

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Toolwire and Auburn University Win National Science Foundation Grant

Funding will Support Development of Immersive Experiential Learning Environments for Introductory Engineering Courses

Pleasanton, CA – June 14, 2011 - Toolwire (www.toolwire.com) and the Laboratory for Innovative Technology and Engineering Education at Auburn University (www.litee.org) have won an NSF SBIR/ STTR Directorate Phase I award for Use of Serious Games to Improve Learning Outcomes in Engineering Programs by the National Science Foundation (www.nsf.gov).

Toolwire is a global leader in [experiential learning](#) solutions. The company has won several awards this year for the development of [immersive “Day-in-the-Life” learning experiences](#) combining audio and video interaction, photorealistic digital locations, and virtual characters that interact with students in the context of engaging storylines.

The Laboratory for Innovative Technology and Engineering Education (LITEE) is well-recognized for developing, testing, and publishing innovative instructional materials for use by engineering students. With funding from previous NSF grants, LITEE has developed [eighteen case studies](#) and tested them for pedagogy and content with faculty and students at different institutions.

“To receive this award is a tremendous accomplishment,” commented Dr. PK Raju, Thomas Walter Distinguished Professor of Mechanical Engineering and Director of LITEE. “This achievement is a testimony to both organizations’ unique strengths and the significant potential for this exciting initiative.”

In the fall of 2010, Auburn and Toolwire collaborated on a pilot combining Toolwire’s SmartScenario learning solutions with LITEE’s Space Shuttle STS 51-L (Challenger) case study. The Scenarios focused on two primary learning objectives: understanding key engineering design principles and mastering engineering communication.

“The development speed and cost-effectiveness of SmartScenarios are uniquely suited for pilots such as this,” commented Steve Lynch, Director of Channels at Toolwire. “In addition, SmartScenarios are built upon Toolwire’s award-winning “Natural Assessment” instructional design. This unique approach goes beyond testing students’ ability to master small pieces of information. Instead, “Natural Assessments” require students to synthesize and apply what they have learned in contextual, real world settings.”

Dr. Chetan Sankar, Professor of Management at Auburn University’s College of Business and an expert on case study development, pedagogy, and research, led the LITEE team that examined how SmartScenarios affected student performance. “Our follow-up studies provided us several major takeaways,” noted Dr. Sankar. “Overall, students strongly supported this instructional approach. However, they also expressed a desire to enhance the Scenarios with audio and video enhanced content and to extend the gaming aspect of the module.”

Michael Watkins, Toolwire’s Director of Instructional Design and Technology, will lead the team’s co-creation efforts. “I’m extremely excited about this initiative. The student research will further enrich our understanding of how these immersive environments impact the student experience. At

the same time, we're excited to try several new approaches that may eventually lead to our next generation of learning solutions."

John Valencia, President and CEO at Toolwire commented, "Toolwire is honored by NSF's support of this initiative. We fully understand the economic constraints facing educational institutions today, and for that reason, we are excited to support our partners' efforts in delivering richer, more engaging educational content."

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About Toolwire

Toolwire is a learning solutions provider specializing in products and services for experiential learning. Toolwire's StudentDesktops, LiveLabs, Scenarios, and Immersive Learning Environments "bring learning to life". Bridging the gap between education and experience, these learning solutions provide the quickest, most effective way to develop skills and ensure ongoing learning, knowledge retention, and competency. For more information, please visit www.toolwire.com.

About Auburn University's Laboratory for Innovative Technology and Engineering Education

The Laboratory for Innovative Technology and Engineering Education (LITEE) at Auburn University has established a strong reputation for developing, testing, and disseminating innovative instructional materials for use by engineering and business students. Using funding received from six different NSF grants, LITEE has developed eighteen multi-media case studies describing problems that happened in actual companies. A major finding from the previously funded research projects is that the case studies serve to improve higher-order cognitive skills, team working skills, and attitude of students towards engineering subjects. LITEE case studies have been widely recognized by national organizations and have received numerous awards recognizing leadership in Engineering Education. For more information about LITEE, please visit www.litee.org or www.liteecases.com.

Disclaimer

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