Virtual Realities, Real Classrooms: XR and AI Reflections from IMMERSEcon 2025

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by Michael Lew, XR Software Programmer in the Teaching & Learning Centre

As technology continues to evolve, extended reality (XR) and artificial intelligence (AI) are increasingly transforming teaching and learning, providing students with interactive experiences and offering instructors innovative ways to engage and educate beyond traditional methods. Earlier this year, IMMERSE — a company specializing in immersive language training — hosted IMMERSEcon, an online conference where educators, researchers, and industry professionals gathered to share the latest developments in XR and AI for education.

The event featured a keynote presentation by Cortney Harding, founder of Friends With Holograms, titled “How Extended Reality Can Revolutionize Education.” Drawing from a variety of case studies, Harding highlighted how XR-based training can significantly improve learning outcomes, increasing knowledge retention by 75% and student performance by 70%. She outlined the core benefits of XR training such as increased engagement, safer environments for high-stakes practice, and faster skill development. She then introduced a framework for successfully implementing XR in educational settings.

As someone creating XR content on the Teaching & Learning Centre team, I was particularly interested in her discussion on why XR still hasn’t seen widespread adoption. Despite the proven benefits and rapidly developing hardware, Harding pointed to a lack of high-quality, engaging software and media as the biggest barrier. She encouraged attendees to take part in growing the XR content ecosystem, emphasizing that even simple tools like 360° cameras can be a starting point, and that you don’t need to be an expert to start contributing.

In addition to the main presentations, a series of 10-minute Lightning Talks throughout the conference allowed industry professionals to showcase how they are integrating XR across different learning environments. These talks ranged from Dr. Gary Burnett sharing how he uses virtual reality (VR) to teach empathy to his students, to Dr. Joanna Pitura and Dr. Yuliya Asotska-Wierzba describing how VR and AI can help prepare future EFL teachers for the

classroom.

I also had the opportunity to present a Lightning Talk on behalf of Seneca's Teaching and Learning Centre XR Development Team about our newly developed King Air 200 Flight Deck project. Created in collaboration with Seneca professor Spencer Warren, the VR simulation replicates the flight deck of a King Air 200 aircraft, allowing aviation technology students to develop essential muscle memory with cockpit controls.

In my presentation, I discussed the ideas behind the project, our team's development process, and some key considerations when integrating XR technology into educational institutions. The audience response was overwhelmingly positive, with attendees particularly impressed by the flight deck's realism. The Teaching & Learning Centre is looking forward to soon releasing the app for use in upcoming semesters.

If you're interested in learning more about how to start using XR and AI in your classroom, please contact us at the Teaching & Learning Centre!

Header photo source: IMMERSEcon 2025 landing page, 2025

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