

UC SANTA BARBARA

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Bill Schlotter

Virtual Reality and the 21st Century At March Chancellor's Breakfast

Virtual exploration has become a pioneering real-world enterprise at the University of California, Santa Barbara where The Research Center for Virtual Environments and Behavior is a world leader in using computer-generated virtual environments to study human behavior.

UCSB professors James Blascovich and Michael Gerber will talk about the center and some of the ground-breaking research conducted there at a community breakfast at 7:30 a.m., Wednesday, March 22 in the Cabrillo Pavilion Arts Center, 1118 East Cabrillo Boulevard, Santa Barbara.

Called a Chancellor's Community Breakfast, the event is hosted by UCSB Chancellor Henry T. Yang and sponsored by the UCSB Affiliates.

Blascovich, a professor in the Department of Psychology, is co-director and co-founder of the center with Jack Loomis, also a psychology professor.

Blascovich

will speak about the emergence of virtual reality research at UCSB over the past decade, formation of the center, and current research being done in the areas of social interaction, visual perception, spatial cognition, learning, and development of a navigation system for the blind.

Gerber, a professor in the Graduate School of Education, will speak about his efforts to build a virtual classroom in which teachers can practice their skills. "Good teaching is cognitively complex ...," Gerber said.

"It's at least as complex as piloting an airplane or managing a power plant. So how do they do it and can we train them to do it better."

Part of the problem, Gerber said, is that there are no truly experimental laboratories where teachers can study teaching.

It is a problem for which virtual reality technology may one day hold the answer.

"Why not build a classroom that has any and all of the elements we wish to study and with the same degree of experimental control that we enjoy in other scientific endeavors," Gerber said. "We will have such an experimental classroom before the middle of this century."

Tickets cost \$10 per person and must be purchased in advance by sending a check payable to the UCSB Affiliates to the Office of Community Affairs, UCSB, Santa Barbara, Calif. 93106.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.