

lead in authentic, technology-rich learning spaces within schools and beyond. The department fosters the innovations lab, mobile innovations lab, and simulations lab.

Terri Ponder directs our simulations lab which includes UWGLive. Terri is a leader in instructional technology within the state of Georgia, coming to UWG from a long career in the public school system.

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### Introduction

Providing diverse, authentic classroom experiences for future teachers has been a vexing challenge for universities because it is difficult to get students the variety of experiences they need to become highly skilled. The challenge is especially true at the freshman and sophomore level when we hope to attract students into education, as state rules do not allow students to enter existing classrooms with a service certificate issued in their junior year. We have implemented an innovative approach to this challenge, using UWGLive Simulations. This immersive simulation allows students to experience their future professions in unprecedented ways. UWGLive is integrated into the first-year EDUC sequence, taken prior to officially entering our teacher preparation program.

### Goal of Activity

The goal of UWGLive is to provide a risk-free environment for future educators to practice their craft while receiving immediate feedback from the instructor. For example, participants can pause the simulation at any point and receive feedback that they can immediately incorporate into the session.

This level of coaching would not be possible in a classroom with real students. Additionally, faculty members have the opportunity to design scenarios wherein



### Reflection

Each of the EDUC courses has a specific focus: EDUC 2110 Investigating Critical and Contemporary Issues in Education, EDUC 2120 Exploring Sociocultural Perspectives on Diversity, and EDUC 2130 Exploring Learning and Teaching. Faculty teaching these courses met to design specific UWGLive simulations that would enhance course content and facilitate student growth. Since the course sequence is not taken in a particular order, we cannot predict what experiences students may have had with UWGLive previously. Typically, in the first session, students are in disbelief that the avatars can respond to them in real time and can "see" them as they are engaging with them. As a result, each course begins with students getting to know the avatars and building a level of comfort with using the simulation.

In the first UWGLive session, EDUC 2110 students meet the middle school avatars and ask them questions about their educational experiences and their use of technology in the classroom, EDUC 2120 has students