NANSLO’s Balbon Receives Reimagine Education Award

Boulder, Colorado – Albert Balbon, chief architect for the North American Network of Science Labs Online (NANSLO), was honored with second place in the Discipline Award in Life Sciences and Medicine category on December 9th in Philadelphia at the Wharton-QS Stars Awards 2014: Reimagine Education.

The global competition received submissions from 427 universities and enterprises from 43 countries with 21 awards judged by a panel of 25 international experts in higher education. QS Quacquarelli Symonds, publisher of the QS World University Rankings, developed this global competition to identify the most innovative approaches in higher education to enhance learning and student employability, in partnership with The Wharton School SEI Center of the University of Pennsylvania.

Balbon has pioneered distance education delivery at North Island College in British Columbia for 29 years. In 2002, he and astronomy instructor Ron Evans created a system to allow distance students to explore the universe from the comfort of home using a remote telescope. That technology paved the way for his development of the remote web-based science labs (RWSL) in 2004. Through RWSL, students with an internet connection can conduct lab experiments in real time using high quality scientific equipment.

Today, Balbon works with North Island College and NANSLO colleagues at Colorado Community College System, Great Falls College MSU, and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). Through NANSLO’s network of online laboratories, faculty and students have access to 25 existing lab activities, with more to come. In the role of network hub, WICHE provides an online scheduling system that allows faculty at other institutions to arrange for their students to use these remote labs on a fee-for-service basis, opening doors to the STEM fields for many online students and others who cannot come to campus for lab courses.

The Reimagine Education prize fund of US $50,000 was shared by two overall winners: PaGamO (National Taiwan University), in which students compete to amass virtual land and wealth by answering questions correctly, and PhET Interactive Simulations (University of Colorado Boulder) that provides interactive animations to teach students fundamental scientific principles. For more information, visit http://reimagine-education.com/ and www.nic.bc.ca/rwsl and www.wiche.edu/nanslo.