

Investing in the Future: Immersive Learning & Dreamscape Learn Partnership

A White Paper Addressing Common Questions & Concerns

Community/Student Interest

At Shawnee Community College (SCC), we are dedicated to providing transformative learning experiences that prepare our students with the knowledge and skills they need to thrive in an evolving work world. Our participation with Dreamscape Learn Immersive Learning Technology (DSL ILT) is an exciting first step in developing a broader Immersive Learning Strategy - one designed to enhance student learning outcomes, expand engagement, strengthen workforce training, and position SCC as a leader in innovative workforce education.

While we continue to gather feedback and strengthen partnerships locally, we are confident that DSL's ILT aligns with the evolving expectations of students, employers, and community stakeholders throughout our service area. By integrating cutting-edge immersive learning tools, SCC is not just keeping pace with changes in education - we are leading the way in creating a more engaging, effective, and career-focused learning experience for all students.

Building Community Buy-In & Aligning with Regional Needs

At Shawnee Community College (SCC), we value the power of collaboration and understand community engagement is essential for the success of any major educational initiative. That's why we are committed to actively working with local businesses, educators, workforce leaders, and students to explore how immersive learning can enhance workforce readiness, open new career pathways, and create dynamic educational opportunities that meet the needs of our region.

While Dreamscape Learn Immersive Learning Technology (DSL ILT) currently enhances coursework in Biology, Chemistry, Art History, and other smaller topic related-academic modules, this is just the beginning. The true strength of this technology lies in its ability to develop customized, entertaining, and highly relevant learning experiences - ones that will strengthen our efforts to serve high-demand workforce development areas such as healthcare, operations management/entrepreneurship, and skilled trades.

By taking this important first step, SCC is laying the foundation for an expansive Immersive Learning (IL) strategy that will transform education and workforce training across multiple disciplines throughout the College. This investment ensures that SCC will be at the forefront of innovation, empowering students and strengthening our community for years to come.

A Transformational Opportunity for Our Students & Region

At SCC, investing in cutting ILT is about more than enhancing instruction - it's about empowering today's learners and preparing tomorrow's workforce. Research at both the national and state levels highlight a growing demand for interactive, technology-driven learning environments, and our community partners are seeking graduates who are job-ready with real-world skills.

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Moreover, DSL ILT offers a potentially powerful solution, allowing us to integrate industry-relevant, immersive experiences into the classroom while strengthening SCC's role as a regional leader in workforce and economic development. DSL has demonstrated that this technology increases engagement, deepens understanding, and improves student retention, particularly for hands-on learners. Additionally, it has shown promise in leveling the playing field for low-income and underserved students, ensuring that all learners benefit from its interactive, high-impact experiences, which:

- Enhance comprehension and retention through active engagement.
- Apply real-world scenarios, making complex subjects more accessible.
- Create safe, controlled environments where students develop critical skills for high-demand fields.

Beyond traditional academics, DSL ILT unlocks new workforce training opportunities by allowing SCC to develop custom simulations tailored to industry needs. As employers increasingly seek graduates with practical, job-ready skills, immersive learning bridges the gap between education and workforce expectations, ensuring that SCC students graduate equipped for success in their careers.

Appeal to Non-Traditional Students & Impact on Enrollment

As highlighted during January 2025 convocation, our future focus should be on developing engaging learning activities for our non-traditional student population, which reflects about 95% of annual unduplicated headcount. As such, we must adapt future learning experiences to meet their needs. DSL ILT is particularly well-suited for non-traditional learners because it will:

- Provide **flexible, interactive learning models** that support **hybrid, online, and accelerated coursework**, making education more accessible for working adults.
- Help non-traditional students **learn faster and retain more knowledge**, reducing time to degree completion.
- Create **skills-based, career-focused learning activities** that align with **industry needs**, attracting adult learners who are looking to **upskill, reskill, or change careers**.
- Allow students to gain **hands-on experience in a shorter amount of time**, which is critical for those balancing work, family, and education.

From an enrollment and credit hour perspective, DSL ILT will help SCC by:

- **Attracting more students** who seek an innovative, career-focused education.
- **Improving retention** by increasing student engagement and satisfaction.
- **Expanding revenue opportunities** through partnerships, workforce training, and micro-credentialing.

Bringing the Technology to Our Community

While we are committed to securing full community buy-in, we also recognize that seeing and experiencing this leading-edge technology firsthand is key to building excitement and understanding its full potential. To truly engage our stakeholders – students, parents, employers, and educators – we need to bring DSL to SCC and provide hands-on demonstrations. This will allow our community to see its impact in

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action, experience the learning transformation it offers, and collaborate with us in shaping how it can best serve our region. By doing so, we hope to generate greater enthusiasm and demand for its expansion into workforce training and other academic disciplines.

A Future Shaped by Collaboration

DSL ILT is just the beginning. It serves as a launchpad for a larger Immersive Learning Strategy that will shape the future of education at Shawnee College. As we expand our capabilities, we will continue to collaborate with our community, industry partners, and educational leaders to develop custom immersive learning experiences that meet the evolving needs of students and employers.

By embracing Dreamscape Learn immersive learning technology, we are taking an exciting first step toward a future where learning is more engaging, accessible, and career-aligned than ever before. Together, we can create a dynamic, innovative educational experience that drives student success, workforce readiness, and regional economic growth.

Funding Immersive Learning & Dreamscape Learn Technology

Initial Strategic Investment in Innovation

At SCC, we are committed to making strategic, forward-thinking investments that enhance student learning, expand workforce training, and position our institution for long-term success. As such, the College plans to invest in DSL ILT through a diverse mix of financial resources, ensuring that this initiative aligns with our fiscal priorities while ensuring both the successful launch and long-term sustainability of this transformative initiative. By doing so, we will maximize the impact for students and the community.

Specifically, our funding strategy includes a combination of institutional funds, grant opportunities, legislative support, and industry partnerships to support this investment. Legislative funding strategies, including earmarked appropriations, workforce development initiatives, and higher education technology grants, provide key opportunities for long-term sustainable financial support. Additionally, philanthropic support, corporate sponsorships, and external funding sources are being explored to sustain and expand our broader Immersive Learning Strategy. Even if all the external funding opportunities do not materialize in the next few years, the College currently has restricted institutional funds that can be used to cover our initial investment.

While we are confident in our ability to secure additional external funding, SCC has **restricted** institutional funds available to cover our initial investment, ensuring that we can move forward without delay. By making this investment now, we are positioning SCC as a leader in immersive education, creating new opportunities for students, and strengthening our ability to attract future funding from a variety of sources.

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Securing additional funding is greatly enhanced by having this technology readily available on campus. When potential funders, policymakers, and industry partners can interact with DSL ILT firsthand, they can experience its transformative power, making them more likely to invest in its expansion. By showcasing this technology in action, SCC strengthens its position as a regional leader in immersive learning and workforce development, increasing the likelihood of attracting state and federal grants, private contributions, and long-term industry collaborations.

Most importantly, this investment is not just about technology – it’s about creating opportunities for our students, faculty, and regional workforce. DSL ILT has the potential to increase enrollment, strengthen student retention, enhance workforce partnerships, and open new revenue streams through customized training programs. This means that over time, the return on investment will extend far beyond the initial cost, benefiting SCC, our students, and the community for years to come.

Sustaining Strategic Investment in Innovation

We recognize that investing in immersive learning technology is not just about the present – it’s about building a sustainable, future-ready learning environment. DSL ILT is designed to evolve, ensuring that our students and workforce partners continue to benefit from cutting-edge educational experiences for years to come.

To keep pace with technological advancements, SCC is implementing a long-term sustainability strategy that includes:

- **Strategic Funding & Partnerships** – We are actively pursuing grant funding, legislative support, philanthropic contributions, and industry partnerships to help offset the costs of future upgrades. Having DSL ILT in place on campus will strengthen our ability to secure additional funding and sponsorships as partners experience the impact of the technology firsthand.
- **Revenue Generation** – As SCC expands its Immersive Learning Strategy, we will explore opportunities to license custom-developed content, offer workforce training programs, and collaborate with industry partners, generating new revenue streams that can be reinvested into technology upgrades.
- **Flexible & Scalable Implementation** – DSL ILT is modular and adaptable, meaning we can integrate incremental upgrades over time rather than requiring full system replacements. This ensures we remain at the forefront of innovation without unnecessary financial strain.
- **Continuous Assessment & Planning** – Our commitment to data-informed decision-making means we will continuously evaluate the effectiveness of DSL ILT, ensuring each investment supports student success, workforce readiness, and institutional sustainability.

By taking this proactive and strategic approach, SCC is well-positioned to stay ahead of technological advancements, maximize our return on investment, and continue

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providing leading-edge and customized learning experiences that prepare students for the future.

Maximizing Intellectual Property & Revenue Opportunities

We are excited about the opportunities that DSL ILT presents – not just for enhancing education, but also for fostering innovation and creating future revenue opportunities. As part of our Immersive Learning Strategy, SCC will retain full intellectual property rights and ownership of the content we develop, ensuring that our faculty, students, and institution benefit from the value we create.

We are actively working with DSL to establish a marketplace where SCC's custom-developed immersive learning content can be shared with other higher education institutions nationwide. This initiative has the potential to create additional revenue streams for the College while expanding our impact beyond our local community.

Additionally, we recognize the importance of developing our content in ways that extend beyond the DSL platform. As immersive learning technology continues to evolve, our goal is to ensure that SCC's content remains adaptable and compatible with other platforms that may emerge in the future. By taking this forward-thinking approach, we are maximizing our flexibility and positioning SCC as a leader in immersive content creation, regardless of technological shifts.

While the details of these arrangements are still under development, SCC is on the ground floor of these conversations, giving us significant influence in shaping how this marketplace and content distribution evolve. Our early involvement ensures that SCC is positioned as an innovator in immersive learning, with the ability to expand both educational impact and financial sustainability.

This initiative represents an exciting step forward, allowing SCC to enhance student learning, drive institutional growth, and establish a scalable model for future innovation and success.

Implementing Immersive Learning

Initial Scope and Implementation

Our goal is to thoughtfully and strategically implement Dreamscape Learn Immersive Learning Technology (DSL ILT) to enhance student engagement, improve learning outcomes, and support workforce training initiatives. Over the next few weeks, we will refine our purchasing and implementation strategy, incorporating valuable input from today's discussions to ensure we make decisions that best serve our students and faculty.

The specific purchases will be guided by which courses we pilot and the number of labs we establish. At a minimum, we anticipate acquiring a platform site license, a Free

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Roam pod, classroom/lab user pods (likely a 16-user and mobile pod), and access to the 14-16 immersive classroom modules already developed. While Biology, Chemistry, and Art History courses are available, we are not required to purchase them immediately. Instead, our selection of course content will be determined by faculty interest and their willingness to integrate immersive learning into their curriculum.

Beyond these initial implementations, SCC is committed to expanding immersive learning into workforce development, career training, and additional academic disciplines. Our flexible, faculty-driven approach ensures that immersive learning aligns with institutional priorities and community needs, creating a dynamic and innovative learning environment that benefits students, faculty, and regional workforce partners.

Implementation Timeline?

We are taking a thoughtful, phased approach to implementation to ensure a smooth transition and meaningful integration into our curriculum (see Three-Phase Plan presented to the Board in November 2024).

Here's a summary of the Three-Phase Plan:

- Phase 1: Establishing Local Hardware and Software Capability
To build excitement and community buy-in for immersive learning, SCC will launch DSL ILT using locally acquired resources in a temporary space. This phase includes purchasing entry-level VR hardware and software, hosting interactive demonstrations with schools, businesses, and civic groups, and launching a marketing campaign to showcase the potential of immersive learning. Additionally, strategic partnerships and fundraising efforts will focus on securing small grants, donor contributions, and local government support, while exploring legislative funding opportunities aligned with workforce development. This initial proof-of-concept phase will generate awareness, encourage faculty engagement, and position SCC as a leader in innovative education.

Phase 2: Development of a Full Immersive Demonstration Facility of Excellence

Building on the momentum of Phase 1, SCC will establish a state-of-the-art immersive learning lab featuring two 16-station VR labs, a free-roam VR pod, and a collaboration space for faculty, students, and community partners. Specialized staff, including Unity programmers, content developers, and infrastructure technicians, will be recruited to support the expansion of immersive learning into high-demand workforce areas such as healthcare, business, and technology. A comprehensive faculty training program will be implemented to ensure seamless curriculum integration. To sustain this growth, SCC will launch a capital campaign, corporate sponsorship opportunities, and large-scale grant applications. Legislative advocacy will also be a priority, with

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SCC working alongside state and federal agencies to secure funding for workforce innovation and economic development.

- Phase 3: Collaborative Partnerships & Long-Term Sustainability
With the facility fully operational, SCC will position itself as a regional hub for immersive learning by establishing partnerships with educational institutions, corporations, and government agencies to co-develop and share content. SCC will focus on creating modular, platform-independent VR experiences that can be distributed beyond the DSL platform, ensuring adaptability as technology evolves. Sustainability efforts will include subscription-based licensing models, workforce training programs, and an endowment campaign to support ongoing content development. To expand SCC's influence, national and international collaborations will be pursued, alongside hosting immersive learning summits and conferences. By securing long-term funding and continuously evolving its immersive learning ecosystem, SCC will ensure a lasting impact on student success, workforce readiness, and regional economic growth.

This intentional rollout allows for continuous collaboration with faculty, administration, and the Board, ensuring that implementation is both effective and aligned with our strategic educational goals.

Faculty Choice?

As always, faculty autonomy is a key priority in this process. While we encourage faculty to explore how immersive learning can enhance their current and future courses, the use of DSL ILT will not be mandated.

Faculty will have opportunities to engage in training, observe the technology in action, and collaborate with peers to determine how immersive learning fits within their curriculum.

The College is committed to providing support, professional development, and flexibility, ensuring that faculty can make informed decisions about whether and how to incorporate this technology into their teaching.

Faculty Compensation for Curriculum Development/Redevelopment

The College recognizes that integrating new instructional methods requires time, effort, and creativity, and we are committed to supporting faculty throughout this process. Therefore, faculty will be compensated consistent with the provisions noted in Article IX of the current Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Our goal is to ensure faculty have the resources, training, and recognition they need to successfully implement immersive learning in their courses. We deeply appreciate our faculty's commitment to enhancing student learning, and we will continue working

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collaboratively to develop a support framework that acknowledges and values their contributions.

Lab Seats?

The number of lab seats and overall capacity for immersive learning at SCC is still being finalized, with decisions informed by faculty discussions and institutional needs. However, our current plan includes establishing at least one 16-user classroom/lab to support initial experimentation and integration of immersive learning into coursework. Our goal is to ensure maximum accessibility and engagement, providing students with meaningful opportunities to experience this innovative technology.

Each DSL ILT lab is designed to accommodate approximately 16-32 students per session, with a flexible and scalable scheduling structure that allows multiple course sections to utilize the space efficiently. Most immersive learning experiences currently take 20-30 minutes to complete, enabling multiple student groups to rotate through sessions, maximizing both participation and impact.

As we move forward, SCC remains committed to equitable access and continuous refinement of immersive learning implementation. We will assess demand, optimize scheduling, and explore expansion opportunities based on faculty input, student engagement, and institutional priorities, ensuring that immersive learning evolves to best serve our students and community.

Final Thought

Our investment in DSL represents an exciting step toward enhancing student learning, strengthening workforce preparation, and positioning SCC as a leader in educational innovation. We are excited to collaborate with faculty, staff, and community partners to ensure a successful and sustainable integration of this transformative technology!

Supporting Immersive Learning

Curriculum Development Support

We are committed to providing strong oversight and dedicated faculty support for the successful implementation of Dreamscape Learn (DSL) and Immersive Learning Technology (ILT). While we have not yet determined whether a new position will be created, we are actively exploring ways to integrate these responsibilities within our existing support structure. Possible roles under consideration include:

- Educational Technology Coordinator
- Curriculum Specialist
- Student Support Specialist (Teaching & Learning Center Coordinator)

To further enhance faculty support for content development, we anticipate needing expertise in storytelling and programming in Unity or Unreal Engine to create

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engaging, customized immersive experiences. We may also explore third-party support options to supplement these efforts as needed. To get started, we plan to pursue grant funding to support these positions initially, with the flexibility to blend roles over time based on faculty demand and institutional needs. While these roles will likely fall under the IT department, we plan to work closely with Academic Affairs teams to ensure optimal alignment with instructional goals.

Lab Oversight

To ensure smooth operations, we plan to adopt best practices from leading institutions like Arizona State University, which effectively utilizes student workers for routine troubleshooting, equipment maintenance, and lab supervision. Major troubleshooting issues will be handled through DSL's dedicated and robust help desk system, ensuring reliable technical support. Additionally, DSL provides a built-in scheduling system that assists in managing student and employee responsibilities, and we anticipate using a similar approach to optimize scheduling and maximize accessibility. Given SCC's expected lower student volume compared to larger institutions, this approach will provide a sustainable and efficient lab management model.

Professional Development

We are committed to fully supporting faculty and staff in integrating DSL and immersive learning into instruction. Initial training will be provided by DSL, with additional ongoing professional development opportunities identified based on faculty needs and instructional goals. As we continue refining our organizational structure and staffing model, we welcome faculty and staff input to ensure that DSL is well-integrated, accessible, and a valuable enhancement to student learning.

Building Capacity & Advancing Innovation

Additional Academic and Student Support Needs

We recognize the challenges posed by unfilled positions and understaffed areas and deeply appreciate the dedication of our faculty and staff in continuing to support students despite these limitations. Addressing these needs is a priority, and we are committed to strategic solutions that strengthen our existing support systems while also positioning SCC for future growth and innovation.

It is important to clarify that budgeted positions already exist for both the Teaching & Learning Coordinator and the Educational Technology Specialist—these are institutional positions that we have been actively trying to fill. The issue is not funding, but attracting the right talent for these roles. Additionally, over the past year, a full-time tutor was added to the Testing Center to enhance student support services. While a proposal for a Testing Technician was submitted, the Board Finance Committee opted not to staff that position due to an incomplete rationale for its necessity.

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The Lab Assistant issue primarily stems from the full-time Science Assistant position that was eliminated two budget cycles ago. We have repeatedly asked faculty for recommendations on guidelines that would help determine when a lab assistant position is necessary. As SCC continues to expand Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, additional lab assistants may be needed in the future, but without clear criteria for triggering consideration, it is challenging for the College to determine which positions should be prioritized. We welcome continued faculty input to help establish these guidelines and ensure we are making informed staffing decisions.

Connecting Current Needs to DSL IT

If unlimited funds were available, we would already support many, if not most, of these positions. However, financial realities require us to be strategic in how we allocate resources while seeking opportunities to expand support services over time. The DSL and ILT do not compete with these staffing needs but instead provide opportunities to enhance resources and secure additional funding that could help support these roles in the future.

The College is exploring external grant funding and strategic hiring solutions that could not only support DSL but also strengthen student services in tutoring, technology integration, and lab assistance. Additionally, Arizona State University's model of using student workers for DSL lab oversight provides a sustainable, cost-effective approach that SCC plans to adopt, allowing for lab operations without adding strain to existing staff.

We see DSL not as an additional burden but as a catalyst for securing new resources and building institutional capacity. By pursuing grant funding, industry partnerships, and workforce development initiatives, we aim to strengthen our support infrastructure across multiple areas - technology, tutoring, curriculum development, and student services. As we move forward, we will continue to evaluate staffing needs holistically, ensuring that SCC is positioned not only for success with DSL but also for long-term sustainability and growth in all student support areas.

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Have you considered the reasons we should not do this?

Absolutely! As President, I'm sure you've seen my high DC personality in play over the last five years. That said, please be confident that our approach to every major initiative is implemented with careful consideration, ensuring that investments align with our mission, benefit our students, and contribute to long-term institutional success. As part of this process, the Board (through the Board Finance Committee) has thoroughly evaluated both the opportunities and challenges associated with implementing DSL ILT.

Clearly, this is a strategic risk, but one with significant potential rewards. The worst-case scenario is that we invest \$1.5 to \$3 million, the majority of which will likely come from external funding sources, and our goal of becoming a Statewide Center for Immersive Learning is not fully realized.

However, the far greater risk lies in not pursuing this opportunity. The window to establish SCC as a market leader in immersive learning is time-sensitive, as early adopters will shape the statewide and regional perception of immersive education. Delaying action could mean missing our chance to lead, losing out on funding opportunities, and allowing other institutions to establish themselves in this space first.

The potential upside is transformational – increased student learning, improved engagement, higher retention, and stronger workforce partnerships that make SCC a destination for cutting-edge education. This initiative will also positively impact enrollment by attracting students seeking innovative, hands-on learning experiences, while enhancing community and industry perceptions of SCC as a forward-thinking leader in higher education. If we do not move forward, we risk losing momentum, diminishing our competitive edge, and missing an opportunity to define the future of immersive education in our region.