

## Drexel University Online Students Break Ground As the First to Defend “Real World” Degrees in Second Life

**Philadelphia-PA, June 14, 2008** – Students in Drexel Online master’s in higher education program made their mark in history by becoming the first in higher education to defend their thesis virtually through the popular social networking site *Second Life*. The first of six students held their master’s defense in Second Life on June 5<sup>th</sup> and four more students are scheduled during the week of June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2008.

Shawn Brown, of Cleveland, Ohio, was the first student in the online master’s program to defend his thesis in Second Life. “I was intrigued by conducting my defense in a virtual world as if I was presenting in a live classroom. It worked, and the format was not distracting. I presented for about 40 minutes, and I was completely focused on my research and findings. I took questions from my committee and being in Second Life didn’t inhibit any part of the presentation,” said Brown.

According to the Sloan Consortium, more than three hundred educational institutions have established presence in Second Life. “*Second Life* is just another example of how Drexel University Online is using current and emerging technology to deliver instruction to its online students,” said Dr. Hartman, academic director for Drexel University Online. “In the end, it’s all about learning, and *Second Life* enables us to offer a different learning environment; one where online students and online faculty are able to visually interact and collaborate in ways not possible until now.”

Hartman, also a faculty member within the MSHE program, found that today’s graduate students welcome the online/virtual environment. “The times and technology have changed,” said Hartman. “The online and virtual classroom enable as much, if not more, interaction and engagement than the traditional classroom.”

Since the launch of the Master of Science in Higher Education (MSHE) in 2005, the program has more than tripled in size, and has attracted students from around the world. This past spring, the online program won the 2008 United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA) Best Practices Award for its innovative use of technology and overall growth and high-quality courses.

To find out more about the MSHE Defenses in Second Life contact Dr. Kenneth Hartman, academic director at Drexel University Online at 215-895-0501 or email [kenhartman@drexel.edu](mailto:kenhartman@drexel.edu).

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### **About Drexel University Online:**

[Drexel University Online](http://www.drexel.edu/online), winner of the 2006 21<sup>st</sup> Century Best Practice Award for Distance Learning from the United States Distance Learning Association, is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Drexel University, specializing in innovative, Internet-based distance education programs for working professionals and corporations in the United States and abroad. A pioneer in online education since 1996, Drexel’s online programs are taught by the same world-renowned faculty as our on-campus courses. Drexel University is continually ranked one of the best national doctoral universities by *U.S. News & World Report* and enjoys regional accreditation by the Middle States Association of Colleges & Secondary Schools.

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