



MUZZY LANE

**HERZING<sup>®</sup>**  
— UNIVERSITY —



## The School

Herzing University offers two master's programs and 40 undergraduate programs in technology, business, healthcare, and public safety online and at 10 physical campuses around the United States.

## The Challenge

Herzing University wanted a tool that would allow instructional designers from a range of academic disciplines to create engaging learning experiences that were more interactive for students than answering a handful of questions after reading a text or watching a video.

## How they used Muzzy Lane

Muzzy Lane Author allowed Herzing's instructional designers to create engaging simulations that helped students to apply the material they're learning in context.

# Creating Community and Critical Thinking Through Simulations

As an institution with a long history of offering both in-person and online courses, Herzing University is always on the lookout for innovations that will capture the interest of students, no matter how they're attending classes. When Herzing began using educational simulations in courses, they looked for a tool that boosted student engagement across its programs and was easy for instructional designers, teachers, and students to use.

**That tool is Muzzy Lane Author.**

Herzing's instructional designers create simulations primarily in four subject areas:



**technology**



**business**



**healthcare**



**public safety**



## Boosting Engagement and Capturing Usage Data in IT Courses

“We use Muzzy Lane to increase students’ interactivity with the material,” explained Lesele Rose, PhD., an instructional designer creating materials for IT courses at Herzing. “So instead of having them just read something passively and then answer questions or watch a video and answer questions, they’re actively engaged and interacting with the material. That’s kind of the whole purpose of Muzzy Lane.”

And Rose said it delivers on that promise, noting that “the students like the activities a lot. With many of the IT courses, even when students have not submitted half of their assignments or their labs, they’ve all done the activities.”

Muzzy Lane also gives educators easy access to usage data to systematically check scores, but also gather additional insights.

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“We can always go to the dashboard and see what percentage of people have been completing them. We can see which one’s got started, how much time students spent in them, what percentage [of questions] they’re getting correct.”

## Helping Nursing Students Develop Soft Skills

Linda Kaiser and Myra Brimmer, who focus on designing for nursing courses, explained that Muzzy Lane enables them to bake in a kind of interactivity that transcends individual activities and helps nursing students develop the soft skills nurses need as they serve communities and see individual patients with evolving maladies repeatedly over time.

“We’ve been creating a ‘village’ where students encounter the same patients that they come across at different points in their curriculum, but with different ailments,” Brimmer said. “That way, they’re familiar with the patient and their background, but they have new symptoms.”

**“It’s building a relationship with a patient,” explained Kaiser.**

“They understand their history, and the patient comes in with some kind of complaint. Because the student knows the patient’s history, they know their current symptoms could be related to their previous ailment or conditions.”

## Collaborating Across Disciplines

Though Herzing’s designers usually work individually, they do sometimes work together and “come up with some really fun ideas,” according to Rose.

When Anna Reese, who designs for business courses, worked with Rose on an idea similar to the healthcare village, for example, they hit on an idea together that Reese incorporated into a simulation for accounting students.

Reese explained that they were creating a nursing simulation together for students to use repeatedly as practice.

“We wanted to have several patients and we wanted their vital signs to change so students would have to respond differently each time. It was meant to be more of a practice activity than a graded activity, so we wanted to be able to have them go through multiple times but not see the same scenario every single time.”

It seemed like a perfect fit for accounting students who need to run different variables through the same formulas, Reese said, “So I've been doing that in accounting with the idea that we can have them practice things like the accounting formula of  $\text{assets} = \text{liabilities} + \text{equity}$ . Muzzy Lane makes it easy for the team to incorporate each other’s ideas in this way, as well.

“We always copy each other’s stuff,” Reese said, “because Muzzy Lane allows us to see everything that everybody's building, so I can see Lesele’s and Linda's, and they can see mine. We've got our characters and our bios [for members of their village] in there, so we can easily go back and refer to those.”

## Developing Critical Thinking Skills

Reese said Muzzy Lane is great for encouraging students to develop their critical thinking skills, as well. “To develop those critical thinking skills, I created a scenario for health administration students that asked them to come up with a new safety program,” Reese said. “The first question students had to ask was “Where do I start?” The simulation I presented them with included several people such as the CFO and the CEO. Throughout the scenario, students gain access to a great deal of shared information, but none of it is spelled out at the beginning. Reese explained, “At each step they have to ask, ‘Okay, now which way do I turn?’”

“That’s one thing I use Muzzy Lane for in the IT division,” Rose agreed. “The whole purpose of an IT degree is to get a job, right? So I use Muzzy Lane to develop those soft skills, like Anna was saying. I build scenarios where they have to actually go do an interview and choose the correct things to say.”

## The Future is Immersive

The team said they were initially excited about Muzzy Lane’s ease of use, but that they believe simulations and more interactive, scenario-based learning will continue to be an integral part of education’s future. “Muzzy Lane is very easy to use as a designer and a developer,” said Rose.

Reese agreed. “The entry point as far as how quickly you can learn Muzzy Lane and create something is a lot easier than some of the other tools.”

“I think we’re going to continue to move towards more immersive and adaptive learning,” Brimmer said.

**“Gamified activities and immersive experiences are going to drive change in higher education, not to mention COVID coming on and pushing institutions further into online formats. I think people are going to continue exploring ways to keep learners engaged, and immersive scenarios are definitely a way to do that.”**