



What is Icons?

The ICONS Project at the University of Maryland is an experiential learning program that uses customized Web-based tools to support educational simulations and simulation-based training. Its high school- and university-level programs cast students in the role of decision-makers tasked with trying to resolve contentious political issues of today. The ICONS Project also uses its simulations to support training programs related to conflict resolution, decision making, negotiations, cross-cultural communication, and crisis management.

Huh?

Icons provides a web-based environment to provide a location for a large number of students to participate in a “simulation” of the way problems are solved in today’s political arena. In this context, a simulation is not a graphical game, but is an environment where participants can be placed in groups (i.e., countries), who then work together to come up with a position for their group. Students are assigned roles and are expected to achieve goals in the face of obstacles. The outcomes are dependent upon the interaction of players. A key is that each group’s members must stay in the persona of that group – a kind of role playing. Groups can send messages, participate in web-based conferences on a particular topic, and then make proposals on those topics for others to ratify. For the political arena that ICONS has been used for in the past, these proposals could be on military security (such as Israel/Palestine), proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, or the environment (like the Kyoto treaty).

A simulation such as these allows learners with different learning styles to shine in different aspects of the simulations. Less vocal students often feel empowered by the written exchanges. Additionally, the web accessibility provides for a more diverse and dispersed collection of students.

Our Task

We will be creating the basis for a simulation for future ICONS participants to use. Following the constructivist paradigm, I will give you some ideas, but it is up to you as a group to come up with the final ideas and information. A good place to get the idea about the format is

<http://www.icons.umd.edu/>

-Globalization and Nigerian Oil simulation:

(This will be used on Monday, July 26th in Kathie's YSP class)

Simnum: ASK

Username: ASK

Password: ASK

Do not add to the simulation, just look around. Notice that initially, the only fields that are filled out are under *Resources*. You will need to make initial cuts at *Scenario*, *Role Sheet*, and *Simulation Mechanics* for the simulation we will build. Additionally, some resources for the *Research Library* should also be found.

Another place to go to examine test simulations is under <http://www.icons.umd.edu/>, under the **Demo Simulation**. Choose one of the countries to join. You can see a simulation in action. This particular topic includes *Messages*, *Conferences*, *Proposals*, and *Resources*. Additionally, one could include *Reports*, and *Actions*. Use the *Help* button to learn more about each of these.

Simulation to Build

The high school environment is a challenging one. In addition to often difficult material and choosing a career or college after high school, students are balancing sports, social, family, and often work responsibilities. Influences, both good and bad, are tugging at them to make decisions which can affect their future. You will be building a simulation to discuss these issues.

What issues you want to discuss are up to you. Examples include, drug use, violence, bullying, teacher assistance, family responsibilities (i.e., need to take care of siblings while parents work, have to work to help family), career information sources, etc. Choose as many or as few as you want.

You then need to choose the groups that will be the subject of the role play. For example, you could use simply administrators, teachers, students, and parents, but there are obviously some important sub-groups within these. For example, students can be jocks, geeks, gang members, “normal”, immigrant, etc. Teachers could be science, math, guidance counselors, etc. Some of these sub-groups may not be important – you decide!!!

What products do you want to get out of the simulation? Should there be a new school policy? How do we stop violence – do we want a community initiative? Brainstorm!!!

Now that you have chosen the issues, groups, and products, you should be able to fill out the *Role Sheet*, and then find *Research Library*.

The below information from the **Help** tab may assist you.

Resources

Resources are an optional component of ICONSnet communities. If your communities include resources, you will see this link in your menu bar. Which resources are available vary according to the type of community you are a member of. Following are the major resources that may be available:

Scenario

The scenario provides background information about the environment in which the simulation will be conducted. This should be the starting point for participant research.

Simulation Rules

The simulation rules provides specific information about how the simulation will work.

Country Resources

The scenario provides background information about the environment in which the simulation will be conducted.

Research Library

The research library is a collection of links assembled by ICONS to help students in preparing for a simulation. By clicking on this link, you will either get access to the full library, or to a smaller, more specialized collection of links put together for your simulation.

Role Sheet

A role sheet provides a participant with specific information about his/her background and interests in the negotiations.

Glossary

The glossary is a list of terms and definitions that are often discussed in ICONS simulations. By clicking on this link, you will either get access to ICONS' full glossary, or to a smaller, more specialized list put together for your simulation.