



## **Kognito Study Finds Virtual Role-Play with Avatars Increases College Students Ability to Prevent Youth Suicide**

*Study conducted by Kognito among 944 students in 35 universities and colleges reveals that completing its new, online, interactive gatekeeper training simulation results in statistically significant gains in the likelihood that students will intervene with a fellow student exhibiting signs of depression and suicidal ideation. The results of the study are available at [www.kognito.com/atrisk/research.html](http://www.kognito.com/atrisk/research.html)*

New York, NY ([PRWEB](#)) January 19, 2011 -- Study conducted among 944 students in 35 universities and colleges reveals that completing Kognito's new, online, interactive gatekeeper training simulation results in statistically significant gains in the likelihood that students will intervene with a fellow student exhibiting signs of depression and suicidal ideation. The results of the study are available at [www.kognito.com/atrisk/research.html](http://www.kognito.com/atrisk/research.html).

### **Key Findings**

The study analyzed the results of surveys taken by students who completed Kognito's At-Risk for University Students online training simulation, versus students from a control group who did not.

The results strongly suggest that At-Risk significantly increases:

1. Students' ability to identify, approach, and refer fellow students exhibiting signs of psychological distress, including depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation
2. Students' confidence in their ability to help a suicidal student
3. The likelihood that students will intervene when face with a fellow student at risk

Results were statistically significant at 0.01 level and consistent across demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, and school year as students.

### **Game-Based Learning Experience**

At-Risk for University Students is an online, interactive training simulation in which users assume the role of a college student and engage in simulated role-play conversations with an emotionally responsive student avatar exhibiting signs of depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation. The virtual student is capable of visually and verbally expressing emotions in reaction to users' decisions during the conversation, effectively replicating real life interactions. In these virtual role-plays, users learn motivational interviewing techniques, such as framing open-ended questions and using reflective listening, to effectively broach the topic of psychological distress, motivate the at-risk student to seek help, and avoid common pitfalls, such as attempting to counsel the student or diagnose the problem. A 2-minute narrated product tour can be viewed [here](#).

"This national study clearly communicates the value of simulations and gaming technology in engaging today's students in assisting fellow students and friends who exhibit signs of psychological distress and thoughts of suicide," said Ron Goldman, CEO of Kognito.

At-Risk for University Students is part of a suite of gatekeeper training simulations developed by Kognito and tailored to the needs of specific groups of learners, including university faculty, high school teachers, families of returning veterans, and emergency department personnel. At-Risk for University Faculty is currently in use



at over 75 institutions nationwide and is listed on the national Best Practices Registry for suicide prevention resources, which is administered by the Suicide Prevention Resource Center and the American Foundation of Suicide Prevention. At-Risk for High School Educators has been adopted by several states including the Texas Department of Health Services and the New York State Department of Mental Health to provide training to more than 70,000 high school educators. A demo of the training for university faculty can be viewed by clicking on "demo" at [www.kognito.com/atrisk](http://www.kognito.com/atrisk).

Launched in September 2010, the At-Risk for University Students has been adopted by several academic institutions including Penn State Altoona. "Learning how to approach an at-risk student and motivate them to seek help can only be achieved via realistic practice. At-Risk provides just that. And, coupled with online availability, I believe it can become a valuable tool in engaging the entire community including faculty, staff, students, and parents as gatekeepers," said Dr. Joy Himmel, Penn State Altoona, Director of Health and Wellness Center.

#### About Kognito

Kognito is an award-winning developer of online role-playing simulations, where users develop interpersonal skills and learn to effectively manage challenging conversations in the areas of health and behavioral health. Simulations are built using Kognito's proprietary Human Interaction Simulation Platform™ which is based on research in social cognition, neuroscience, and motivational interviewing. In these simulations, learners enter virtual environments, engage in practice conversations with emotionally responsive avatars, and receive personalized feedback. Kognito's flagship product line, At-Risk, is successfully used by over 75 academic institutions, and several states and federal agencies to train teachers, students, families of veterans, and health providers to recognize and refer those exhibiting signs of psychological distress, thoughts of suicide, and PTSD. Headquartered in New York City, the company has received numerous prestigious awards including the 2009 Training Product of the Year and the 2007 and 2008 Learning Leader Awards. For more information, visit <http://www.kognito.com>.

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