Rennes 2 launches the First Edition of the VEC Challenge for the Promotion of Sustainable and Connected Campuses

On October 1st, Rennes 2 and partnering institutions are kicking off a new innovative open online course, the Virtual Classroom Environmental Challenge.

Throughout the duration of the fall semester, students and teachers from: the University of Limerick, Ireland; INN, Norway; the University of Joseph KI-ZERBO, Burkina Faso; the Université Matej Bel, Slovakia; as well as from France: the Université Bretagne-Sud, the École Centrale Nantes and SCELVA (Service commun d'études des langues vivantes appliquées), will all be working hard to find new innovative ways to promote, connect and find ways to improve the sustainability of their campus environments. Split into 8 different teams, each one will need to develop ideas relevant to their campuses and then present those ideas to the opposing teams. Between November and December, students will take part in a semi-final and final competition for the best ideas and presentations put forward. Participating students will be eligible to receive 3 ECTS for the successful completion of the course.

Each week, participants will be invited to join weekly online sessions using Rennes 2's virtual teaching platform, the VIA system, and will be given various assignments to complete. Students can find the manual for the program on an online padlet, while recordings of the sessions will be published on a YouTube channel so that it's possible to follow the latest exchanges even if they miss a live meeting.

The overall aim of the project is to develop peer education in an international context, mainly in language teaching and challenge-based projects. All of this will be coordinated by Master students from Rennes 2's Didactiques des Langues program, who will be taking on the role of student 'coaches'. The coaches will be in regular contact with the different teams, helping each to organize their presentations and they will also provide feedback to the teacher coordinators from participating institutions. They will additionally organize and host the semi-final and final competitions.

The project is being headed by Rennes 2 Professor Christine Evain, who works in the Didactiques des Langues program.

As she puts it, "*The idea just came from a desire to launch an original program with our partners or other willing institutions that would foster international collaborative work between students and help them find innovative and environmentally-friendly ways to improve their campuses. We worked with the University's SUP office (the Pedagogical Service) and Dr. Catrin Bellay to develop the idea of building a 'virtual campus' into the idea of building a 'green virtual campus'. Another main aim of the project for us as teachers is to help our students become comfortable collaborating with peers virtually and help them to hone their interdisciplinary project management skills all at once.*"

In today's context of universities striving to offer an increasing number of online learning experiences being offered to students, the project stakeholders were inspired by principles contained in the free open online ecolinguistics course: The Stories We Live By. This initiative and other similar projects encourage students to question the way in which we have traditionally studied, consumed and lived. Similar initiatives conducted on campuses have, for example, managed to reduce plastic, food and other wastes, created more green spaces and helped to promote healthy and sustainable learning environments overall.

For questions regarding the VEC Challenge, please contact Christine Evain at: christine.evain [at] rennes2.fr (christine[dot]evain[at]rennes2[dot]fr).

More information on similar initiatives:

The Stories We live By

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