- Team Member Information
- Our University
- MRIT by the Numbers
- "Block Party"
  - *Why?*
  - *What?*
  - *Who?*
  - *Where?*
  - *When?*
  - *How?*
- Looking Forward
- References

Presentation Overview

The Team

Ryan Greenwood

- Bryan-College Station, TX
- BS in Sports Marketing
- TAMU 2019

Marco Navarro

- Coppell, Texas
- BGS (General Studies)
- MSSU 2019

Shane Reynolds

- Las Vegas, NV
- BA in Theatre
- SFASU 2020

Our University

MRIT is a massive, 300-acre Engineering, Technology, Applied and Natural Sciences Institute that prides itself in its ability to "Shape America's Innovative Leaders." MRIT students are known as Sailfish, or "Sails." With its competitive acceptance rate and an overall graduation rate of 90%, this University is home to all who enter. While recent world events may have turned Higher Education on its head, the Sailfish are always ready to pursue new horizons!

Sailfish by the Numbers

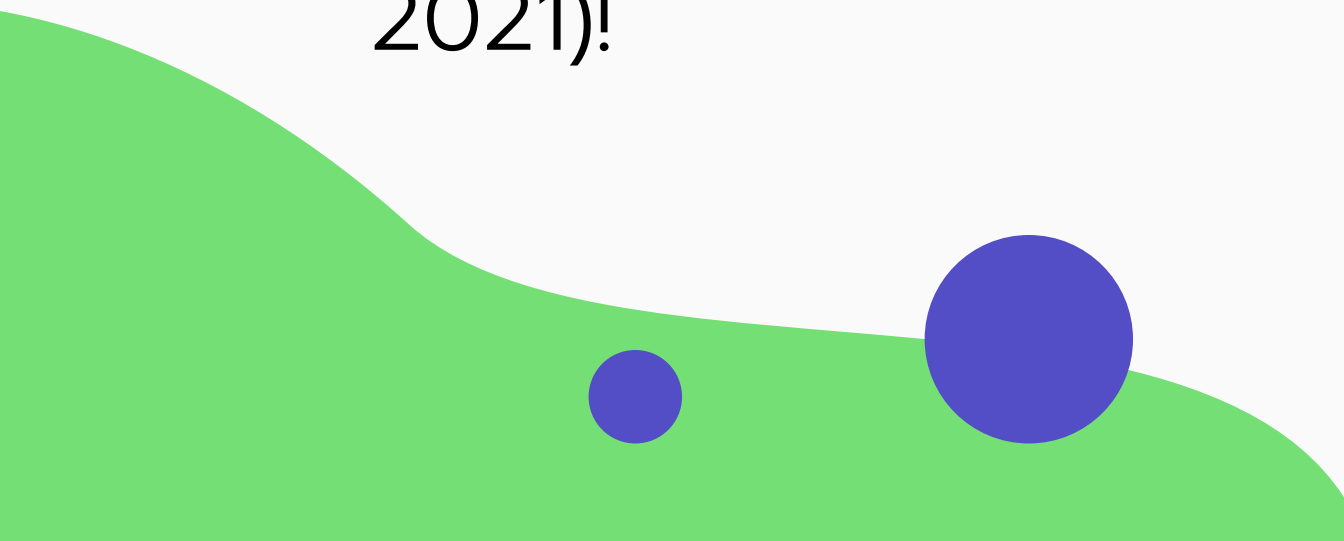|	
3,002	Freshman Students
2,854	Sophomore Students
2,510	Junior Students
2,288	Senior Students
1,905	Graduate Students
1,457	Doctoral Students
14,016	Total Students

Why Do We Need a Change?

Because the world is changing!

- We know that student engagement effects student satisfaction and academic performance (Bolliger & Martin, 2018).
- <u>BUT</u> Buckley et al. (2017) suggest that student motivation and engagement was declining even before COVID-19 pandemic!
- Now, thousands of MRIT students struggle even more to stay engaged and socialize with peers due to distance learning and isolation (Armoed, 2021)!

Why Go Virtual?

- "The use of virtual worlds... can definitely positively affect learner engagement" (Christopoulos & Shukla, 2018).

- "Studies suggest that students are more likely to remain engaged in an educational activity if technology is involved" (Felszeghy et al., 2019).

- "All [student engagement] principles can be applied to distance learning environments" (Bollilger & Martin, 2018).

Why Should I Gamify?

01 Gamification can benefit all college programs, activities, and curricula (Alsawaier, 2018).

02 In-game socialization benefits physical social engagement (Christopoulos, 2018).

03 Anyone can reap the full benefits of virtual learning, <u>regardless of gender or lack of gaming experience</u> (Warden et al., 2016)!

What is the Program?

MRIT

BLOCK PARTY

Students will join an MRIT Minecraft Server to build a full-scale, 300-acre model of the MRIT campus!

Minecraft has been utilized by colleges and universities across the country with great success. The platform has been perfect for educational content, student orientations, recruitment tours, debates, social gatherings, and even university graduations!

(Kiang, 2019; Anderson, 2020; Loveland, 2020; Meisenzahl, 2020; Ullman, 2020; "Students around the world," 2020; Webster, 2020; [MarioFoli], 2021)

Who's Invited?

All students, as well as select faculty and staff, will be invited participate.

Upperclassmen and postgraduate students can apply to volunteer as one of 50 student server moderators.

Based on our previous trends, our goal is to have a total of 6,000 student participants!
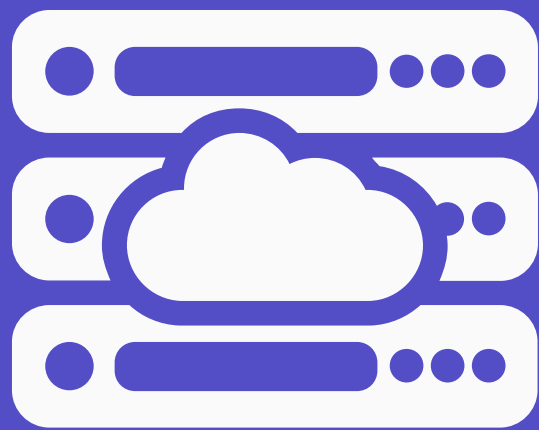

Socializing inside a public Minecraft server (Reynolds, 2021).

Participation in the MRIT Block Party can fulfill the "Get to Know Your Campus" project in the required MRIT 101 seminar course for freshman students.

The best way for freshmen to learn their campus is to build it!

Where and *When*?

MRIT staff will create and host a dedicated, private server only available to registered participants

The server will be a large, Creative "Superflat" (flat grassy world) divided into 100 plots of 120x120 blocks.

The Block Party will begin Tues. September 14 at 6 p.m. and end 72 hours later. There will be optional tutorial sessions on September 13 and 14 for new players.

How Will We Publicize?

Two weeks prior to the event, our Marketing Manager will release the MRIT Block Party Promo Video on all campus social media. It will be played on campus televisions in the library, dining areas, and Recreation Center.

A physical flier will also be posted and distributed throughout the MRIT campus.

How Do We Set Up?

Classification

○ Freshman

○ Sophomore

○ Junior

○ Senior

○ Postgraduate or above

○ Faculty or Staff

Major

Your answer

Would you like to join the Minecraft Block Party from your own computer, or a campus computer?

○ Own computer

○ Campus computer

Will you use your own Minecraft account (or purchase one for $30), or will you use a MRIT guest account?

○ Own or purchase account (Recommended)

○ MRIT guest account

01 Participants will submit an online registration form, due on Sept. 10. (partly pictured)

02 Registrants will be divided into 100 groups (with preference for same majors) and assigned one random plot.

03 Registrants will receive an email detailing instructions on joining the private server and server rules, as well as group information.

How Will We Run It?

Each group will have a designated Zoom meeting room for vocal communication and social interaction, in addition to Minecraft's integrated text "chat" feature. Group members will need to coordinate with each other (and chat with neighboring groups) to ensure accuracy and plot connections.

Student and staff moderators will ensure all server rules are followed (e.g. no disruptive destruction, no profane symbols, no interference in other plots, etc.). "Mods" will have the ability to remove or ban violators.

Participants who do not have their own devices can indicate their need on the registration form. These participants will receive instructions regarding the use of campus workstations. MRIT has a total of 7,743 workstations available for students; however, social distancing guidelines have reduced this to approx. 4,000.

Students may receive basic floor plans for campus buildings to help their creations. Students are also encouraged to explore campus and take pictures and measurements of their assigned areas in real life.

How Can We Make It Accessible to Everyone?

While participants are encouraged to use their own devices and accounts, accommodations can be made available using a limited number of campus-owned accounts.

Minecraft has a number of accessibility features built-in (e.g. text-to-speech) and is designed with various handicaps in mind (Huang, 2019; see also "Accessibility", n.d.).

Participants are encouraged to contact MRIT Disability Services regarding specific accommodations.

How Will It End?

- On Friday, September 17 at 6 p.m., all general participants will be temporarily banned from the server. Student and staff moderators will have until Friday, September 24 at 5 p.m. to assess their assigned plots. Each plot will be quantitatively scored on separate factors, including Completion, Accuracy, and Creative Use of Materials
- Each factor will be totaled to generate an overall score for each group's work.
- Each member of the highest scoring group will receive a $10 credit to the campus bookstore. (A tie will be settled by the Dean of Student Affairs.)
- The winning plot will be announced on September 24 at 6 p.m. on social media and will be notified via email.
- The server will then be reopened to allow campus participants to complete the campus model at their leisure.

How Much Will It Cost?

- Hosting a massive server through a platform such as ServerMania can cost up to $650/month (Cloud Server, n.d.).

- Assuming we reach our participant goal, the winning team of 60 students will get $600 worth of store credit.

- Maximum cost of providing accounts* to requesting participants: $9,000.**

- Cost to run Block Party: $10,250.
Cost to maintain server for 2021-2022: $27,400
Total Cost of Fall 2019 Welcome Week: $11,000

*A standard Minecraft account is about $30. Minecraft has sold over 200 million copies (Clement, 2021) and the average player age is 24 (Capel, 2019). While it is possible to assume many students own (or are willing to purchase) their own account, we recommend setting aside 300 campus-owned accounts which can be used by multiple students in rotation. Participants can access a campus account with login information available at the library. **There is a free alternative to the standard Minecraft account known as Minecraft: Education Edition. However, this version only allows for servers of up to 30 players and is therefore not recommended for this event. This may be worth considering for classroom activities.

Looking Forward

Once the blocky replica of campus is complete, the server's game mode will be changed from Creative to Adventure. Adventure Mode allows players to navigate and interact with the world without creating or destroying blocks. This map can then be used for recruitment displays, student lounging, orientation tours, and more! A copy of the server can also be created for Minecraft: PE* using platforms such as PocketMine for wider public reach!

The cost of maintaining the server each month can be costly, but it will prove to be a useful tool for years to come (Anderson, 2020)!

*Minecraft: Pocket Edition is a smartphone application available for $6.99. While this may appear to be a more favorable choice for the Block Party, it is incompatible with computer servers. More importantly, it has greater limitations regarding accommodations and virtual communication with others.
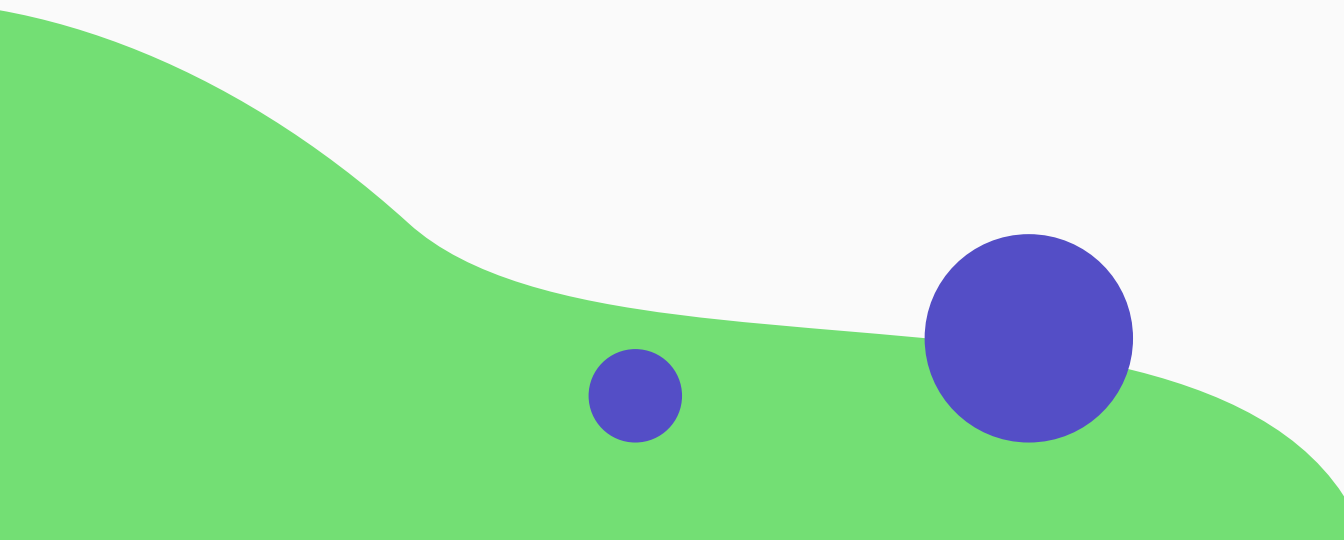
Bibliography

Accessibility in Minecraft (n.d.). Minecraft. https://www.minecraft.net/en-us/accessibility/

Alsawaier, R. S. (2018). The effect of gamification on motivation and engagement. *The international journal of information and learning technology, 35*(1), 56-79. doi:10.1108/IJILT-02-2017-0009

Anderson, P. (2020, March 31). *Campus is closed, so students are rebuilding their schools in Minecraft*. The Verge. https://www.theverge.com/2020/3/31/21200972/college-students-graduation-minecraft-coronavirus-school-closures

Armier, D. D., Shepherd, C. E., & Skrabut, S. (2016). Using Game Elements to Increase Student Engagement in Course Assignments. *College teaching, 64*(2), 64-72. doi:10.1080/87567555.2015.1094439

Armoed, Z. (2021). The Covid-19 Pandemic: Online Teaching and Learning at Higher Education Institutes. *IOP conference series. Earth and environmental science, 654*(1), 12026-12032. doi:10.1088/1755-1315/654/1/012026

Bolliger, D. U., & Martin, F. (2018). Instructor and student perceptions of online student engagement strategies. *Distance education, 39*(4), 568-583. doi:10.1080/01587919.2018.1520041

Buckley, P., Doyle, E., & Doyle, S. (2017). Game On! Students' Perceptions of Gamified Learning. *Educational technology & society, 20*(3), 1-10.

Capel, C. J. (2019, October 10). *Believe it or not, the average age of a Minecraft player is 24*. PCGamesN. https://www.pcgamesn.com/minecraft/player-age

Christopoulos, A., Conrad, M., & Shukla, M. (2018). Increasing student engagement through virtual interactions: How? *Virtual reality : the journal of the Virtual Reality Society, 22*(4), 353-369. doi:10.1007/s10055-017-0330-3

Clement, J. (2021, January 29). *Minecraft unit sales worldwide, 2016-2020*. Statista. https://www.statista.com/statistics/680124/minecraft-unit-sales-worldwide/

Cloud Server Packages. (n.d.). ServerMania. https://www.servermania.com/cloud-hosting-v2a.htm

Farrer, L. M., Gulliver, A., Katruss, N., Bennett, K., Bennett, A., Ali, K., & Griffiths, K. M. (2020). Development of the Uni Virtual Clinic: An online programme for improving the mental health of university students. *British journal of guidance & counselling, 48*(3), 333-346. doi:10.1080/03069885.2020.1729341

Bibliography (cont'd)

Felszeghy, S., Pasonen-Seppänen, S., Koskela, A., Nieminen, P., Härkönen, K., Paldanius, K. M. A., ... Mahonen, A. (2019). Using online game-based platforms to improve student performance and engagement in histology teaching. BMC medical education, 19(1), 273. doi:10.1186/s12909-019-1701-0

Hackl, C. (2020, August 30). Social VR, Facebook Horizon and the future of media marketing. Forbes. https://www.forbes.com/sites/cathyhackl/2020/08/30/social-vr-facebook-horizon--the-future-of-social-media-marketing/?sh=118164cf5b19

Huang, M. (2019, October 29). Minecraft now more autism friendly with accessibility features built by Garage Interns. Microsoft. https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/garage/blog/2019/10/minecraft-now-more-autism-friendly-with-accessibility-features-built-by-garage-interns/

Kiang, D. (2019, September 27). Minecraft 101: The Underwater Dome Project. International Society for Technology in Education. https://www.iste.org/explore/In-the-classroom/Minecraft-101%3A-The-Underwater-Dome-Project?articleid=155

Loveland, E. (2020). NACAC COLLEGE FAIRS GO VIRTUAL. *Journal of College Admission, 248*, 23

[MarioFoli]. (2021, February 13). [Mod] Love is in the air! Join the r/teenagers Valentine's Dance! [Online forum post]. Retrieved from https://www.reddit.com/r/teenagers/comments/lj21fr/mod_love_is_in_the_air_join_the_rteenagers/

Meisenzahl, M. (2020, April 5). *UPenn students created their campus on 'Minecraft' in painstaking detail while stuck at home - take a look*. Business Insider. https://www.businessinsider.com/upenn-students-recreate-campus-in-minecraft-to-host-virtual-events-2020-4

Paul, K. (2020, August 17). 'Boring and awkward': students voice concern as colleges plan to reopen - through Minecraft. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/aug/17/minecraft-university-johns-hopkins-campus

Reynolds, S. (2021, February 14). Socializing at the r/teenagers Valentine's Dance [Screenshot]. Self.

Students around the world hold graduations in Minecraft - and now you can too! (2020, June 23). https://education.minecraft.net/blog/students-around-the-world-hold-graduations-in-minecraft-and-now-you-can-too

Traylor, S. (2020, April 27). *What recreating school in Minecraft can teach about reimagining education*. EdSurge. https://www.edsurge.com/news/2020-04-27-what-recreating-school-in-minecraft-can-teach-about-reimagining-education

Ullman, E. (2020, September 17). *How colleges are using Minecraft to create events and activities*. Tech & Learning. https://www.techlearning.com/how-to/how-colleges-are-using-minecraft-to-create-events-and-activities

Bibliography (cont'd)

Valenti, S., Lund, B., & Wang, T. (2020). Virtual Reality as a Tool for Student Orientation in Distance Education Programs: A Study of New Library and Information Science Students. Information technology and libraries, 39(2), 1-12. doi:10.6017/ital.v39i2.11937

Virtual Product Launch. (n.d.). https://www.bcdme.com/case-studies/virtual-product-launch/

Warden, C. A., Stanworth, J. O., & Chang, C. (2016). Leveling up: Are non-gamers and women disadvantaged in a virtual world classroom? Computers in human behavior, 65, 210-219. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2016.07.033

Webster, A. (2020, August 21). Minecraft Education is perfectly suited for this surreal back-to-school moment. The Verge. https://www.theverge.com/21377192/minecraft-education-edition-back-to-school-pandemic

Wheelock, A. (2015, May 4). 5 virtual worlds for engaged learning. International Society for Technology in Education. https://www.iste.org/explore/In-the-classroom/5-virtual-worlds-for-engaged-learning