

A young man with dark hair and glasses is looking down at a laptop screen. He is wearing a dark blue sweater with horizontal stripes and a red and white checkered shirt underneath. The background is a blurred indoor setting with large windows.

ONLINE EDUCATION: MORE THAN MOOCS

A selection of *Inside Higher Ed* articles and essays
December 2013

INSIDE
HIGHER ED

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The education marketplace is changing dramatically, more so than at any time in our or our parents' generation. Powerful economic, technological and political forces are reshaping the educational landscape.

Universities and colleges face significant revenue concerns with declining tax support and limited ability to raise tuition. Yet they face pressure towards growing classroom capacity and increasing student enrollment. Student graduation rates remain a major concern and graduating students are finding it difficult to find suitable jobs with corporations, who are demanding greater and varied skills and competencies. Many students aspiring to attain a college education find it difficult to justify the high costs required to attain a degree.

These challenges require innovative and industrious efforts. Addressing the educational needs of our youth and fulfilling the shifting demands placed by businesses are critical to our future as a leadership economy. Every institution can make use of technology innovations to make improvements within the current educational model. However, advancements in technology do present opportunities to introduce alternative education models to address the demand for greater affordability, faster time to completion and a better alignment towards the job marketplace.

Delivery of online and blended programs, offering instruction based on the flipped classroom approach and providing self-paced education underpinned by competency based learning can help schools diversify their current high touch campus models, offering alternative learning options and value to students, while generating revenues and sustaining operations at institutions.

LoudCloud built its ecosystem of platforms and products to help colleges and universities address these specific challenges. The LoudCloud LMS is a simple, easy to use, course delivery tool. It is also a powerful and flexible management platform.

Our focus on behavioral analytics provides students, faculty and administrators with real-time and on-demand insight into how a student, a class, a program and even the school as a whole is progressing towards meeting teaching, learning and engagement goals.

We understand that one-size-does-**not**-fit-all and since our inception have focused on building technologies and workflows to achieve personalization. Our task-centric design keeps your learners focused on what's most important for their success.

Above all, LoudCloud makes it easy for schools to tie courses and learning assets to desired academic and vocational competencies. This alignment permits faculty, students and businesses to track the specific skills being taught and mastered, and allows students to master additional competencies based on their interests and on what the marketplace currently values.

We know that each student has unique goals, learning styles and needs. Schools seek to differentiate themselves in many ways to meet those needs. The LMS and associated technologies are an extension of a school's campus. Providing a unique and custom experience via the LMS is a powerful way to differentiate a school and its programs.

If your school plans to deliver a CBL program, consider what technology infrastructure is essential towards a successful rollout. The LoudCloud competency based learning system is distinct from the LMS that supports traditional programs and differentiates itself in several important ways, offering the ability to tie competencies to learning assets, organize courses into a set of competencies, track mastery of competencies through a powerful assessment platform, deliver personalized learning paths, support a class of one at scale, and manage collaboration amongst students who are learning at different speeds.

Over the next few years, we expect continued innovation and dramatic change in how education is delivered, consumed and valued. I hope that this collection of articles from *Inside Higher Ed* inspires you to think about education in new and unique ways.

At LoudCloud, we are excited to lend our research, experience and partnership to build powerful education technology products. We invite you to talk to us to learn more about our investments and our exciting vision.

Manoj Kutty
CEO, LoudCloud Systems

Introduction

While pundits and politicians traded predictions about massive open online courses in the last year, online education was doing what it has been doing for more than 15 years: growing.

More than one-third of all college students are taking at least one online course, according to the Babson Survey Research Group's most recent Survey of Online Learning. That's more than 6.7 million students. And those students are taking courses that have been tested by years of experience and that have been reviewed as part of regular accreditation reviews of colleges. Some students are entirely online, while others are traditional students, enrolled at physical campuses, but taking some of their education online.

The hype about MOOCs has overshadowed trends that may well affect far more students and far more institutions:

- States are increasingly relying on online education as a key part of efforts to increase the share of the population that is college-educated.
- Hybrid programs – in which material is delivered in person and online – are gaining in popularity and are becoming the norm for many students.
- Many professors and many institutions are taking elements of MOOCs and applying them to programs that are not open to all or free, but that do award credit.
- Colleges continue to experiment with business models that will help them deliver online education and attract more students.

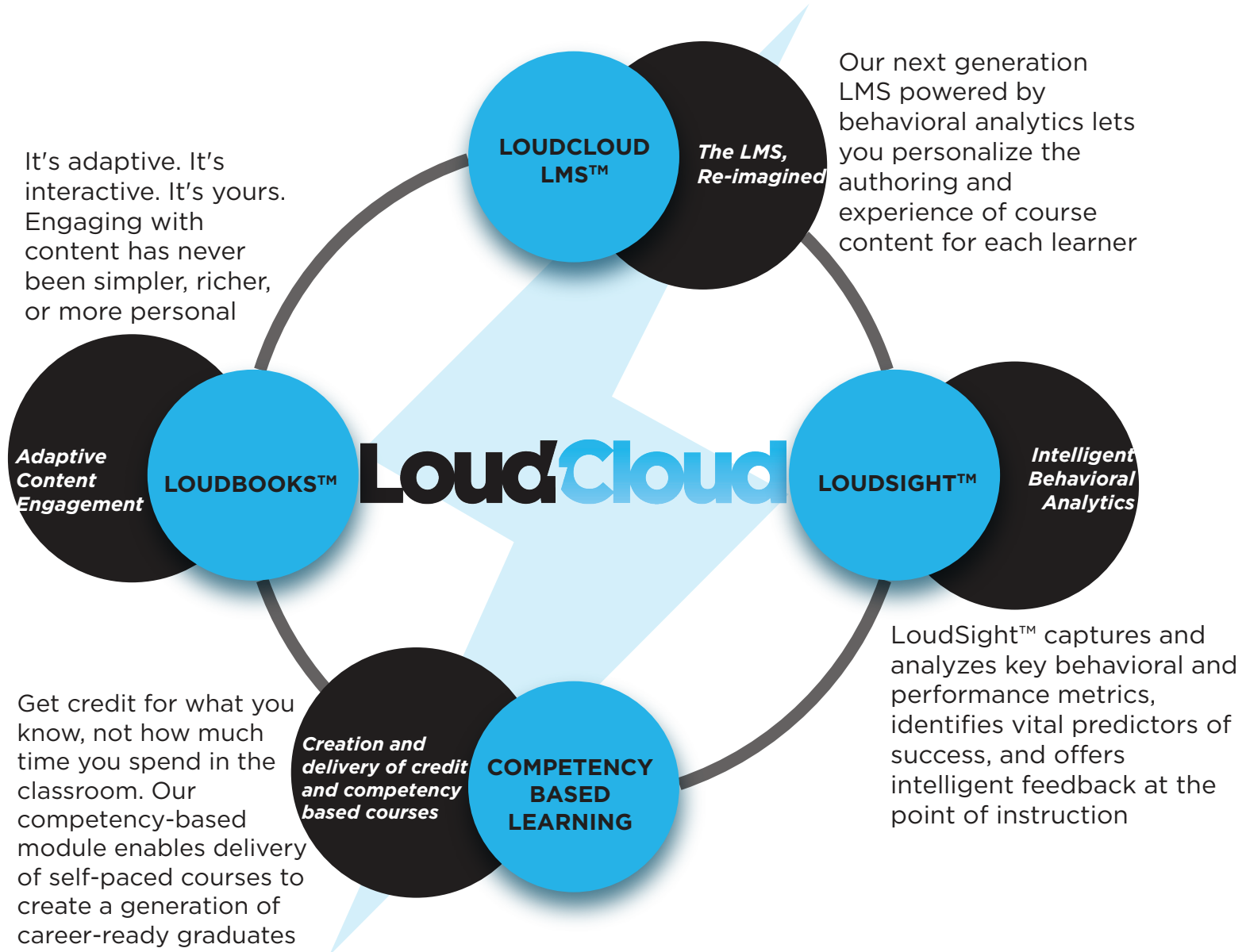
The articles and opinion essays on the pages that follow reflect these and other trends. Such topics appear regularly in *Inside Higher Ed*, where you can find the latest news – as well as relevant essays and blogs – here: www.insidehighered.com/news/focus/technology

We welcome your reactions to this booklet, and your ideas on topics for coverage.

Please send them to editor@insidehighered.com

--The Editors

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News

A selection of articles by *Inside Higher Ed* reporters

Americans' Views of Online Courses

Gallup survey finds majority of adults see online courses as equal to or better than classroom-based courses in several key ways.

By Doug Lederman

A majority of Americans believe online instruction is at least as good as classroom-based courses in terms of providing good value, a format most students can succeed in, and instruction tailored to each individual. But they question the rigor of testing and grading, and whether employers will view such degrees positively, a new survey by Gallup shows.

In a recent survey of more than 1,000 adults aged 18 and older, Gallup asked a series of questions about use and perceptions of fully online courses. (While *Inside Higher Ed* works with Gallup on other surveys, this publication played no role in this survey.)

Five percent of those surveyed said they were currently taking an online

course (the survey did not differentiate between whether it was for formal education or training, or for personal edification), with 18- to 29-year-olds, at 8 percent, likelier than their older peers to say so.

Asked to rate online vs. face-to-face courses on seven factors, touching on the courses' reach and quality, more Americans rated online

Americans' Views of Online Education vs. Traditional Classroom-Based Education

	Online better	The same	Online worse	Net better
Providing a wide range of options for curriculum	33	39	23	+10
Providing good value for the money	33	34	27	+6
Providing a format most students can succeed in	23	42	30	-7
Providing instruction tailored to each individual	23	31	41	-18
Providing high-quality instruction from well qualified instructors	15	37	43	-28
Providing rigorous testing and grading that can be trusted	11	39	45	-34
Providing a degree that will be viewed positively by employers	13	33	49	-36

Oct. 5-6, 2013, GALLUP

courses as worse than as better than traditional courses on five, as seen in the table on previous page. In this particular question, the survey defined online education as “classes conducted entirely or partially over the Internet,” and did not differentiate between courses taken for credit, personal enrichment, or professional development.

But on all but one of the factors -- “providing a degree that will be viewed positively by employers” -- a majority of respondents rated online courses as the same or better.

Still, when asked to rate the “quality of education” provided by four-year colleges and universities, community colleges, and “Internet-based college programs, in which the courses are

conducted entirely online,” survey respondents rated the latter category worse by far. Unlike the earlier question, though, that one focused only on fully digital courses, which is not how most online education is frequently offered -- in many cases by those very same traditional colleges and universities, and blended with traditional ground-based instruction. ■

Flipping Med Ed

Stanford University and the Khan Academy present a road map to change medical education -- and to bring students back to lecture halls.

By Carl Straumsheim

To help medical students progress faster and find their calling in the field, two educators suggest moving content delivery out of the classroom may be the way to bring the students back in.

The plan, featured in the October edition of *Academic Medicine*, comes from Charles G. Prober, senior associate dean of medical education of the Stanford University School of Medicine, and Salman Khan, founder of the Khan Academy.

Khan and Prober present a three-step road map: First, identifying a core curriculum with concepts and lessons that can be taught through the kinds of short, focused video clips pioneered by the Khan Academy; then, changing static and poorly attended lectures into interactive sessions where students can practice that curriculum; and finally, letting students explore

their passion -- from bioengineering to public health -- early on in their medical school careers.

“I think the notion of meeting the learner where they are is really important,” said Prober, noting “the writing is on the wall” about the



flipped classroom model -- assigning recorded lectures and reserving classroom time for hands-on activities -- in K-12 education. “I do believe that’s the future model.”

The partnership stems from a video

shot on a whim in which Prober is heard, in his words, “spewing stuff out about the stuff I know something about,” namely pediatric infectious diseases.

The act of posting abbreviated lectures online is not a groundbreaking idea, nor is it a first for medical education. Sites like MEDtube and UndergroundMed have in recent years sprouted to give lecture-skipping med students more resources to learn the basic competencies needed to pass their introductory courses, but where Stanford and the Khan Academy differ is that they aim to address why students skip class in the first place. As the plan aims to transform medical school, where many experts say that the outstanding, well-educated students are just the cohort most likely to succeed with video delivery.

The partnership is headed by Rishi Desai, who leads the Khan Academy’s medical and science initiatives and spends Tuesdays as a clinical instructor at Stanford.

“Like most med students, I never went to class,” Desai said. “It’s so silly that I spent thousands of dollars

on tuition, and I learned it all myself anyway.”

Before he joined the partnership one year ago, Desai made “wave after wave of videos” in an attempt to catch Khan’s eye. Once hired, he immediately set to work creating videos starring Stanford’s best teachers and researchers.

“We tried that strategy, and it was incredibly hard,” Desai said. “We spent months trying to get faculty to make videos, and on the side, students were coming into this booth that Stanford had set up, and they were making great content.”

In response, Desai flipped the already-flipped model, making students the stars of the videos -- at least in the short term. The Khan Academy has partnered with the Association of American Medical Colleges to produce test prep for the revised Medical College Admission Test, due out in 2015. The resources, set to launch in a few weeks, will feature student-made videos, peer-reviewed by medical professors.

“The big issue now is scalability,” Desai said. “To cover medicine, you probably need on the order of thousands of videos.”

Which is where Khan and Prober’s roadmap fits in. For the last two years, Stanford has offered an applied

biochemistry course that uses the flipped classroom model. The course has so far been successful at raising student participation and engagement.

“The course went from being mostly rated as poor to being mostly rated from good to excellent,” Prober said. “Attendance at lectures went from 20 percent to about over 90 percent in the optional interactive session. It was really pretty dramatic.”

Tina Cowan, who teaches the course this fall, said the poor evaluations from when the course featured traditional lectures meant student opinion had nowhere to go than up. “Flipping is hard,” she said. “It’s more work to flip than to pull the lecture that you used last year out of the drawer.”

Still, four in five students say they prefer the new format, although with an important caveat: The instructional videos and interactive sessions need to be done well. Desai warned that may be a sign their judgment is colored by the novelty of the new format.

“When you’re a med student, and you’ve seen awful, awful lectures day in and day out -- on a scale from 1 to 10, when you’re used to every lecture being a 1 or a 2 -- if someone offers you a 4, you’re going to be ecstatic,” Desai said. “These lectures, even as a good as they are, I sincerely believe they can be 100 times better.”

That sort of improvement can only come if instructors accept their role in the classroom will change, Desai and Prober said. That does not mean their role will become any less important, however.

“Essentially, the idea is that it’s quite the opposite,” Desai said. In one example, he said data gathered from how students interact with the course materials can be used to produce powerful analytics. In turn, instructors can tailor the in-person part of the course to address specific issues without waiting for students to raise their hands. “They no longer have to fly blind,” he said.

If the model proves successful at changing how student’s behavior, Prober suggested it could be expanded to cover continuing education for practicing physicians. Desai, meanwhile, said he can imagine doctors prescribing patients videos explaining their illnesses along with their pills.

For now, the experiment continues its early stages of one flipped classroom and MCAT test prep resources. “If this is the correct model, the first part is building that core body of knowledge. That’s no small trick,” Prober said. “It’s a movement that takes time, attention -- and we’re going to stumble.” ■

“Flipping is hard. It’s more work to flip than to pull the lecture that you used last year out of the drawer.”

Back to 2U

After months on the fence, Wake Forest joins 2U's Semester Online consortium as its fall pilot gets under way. Initial student interest has been tepid.

By Carl Straumsheim

The online course pool Semester Online is growing again after Wake Forest University joined the ed-tech company 2U's consortium in September 2013. With a fall pilot that attracted only 100 students and six course-providing universities, some participating institutions are waiting for results before they commit more resources to the effort.

Announced last year, Semester Online intends to give students the flexibility to keep up with their studies while traveling abroad, working an internship or taking on some other responsibility that would prevent them from attending class. Alternatively, as the pool of courses grows, students can enroll in courses not offered at their university. The fall pilot began last month, giving students access to courses that resemble a cross between traditional classrooms and massive open online courses: While students are free to access course materials on their own time, their class also "meets" regularly for live video conferences. 2U sets the cost parameters per course, which generally do not offer any significant savings over face-to-face courses.

The decision to join the Semester Online effort often has followed divisive

debates on campuses between faculty members skeptical of its ability to improve academic outcomes and those eager to experiment. Wake Forest was no exception, said Carole Browne, professor of biology.

"There are people who feel that we



shouldn't be doing online education just because other people are doing online education," Browne said.

After a series of forums held in 2012, Wake Forest's faculty gave the administration permission to sign a non-binding memorandum of understanding with 2U. The university then agreed to lend its name to Semester Online's public launch, even though it would remain on the fence for months before officially joining the consortium two weeks ago.

During the months leading up to that decision, Wake Forest worked to establish exactly what Semester Online was, but a significant part of winning over the faculty involved communicating what the effort wasn't.

"It was clear that Semester Online had to be closer to Wake Forest than

MOOC-land," said Rogan Kersh, provost of the university. "We were not going to be MOOC U."

A Faculty Decision

Semester Online's launch has not been without setbacks. Three institutions backed out this spring, including Duke University, where faculty members narrowly voted to leave the consortium. The move was seen as a rebuke against Duke's administration for keeping faculty in the dark, although some think that lingering faculty resentment over Duke's activities in China led to the distrust that was evident in faculty deliberations.

In comparison, Adam Friedman, associate professor of social science education at Wake Forest, described the university's approach as one defined by "transparency [and] openness." Friedman headed the committee on online education tasked with researching Semester Online and recommending a course of action to the faculty.

"My general rule for technology as an educator is: Will the technology allow you to do something that you wouldn't be able to do otherwise?" Friedman said. "That was the bottom line."

As part of the research, Browne, the biology professor, agreed to take a 2U course over the summer. A newcomer to online education, Browne said the experience she gained -- and then shared with the rest of the faculty -- could change her teaching altogether.

"If you take the appropriate measures to get to know your

students before going into the online course, you can establish a rapport with them,” Browne said. “I think that helped reassure people that this Semester Online experience was not a MOOC.”

Instead of “massive” and “open,” 2U describes the courses as “small” and “rigorous.” Since the courses substitute classroom time for video conferencing, they enroll tens -- not tens of thousands -- of students.

Faculty members sought to reassure themselves that the Semester Online courses would not supplant traditional face-to-face courses over time, Browne said. A policy specific to the university means students -- unless studying abroad -- will not be able to enroll in Semester Online courses taught by their own professors.

Another important selling point was the lack of coercion. Browne volunteered -- as will any professor who wishes to create a Semester Online course.

“No one is going to be forced into doing this,” said Friedman. “People would know what they’re getting into.”

Friedman credited Browne’s testimonial for reassuring faculty members that the courses wouldn’t become too time-consuming or unwieldy. Instead of doomsday prophecies, Friedman said the culminating discussions about Semester Online were dominated by curiosity.

When faculty members cast their ballots two weeks ago, the vote was much less polarized than at other institutions. Those voting in

favor of joining the Semester Online consortium outnumbered those voting against by about a two-to-one margin. Had the vote been any closer, Kersh said administrators would have tabled the decision to seek more feedback.

“This was a faculty decision,” Kersh said. “We’ll give it a whirl and see where it goes. We not only will learn about the Semester Online program; we’ll learn more about what it means to put some subset of Wake Forest’s education online in a way that will radiate back through our institution.”

The faculty members who opposed joining the consortium were defined

“No one is going to be forced into doing this. People would know what they’re getting into.”

more by their uncertainty than their outrage. “There weren’t really people standing up saying, ‘No, no no! We shouldn’t do this!’” one professor said.

Without any data from other schools participating in Semester Online, the professor, who spoke on a condition of anonymity, said some faculty members felt they were unprepared to decide. Others were hesitant to endorse any program that hopes to revolutionize higher education during a time when so many ed-tech companies promise just that.

“It’s going to take a while for us to

understand what the ramifications are,” the professor said. “We just don’t know what the future is going to bring. These decisions are hard enough to make in times when things are stable.”

Beyond the Pilot

This fall, Semester Online’s scope is limited. About 100 students are taking the courses as part of the pilot, with class sizes ranging from the single digits to about 30. Since 2U takes a percentage of what students pay to enroll in the courses, the low enrollment has raised questions about Semester Online’s ability to sustain itself.

Enrollment was hurt by cases like Washington University in St. Louis, where students were unable to sign up for Semester Online courses until July -- about three months after fall registration.

“Our students typically register in April, and we at that point did not have all our ducks in a row,” said Roddy Roediger, professor of psychology. “We didn’t know what courses would be offered.”

When registration opened, students didn’t flock to Emory University’s “Baseball and American Culture” or Boston College’s “How to Rule the World,” but to a course taught by a popular professor at the university. The course is capped at 100 students, which meant students could take the Semester Online version to escape the waitlist.

“I was kind of surprised that some of the courses that looked so interesting to me didn’t do better,” Roediger said. “It will be curious to see what

happens in the future. I really think we got to students after they picked their courses. I think we just got to them too late.”

Enrollment figures don't have to stray far from their goals before Semester Online becomes a losing venture for participating institutions. Kersh said that Wake Forest's projections show it will break even or make a slight profit by the end of its two-year engagement with the consortium. The profit is earmarked for on-campus instruction, Kersh said.

“I don't think anybody at Wake Forest imagines that this is first and foremost... a moneymaking venture,” Kersh said. “We see it as an opportunity to learn how this tool can supplement what we can do.”

Since the fall pilot is less than one month old, 2U and university officials say it is too early to gauge the effort's success.

“A pilot is a pilot,” said Chance Patterson, senior vice president of communications for 2U.

Semester Online is set to announce its spring course lineup next week, and officials earlier this year confirmed they were engaged in talks with about 20 universities to increase both the number of students and the range of courses in the pool. In addition to Wake Forest, Semester Online's partners include Boston College, Brandeis University, Emory University, Northwestern University, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the University of Notre Dame, and

Washington University. Students at a number of other affiliated universities can take the courses, but their institutions do not supply Semester Online courses of their own.

Wake Forest's first and initially sole contribution to the course pool will be an introductory bioethics course taught by Browne that is set to debut next spring. The university expects to produce a total of six to eight courses in the future, according to an FAQ on its website.

“I think that right now we didn't want to go overboard and go off the high dive into online higher education,” Browne said. “We want to wade into the water, make sure we do it right, and feel our way toward what's going to be right for our students.” ■



Don't Call It a MOOC

Guided by student performance results, two psychology professors at the U. of Texas at Austin take their introductory course online in what they think is the first ever “SMOC.”

By Carl Straumsheim

Two University of Texas at Austin psychology professors will take the stage Thursday night for the fall semester's first session of Introduction to Psychology. Their audience will consist of a production crew and their equipment. In their years of working together, the professors' research has shown their students benefit from computer-based learning to the point where they don't even need to be

physically present in the classroom.

Just don't call it a MOOC. The university styles the class as the world's first synchronous massive online course, or SMOC (pronounced “smock”), where the professors broadcast their lectures live to the about 1,500 students enrolled.

“I think we were influenced predominantly by this mix of Jon Stewart and ‘The View’ or Jay Leno,”

said James W. Pennebaker, chair of the department of psychology at UT-Austin.

The course is the result of almost a decade of research into how students learn. After teaching separate 500-student sections of the introductory course, Pennebaker and fellow psychology professor Samuel Gosling decided to schedule the sections back-to-back. The professors then began experimenting with adaptive learning, requiring students to bring a laptop to class so they could take multiple-choice tests and receive instant feedback. Gosling and Pennebaker then built group chats that randomly paired five or six students together for in-class discussions. Last year, they moved

one of the two sections of the course online. And with this change, the class will be taught exclusively online.

“More and more, we have been integrating a sort of research element,” Gosling said. “Everything the students do, we learn about, and we learn about it so we can find out what works. They’re guinea pigs and we’re guinea pigs.”

As more and more of the coursework continued to shift toward digital, the data showed a clear trend: Not only were students in the online section performing the equivalent of half a letter grade better than those physically in attendance, but taking the class online also slashed the achievement gap between upper, middle and lower-middle class students in half, from about one letter grade to less than half of a letter grade.

“We are changing the way students are approaching the class and the way they study,” Pennebaker said.

Anyone can enroll in the course -- as long as they can foot the \$550 registration fee and can make themselves available at 6 p.m. central standard time on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Registration is handled online at a separate site, and students who finish the course earn three transferable credit hours. In comparison, full-time resident students pay \$2,059 (out-of-state students pay \$7,137) for three credit

hours in the College of Liberal Arts, but there is no out-of-state premium charged for the SMOC.

Goslin and Pennebaker said they have set an upper limit of 10,000 students, but managing a course of this size “shakes a big bureaucracy to its knees,” Pennebaker said. Between lecturers, audiovisual professionals, teacher’s assistants, online mentors



Sam Gosling and James Pennebaker, professors at the University of Texas at Austin, are teaching a section of PSY 301 online this fall.

and programmers, the number of people associated with teaching one class has ballooned to more than 125.

“No human can do more than one of these a year,” Pennebaker said. “It has been the hardest I’ve ever worked in my entire life.”

In that sense, running the course as a traditional MOOC would be more efficient, but Gosling said, “I think it wouldn’t be this class.” As the two

professors prepared for what Gosling called “the largest leap we’ve taken,” they agreed to sacrifice some of that efficiency to maintain some elements of a classroom setting.

“The cons of a MOOC is that you take away a sense of intimacy, a sense of community, a sense of a simultaneous, synchronous experience,” Gosling said.

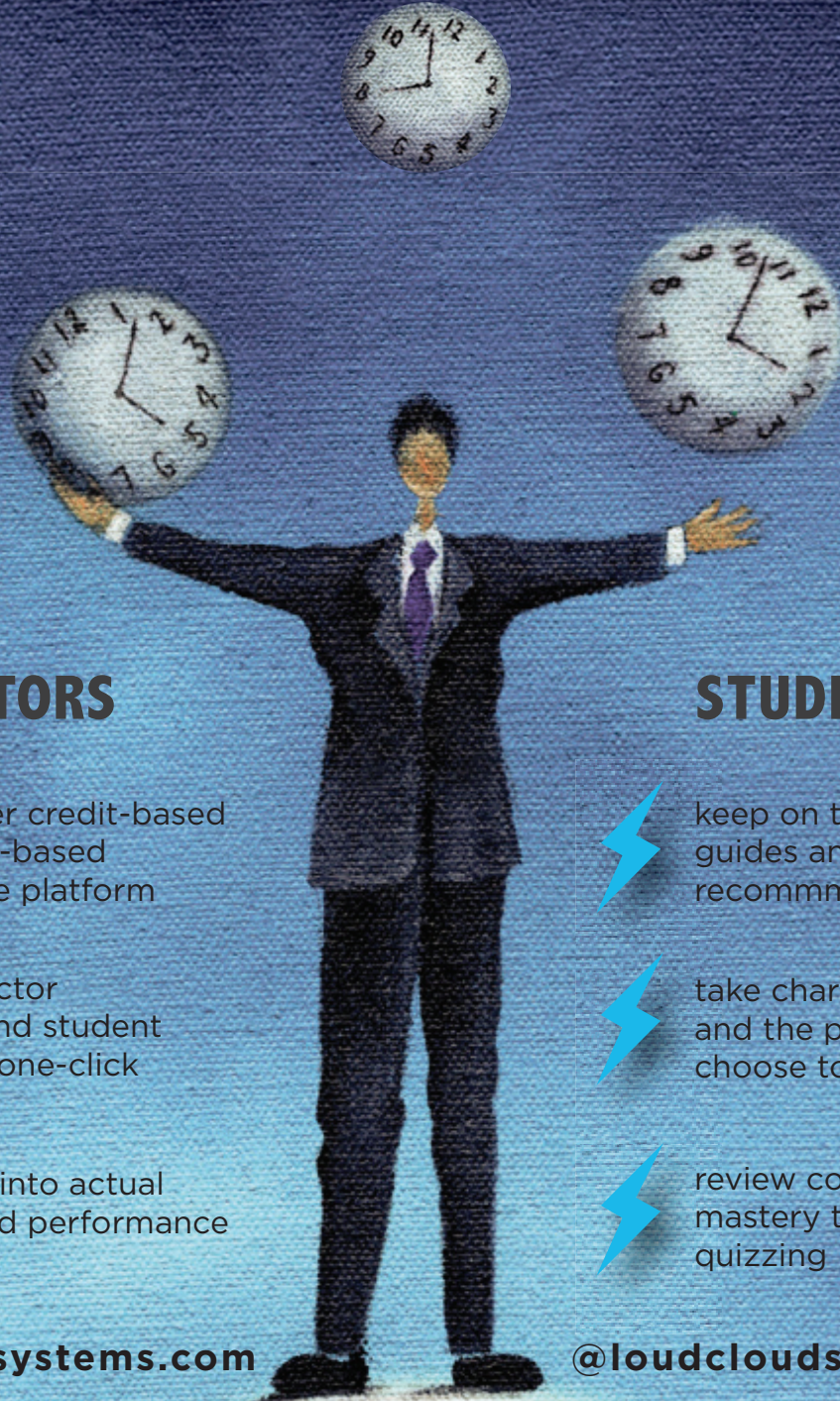
To ensure that students don’t treat the class as a static broadcast, the class will be split into smaller pods monitored by former students, who essentially work as online TAs. The pods will remain static throughout the semester, giving students a core group of classmates to chat with during the lectures. And should a student be confused about the content of a lecture, Pennebaker said, “a blue light comes on and we’ll say, ‘We have a question out there in T.V. land.’”

By moving the entire course online, the professors will be able to collect even more of the kind of data that led them to that decision in the first place. Gosling described the process as “reframing what teaching is -- reframing it and integrating the research.”

“That’s one thing that I’m actually most excited about,” Pennebaker said. “This project could never have been built here at the university without heavy research behind it.” ■

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Economics of Online Scale

Florida and New York try to expand their online course catalogs while consolidating authority.

By Ry Rivard

The State University of New York, a system of 64 campuses, and Florida's dozen-member university system are seeking to offer new online degree programs by January while consolidating authority and avoiding redundant efforts by different campuses.

In New York, this means the system office is taking the reins. In Florida, it means the University of Florida is likely to lead a new online effort on behalf of the state system and gain thousands of new students in the process.

While the two approaches are a bit different, officials in both states seem to realize online education programs need to be pruned to properly grow.

SUNY Chancellor Nancy Zimpher wants to consolidate online course offerings after nearly 20 years of institutional independence.

"I think the problems the country is trying to solve simply cannot be solved one institution at a time," Zimpher said in a recent interview.

Florida's online education offerings are also dispersed. Ten of the state system's 12 universities offer online courses. That's nearly 390 degree programs. Each university has its own online strategy, online education marketing efforts and staff dedicated to designing, teaching and hosting online courses.

The state legislature is now looking to expand the system's online presence while also consolidating authority for future efforts.

New York

SUNY began its online efforts in 1994 at Empire State College. Now, there are 150 online degree programs



Nancy L. Zimpher

scattered across all its campuses. SUNY's extensive offerings are, as it has said in documents related to its new effort, "fragmented" – the source of "countless unexplored opportunities for collaboration, economies of scale and innovation."

Zimpher ultimately wants to enroll 100,000 new online students in the next several years while also adding new degree programs to train New Yorkers for industries with job openings. To reduce costs to students, she is also trying to speed degree completion

times in online degrees to three years.

The chancellor said the whole online effort will target adults.

"We have all these adults who have some education but not enough," she said. "We're really trying to grow a major enrollment in an underserved population."

SUNY is conscious of expanding its efforts at a time when higher education has fallen down the list of national funding priorities.

"We definitely need something that higher ed usually doesn't do, and that's called a business plan," Zimpher said.

SUNY already allows for students to easily transfer online credits. That's one thing. Now it is looking to consolidate offerings. That means multiple campuses won't each offer their own computer science degrees, for instance. Instead, several campuses might offer a concentration within that degree – and different campuses would take turns offering the core online courses – so faculty can focus on a specialty, said SUNY associate provost Carey Hatch.

SUNY's online rejiggering means the system will "cut down on administrative costs and put that into academic [programs]," Hatch said. "It's not going to take people's jobs away but it might change some of them," he said.

A spokesman for the union that represents SUNY academics and instructors said the union had not been consulted about the push.

"SUNY hasn't brought us into the conversation, hasn't consulted us,"

said Don Feldstein, spokesman for United University Professions, which represents about 32,000 SUNY employees.

SUNY spokesman David Doyle said the system had consulted with faculty by appointing some of them to a task force and by talking to faculty through the “appropriate governance channels,” such as the faculty senate.

Florida

Florida is taking a different route. Lawmakers there are looking to put a single university – likely UF – in charge of an online push instead of trying to consolidate efforts in the chancellor’s office.

Some lawmakers are looking to create a go-to “high-quality” online university in the state by the beginning of next year.

Last year, the state hired Parthenon Group to draw up plans to expand the state’s online education programs. The consultants came back with four options for managing the expansion: let each university continue to work independently, make them work together, create a new online-only institution or put an existing university in charge of the online expansion.

Lawmakers appear to be settling on a plan that would put UF at the head of an effort to create a new arm of the state’s university system. Graduates would get a UF degree.

Parthenon said there were three potential drawbacks to such a plan. In particular, there could “limited” participation by other institutions, stifled innovation and a contentious political tug of war at the outset over

who gets what.

Florida Provost Joseph Glover said there are still several weeks before lawmakers are expected to finish their work. But if the bill stays relatively unchanged and becomes law, the university would have to get ready to offer two new undergraduate degree programs by January 2014 and work to offer four more in the next year.

“If this passes in the legislature, we will put the pedal to the metal in May,” Glover said.

The extent of the Parthenon-predicted tug of war is unclear.

Florida State University’s president, Eric J. Barron, said his university is “pleased” with the bill because it means the state is beginning to invest in “preeminence and in online education.” He said he thinks his university and UF can work together.

“We believe the investment at the University of Florida for online education will complement the efforts at each of the universities in our state system,” Barron said through a Florida State spokesman on Tuesday. “Designed to incubate innovation, the UF program should enable other programs in the state to advance their online programs more efficiently and effectively.”

Glover suggested giving UF the lead would not stifle other universities’ online efforts.

“I don’t see us as necessarily



Eric Barron

crowding out every other university from that field,” he said.

MOOCs

In addition to the expansion of its campus-based online offerings, SUNY is looking to grant credits to students who take massive open online courses, Zimpher said.

SUNY still needs to come up with some way to make sure the courses are of good quality. “We’ll need an auditing system for the MOOCs,” Zimpher said. “[We] can’t just take any MOOCs.”

Zimpher said SUNY could potentially allow up to a third of the credits for certain SUNY degree programs to come from outside institutions, including MOOCs.

Being able to bring in credits from courses taught by professors at more elite institutions – Stanford University or Duke University – could help improve student perception of a SUNY education to being much more than a “degree of convenience,” the chancellor said.

An aide to the chancellor said the system’s “main discussion partner” at this point is Coursera, a Silicon Valley-

based company that provides MOOCs from 62 mostly elite universities across the world.

Glover is unsure whether Florida will try to grant credit to students for MOOCs.

“This is one of the frontier questions that has not been resolved yet,” he said.

Though UF has partnered with Coursera to offer free online classes for no credit, Glover said offering credit for such a class is “much more complicated.”

“Once you enroll students in courses for credit, they are enrolled in your university and there are very different accreditation requirements,” Glover said.

New software

SUNY’s consolidation also means changing the very technology its scores of universities use to offer online classes.

Right now, different campuses use different software platforms to offer online classes to students.

To allow students to easily take classes from any campus across the system, all the universities will have to eventually use the same software. That could be an expensive proposition.

In the meantime, the chancellor is looking for “Band-Aid” software to allow different campuses’ systems to talk to each other.

“Heretofore, a campus could say, ‘You know what, we really like

Moodle – we’re doing it,’ ” Zimpher said, referring to one online learning software package that Empire State officials preferred.

SUNY is eventually likely to adopt Blackboard, which is already used at 19 institutions, across its whole system.

Hatch said while nobody disagrees about what SUNY is trying to accomplish, there has been some rumbling on different campuses about making the switch from one platform to another.

“People are kind of hunkering down a little bit in terms of the technology -- fact of the matter is, that’s kind of irrelevant over the course of time,” he said. ■



Feminist Anti-MOOC

Can education be free and online and yet reject some of the choices made by proponents of massive open online courses?

By Scott Jaschik

At first glance, “Feminism and Technology” sounds like another massive open online course. The course will involve video components, and will be available online to anyone, with no charge. There are paths to credit, and it’s fine for students to take the course without seeking credit. An international student body is expected.

But don’t look for this course in any MOOC catalog. “Feminism and Technology” is trying to take a few MOOC elements, but change them

in ways consistent with feminist pedagogy to create a distributed open collaborative course or DOCC (pronounced “dock”).

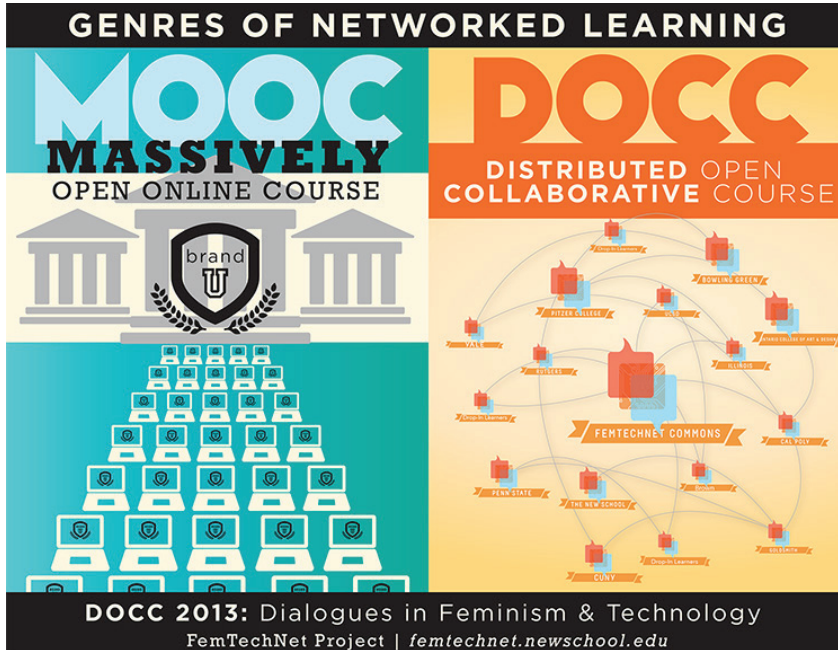
The DOCC aims to challenge MOOC thinking about the role of the instructor, about the role of money, about hierarchy, about the value of “massive,” and many other things. The first DOCC will be offered for credit at 17 colleges in fall 2013, as well in a more MOOC-style approach in which videos and materials are available

online for anyone.

“We’re not saying bad bad MOOCs, but we’re asking how else we might innovate,” said Anne Balsamo, co-facilitator of the DOCC and dean of the School of Media Studies at the New School.

“A DOCC is different from a MOOC in that it doesn’t deliver a centralized singular syllabus to all the participants. Rather it organizes around a central topic,” Balsamo said. “It recognizes that, based on deep feminist pedagogical commitments, expertise is distributed throughout all the participants in a learning activity,” and does not just reside with one or two individuals.

So each week, a video presentation -- typically a discussion with one, two or three thinkers about feminism



She hopes that those who are not enrolled at one of the participating colleges may use the various syllabuses that will be posted to add to their experience beyond the videos -- but she's also fine if they just watch the videos.

With this approach, there may be common works and common lessons, but there is no sense of a single best way to learn the subject, she said.

Another common element in the courses will be participation in "Storming Wikipedia," in which students will be given lists of women who have played key roles in science and technology, and will study where they are represented (or ignored) in Wikipedia, and draft entries or entry additions to increase the representation of women in discussions of technology.

By using the faculty positions and institutions of participating instructors, Balsamo said, there has been no need to raise large sums of money or seek out corporate sponsors. To pay for the costs of video production, the organizers received \$10,000 grants from the Pembroke Center at Brown University and from the New School. The project also received \$7,000 in early support from Pitzer College.

The question organizers asked, she said, was "what if we put aside the most hand-wringing parts of the MOOC discussion -- revenue and massive." By thinking in this way, the organizers have decided not to worry about revenue streams or losing touch with students as individuals, she said. Yet they will be producing video

and technology -- will set a theme for the week. The first week's video will feature Balsamo in a discussion with Judy Wajcman, a sociologist at the London School of Economics and Political Science whose 1991 book *Feminism Confronts Technology* led many feminist thinkers to focus more on technology issues. That video is designed to provide a historic overview. Subsequent weeks will feature discussions about more focused topics -- feminism, technology and labor one week; feminism, technology and sexuality another, and so forth.

At participating colleges, professors will base their own courses on each weekly theme, sharing course materials and assignments, but customizing them for their own students. The courses will vary, as some are undergraduate and some

are graduate, and the institutions vary widely by mission and geography -- including institutions in Australia, Britain, Canada and the United States. The class sizes will be between 15 and 30 students each, decidedly non-massive. "There is another pedagogical commitment here," Balsamo said. "Who you learn with is as important as what you learn. Learning is a relationship, not just something that can be measured by outcomes or formal metrics."

The courses at participating colleges will be offered for credit. Balsamo said she'll meet with her students twice a week for 90 minutes a class, and they will have readings and assignments based on the theme of the week, and will be formally graded.

Other instructors will have their own assignments and grading systems.

content that will be available to anyone and that could, over time, reach large numbers of students. And they believe this approach could be used for other courses as well.

Alexandra Juhasz, a professor of media studies at Pitzer who is the other co-facilitator of the DOCC, said via e-mail that “our DOCC is built to value situated experience and emphasis, and to share authority and responsibility rather than the MOOC’s top-down, one size fits all, sometimes elitist approach. Attention to discrete

learners, teachers, and institutions is valued over simple numbers of participants.

While these structures mirror my own feminist values and approaches, I imagine that most educators will be intrigued by this more democratic and responsive model for technology enhanced learning.”

Among the forms of MOOC hype that Balsamo said she hoped the DOCC would combat is the idea that massive online courses allow some “best” professor to interact with

students everywhere, so that all can learn from the superstar.

It’s not that there aren’t very talented professors out there, she said, but the superstar emphasis is wrong (“Is there really a ‘best’?” she asks) and doesn’t encourage group learning.

“The idea of the one best talking head, the best expert in the world, that couldn’t be more patriarchal,” Balsamo said.

She added: “That displays a hubris that is unthinkable from a feminist perspective.” ■



Skiping Campus

Survey suggests growing segment of online degree-seekers prefer online to on campus.

By Ry Rivard

Students seeking online degrees might soon resemble traditional on-campus students, according to a new survey sponsored by two companies involved in online education consulting.

The survey, in its second year, continues to show the typical student seeking a degree or certification online is a married middle-aged white woman, but the new results suggest the overall population of online learners is beginning to include more students who are of traditional college age, but not going to a college campus. The survey is only of students who have taken, are taking or plan to take courses from an online program.

“It’s obvious that more and more

people from traditional college-age populations are electing to do their college online -- they are just skipping the campus,” said David Clinefelter, a co-author of the study and the chief academic officer at the Learning House, Inc., which advises colleges on online education ventures.

Clinefelter and co-author Carol Aslanian, a senior vice president of market research at Education Dynamics, said they would like to see 2014’s survey before they can verify that the moves in this year’s research are a trend rather than an anomaly since their 2012 survey.

About a third of America’s 21 million college students are enrolled in at least one online class, including about

three million students who are thought to be enrolled in fully online programs. The survey tries to get a sense of who those three million students are and what they are up to.

The survey was paid for by the two companies. Resolution Research of Denver conducted the survey of 1,500 respondents who were recently enrolled, are currently enrolled, or planned to enroll in a fully online undergraduate or graduate degree, certificate, or licensure program. The respondents were drawn from a market research panel of consumers invited by e-mail to participate in an online survey about online education. The survey reports it has a 3 percent margin of error.

About a third of the students surveyed were between 18 and 24 years old, up from a quarter of the students last year. The sample was also “more male and more Caucasian.”

Aslanian said early online programs were not geared to younger students.

“I don’t think the for-profits that really opened the doors to online education 10 years ago were thinking of high schools,” she said, referring to their target audience.

Now, not-for-profit colleges are teaching a significant majority of online students.

“About two-thirds of online students attend not-for-profit institutions, and we predict that percentage will increase as more not-for-profit institutions begin to offer online programs,” the study said.

The survey also found that nearly a third of students who took online classes would not have taken the same classes on a campus: 28 percent said they definitely would not have gone on campus to take the courses, while only 17 percent said they definitely would have gone to a campus to take the courses. The rest of the students fell somewhere in between.

The authors used this finding to issue a warning.

“College and university leaders often worry that if they offer online programs, enrollments in their classroom programs will decline,” the report said. “This may be true but if they offer the program online, they will retain those students and gain additional ones. By only offering classroom or hybrid programs, they miss a portion of potential students who will not consider classroom or hybrid programs and won’t attend if the program is unavailable online.”

And, while the promise of higher ed is to eliminate the barriers of distance and time, about 70 percent of students turn to online programs based at colleges within 100 miles of their home. The finding that suggests well-regarded institutions with a good online presence can ward off homogenous players.

Aslanian said the victory of regionalism could run into problems if other distance education providers can significantly undercut local prices.

“I think the only thing that stands in the way is pricing,” she said. “I think students would go afar for pricing.”

Some – but not most – students said they received tangible results from their online education endeavors. The survey showed 44 percent of respondents who had already completed their online program had received either a new job or a promotion. Students also largely reported a positive experience with online education.

“I was pleasantly surprised by a high percentage of students who said it was definitely worth my time and money,” Clinefelter said.

Respondents had a favorable view of massive open online courses, but few had actually taken a MOOC. ■

The MOOC-Averse Technology U.

Carnegie Mellon doesn’t want to give its courses away. It does want to promote new forms of instruction -- but only if they have business models.

By Ry Rivard

While other universities move quickly to offer courses online for free, Carnegie Mellon University is instead starting for-profit efforts designed to capture segments of the education market.

Provost Mark Kamlet said the

university is looking for a “financially sustainable” way to expand its reach. So far, that means a handful of spinoffs with a variety of products aimed at workforce development and online education.

One subsidiary helps other

companies improve business practices. Another is helping Mexico lure outsourced software jobs. A recently formed subsidiary hopes to help top-tier research institutions offer credit-worthy online courses.

At the same time, Carnegie Mellon is shying away from massive open online courses, or MOOCs, the all-comers craze sweeping through higher education circles.

Two top MOOC providers – Coursera, a Silicon Valley company with 62 university members, and edX, a nonprofit started by Harvard University



Mark Kamlet

and Massachusetts Institute of Technology – are both expanding but also still looking for ways to generate revenue. Among universities with strong programs in technology and entrepreneurial mindsets -- a group that would decidedly include Carnegie Mellon -- administrators are rushing to be sure their institutions aren't left behind by the MOOC bandwagon.

Kamlet said Carnegie Mellon is working on an approach that encourages financially solvent business plans from the get-go.

"To be honest, I think there are some challenges – edX and Coursera would be the first to admit that they are going to see how things go over time in terms of a business model," Kamlet said.

A new Carnegie Mellon subsidiary, Acatar, is aiming to help universities move courses from the classroom to the web -- but not for free. It costs the company "north of \$150,000" to customize a course for the web, said company CEO Matthew Cooper. Acatar would then seek to recoup that upfront cost through revenue sharing with universities. Kamlet, who is the

company's non-executive chairman, and Cooper said Acatar customers will be paying for an online class they can use to offer highly interactive courses for credits. Carnegie Mellon will begin using the software to offer some courses this fall.

The company's tagline is "Uncompromising Online Education" -- a perhaps less-than-subtle contrast to MOOCs that have been put together quickly for the masses.

"There is no dilution of the rigor," Cooper said. "There is no asterisk behind the courses."

Still, the company will have to set itself apart in a crowded space. Acatar comes from a tradition of online course "enablers" like Bisk, Deltak, Academic Partnerships, 2U (formerly 2tor) and Pearson, which recently bought Embanet/Compass, another major player in the online course world. Some of them have prestigious clients of their own.

Cooper said the company is in serious discussions with another university, which he did not name. Asked if the company could show a

demo of the software, Cooper said the company is not currently making its interface available to the public.

Kamlet said Acatar will offer an experience that will "blur the distinction" between learning in the classroom and learning behind a computer screen.

Kamlet said he doesn't have a problem with MOOCs, but he said the current experience is based on "very old technology" or, in some cases, "just a variance of YouTube."

"It's been around since TV came around, where people would have programs on public television where you would learn to paint sunsets and stuff," Kamlet said.

Carnegie Mellon's faculty leaders are also wary of MOOCs, said Anthony Rollett, a former faculty senate chairman.

"We are skeptical that MOOCs as commonly presented do anything more than provide a showcase (or, at best, outreach) for whichever university is offering them," Rollett said in an e-mail. "Another way to say it is that you have to measure what learning is taking place, not just student satisfaction. Concerning the latter, it's interesting to me that one common measure of quality of an institution is student retention. For some reason, this measure is not being applied to MOOCs."

Hundreds of thousands of students have signed up for free MOOCs, and data suggest the percentage who finish some courses is in the single digits.

“Our interest really hasn’t been on just scaling the lecture, but focus on where the learning has been and scaling the learning.”

‘Our business’

Kamlet said Carnegie Mellon is trying to provide “high quality at a very good price” through its affiliates, including for-profits.

“One of the reasons that we wanted to do them within Carnegie Mellon is we sort of view it as the business of our business,” Kamlet said. “That’s sort of what we do, and we think these things have a lot to offer the world – they are going to have a big impact in workforce [training].”

One university subsidiary, iCarnegie, is helping open training centers throughout Mexico so the country can become a successful destination for technology outsourcing. Kamlet said Mexico has made it a “pretty major priority” to become, like India, a top destination for technology work. The subsidiary is also working on a new campus in Russia, he said.

Another subsidiary is Clearmodel, the home of Carnegie Mellon’s CMMI Institute, which helps companies improve their business practices using a technique developed at the university in the 1980s.

Some of the efforts overlap. For instance, Acatar will use software developed by Panopto, a Carnegie Mellon spinoff that has software to capture and manage video

presentations. Video is a key part of most online classes.

Other efforts at Carnegie Mellon affiliates do not overlap. The Open Learning Initiative, or OLI, is a grant-funded nonprofit that works to create model undergraduate courses for adoption across the country.

The nonprofit is also a pioneer in online learning and offers 18 computer-guided courses on its website. It and Acatar share no personnel.

Kamlet said each effort has its own niche. “Every day I come into the office and ask myself that, ‘What on earth is all this stuff?’” he said. “[Acatar] actually is different between the OLI, which we are very supportive of, and these other entities.”

Carnegie Mellon has long avoided simply offering its course material free of charge to the public, though it does currently offer some lecture material on iTunes U.

In 2001, representatives from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation came to Pittsburgh to meet with Carnegie Mellon officials to talk about a project similar to MIT’s OpenCourseWare project. Norman Bier, the current associate director of the learning initiative, said university officials told the foundation representatives they were not

interested in MIT’s approach.

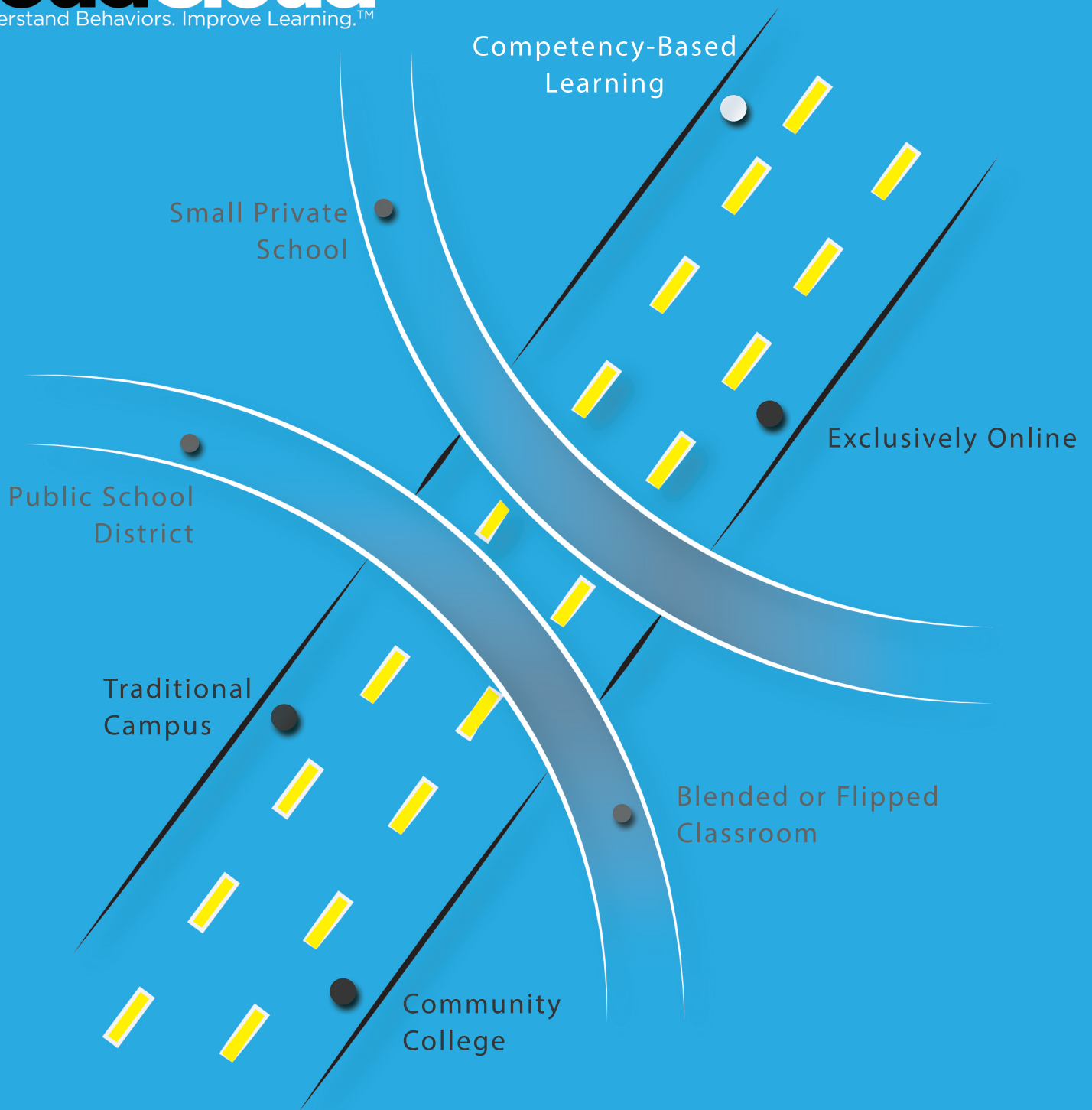
“No, not really, MIT seemed to have this covered,” Bier said the message was at the time.

The foundation representatives were set to leave, but it was Sept. 11 and planes were grounded. During the longer-than-expected talks, the university and the foundation decided to work together but to take a different track than MIT, Bier said. At first, the Carnegie Mellon group focused on computer-guided online courses.

Now, the group is focused on crafting a few model courses that can be used again and again in a variety of settings across the country.

Currently, the group is working with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to see if a few courses developed at Carnegie Mellon can be used to help community college students across the country.

More than a decade after the 2001 meeting, which nearly ended fruitlessly because the university was not gung-ho simply for open access, Bier said his group’s work and the approach taken by MOOCs may be irreconcilable. “Our interest really hasn’t been on just scaling the lecture, but focus on where the learning has been and scaling the learning,” Bier said. ■



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Views

A collection of essays and op-eds

3 Must-Knows on Distance Ed

Remember that distance education isn't a singular thing, and that many of the key debates also apply to traditional instruction, writes Joel Shapiro.

By Joel Shapiro

I know! I know! Everyone is sick to death of debating the pros and cons of MOOCs, the massive online courses that, depending on your viewpoint, will be the downfall or resurrection of higher education. But what's getting lost in all the noise is that MOOCs are far from the only game in town when it comes to online education.

Key in determining the effectiveness of a course, both online and on the ground, is how actively it is being taught and how effectively it is engaging students.

Educators are creating and tweaking a number of very different learning models to engage students in "active learning," both in the physical classroom and the virtual world – often in intriguing combinations.

Based on innumerable conversations with faculty, students, administrators, staff, and the general public, the following are the three most important things I know about the role distance education plays in higher education today and about how to create high-quality programs.

1. Distance education is not a singular thing.

Educators and administrators often use only the terms "synchronous" and "asynchronous" to differentiate among distance education models. But the most critical descriptor of distance education models has nothing to do with the extent of live instruction; rather, it is the extent to which a course is "actively taught."

On one side of the active-teaching spectrum is a "course-in-a-box" -- a course with pre-built media assets meant to stand alone, with minimal or no involvement or intervention by the faculty. MOOCs, for instance, often consist of pre-recorded high-production video and automated assessments. If the faculty member were to disappear or otherwise disengage from the course, the course would still exist. The thousands of students in the MOOC could simply press the play button on the screen, answer automatically graded test questions and otherwise enter input as appropriate. And, of course, the size of the MOOC is nearly limitless, subject only to technology capacity constraints.

On the other side of this spectrum is the very actively taught class.

Independent of media assets available to students, faculty teach. They communicate with students, lead discussion, provide feedback, and otherwise engage. If a faculty member were to stop teaching, the class would cease to exist. Typically, such actively taught courses are smaller and require that faculty know and interact with students much more intimately, more like a seminar than a lecture hall.

Some MOOCs employ teaching assistants, striving for modest interaction with students. However, in most cases, the scale of MOOCs overwhelms even multiple instructors; plus, TAs are, by definition, not faculty. Thus, while MOOCs may be great for personal enrichment, most are not yet appropriate for college credit, given that they are largely unresponsive to the learning needs of any given student.

2. The questions being asked about effective distance education aren't all that different from those concerning "traditional" teaching models.

Just as with traditional education,

one the greatest challenges of distance education is how to better engage students. Traditional educators often discuss the role of lecture, discussion, feedback, group projects and peer assessment. Today they also talk about “flipping the classroom” so that lectures and other didactic material are recorded and made available to students outside of class. Class time can then be reserved for discussion and application.

Understanding that student engagement is highly correlated to active teaching, distance educators are addressing the very same issues. The “course in a box” model is rarely engaging - many MOOCs create very passive experiences for students, who are required to watch hours of video and answer machine-graded multiple choice questions.

That said, some “course in a box” exceptions come close to rivaling substantive live interactions. Simulations, games, and other online modules in which students must solve problems and make decisions within an automated environment can be very effective teaching tools that adapt to students’ varying levels of skill and mastery. Fully adaptive learning technologies may, in fact, be more engaging than traditional teaching, given that students’ learning experiences may be customized to individual needs.

Of course, not even all traditional education is “active.” A professor’s recitation of pre-written 75-minute lectures twice a week for an entire term would hardly be more active

than simply recording those lectures and posting them on a website. An actively taught traditional course, like a distance education course, would require the faculty member to engage much more intimately with students through discussion, feedback, and more.

While some asynchronous models have no active teaching element -- including many MOOCs -- others rely on highly active and present faculty to asynchronously engage with students. Asynchronous communications, including group discussion boards, blogs, and wikis, can lead to more substantive exploration of course material than live, in-person conversations. Some faculty report that asynchronous communications allow students to better digest and consider others’ opinions while constructing their own beliefs, and can lead to deeper and more robust discussions.

Putting aside the aforementioned adaptive and interactive learning technologies (which are still relatively rare), an active teacher can better understand the needs of each student and differentiate instruction, customizing discussion and explanations as appropriate. Non-active teaching -- whether through distance or traditional education -- tends to be inflexible and monolithic.

3. Faculty conversations about distance education are shifting markedly.

Faculty today are less interested in debating the quality of distance education and how much a student

can learn. Perhaps the launch of edX by MIT and Harvard opened the gates -- suddenly high-profile, top-notch universities were committing to distance education with significant resources, searching for new ways of teaching and learning.

For whatever reason, today’s conversations by faculty focus less on quality and more on the qualities of distance education. Many express concern that a distance course may be deficient at enhancing cognition, emotion and interpersonal relationship-building, or at developing the “whole student.” These are reasonable concerns.

No serious distance educator would ever suggest that distance education fully supplants the benefits of a live in-person experience. Rather, we argue that the loss of face-to-face benefits in a classroom can be mitigated in a distance learning environment if students achieve the intended learning outcomes while benefiting from convenience and increased access to higher education.

Faculty are also keenly interested in the impact of distance education on higher education broadly and the faculty workforce specifically. Given that distance courses can be taught by faculty anywhere in the world to students anywhere in the world, they question whether distance education will result in a sort of standardization of curriculum, fewer faculty at their home institutions, and lower standard of quality.

While not unreasonable, such questions must be considered within

the context of how distance education is evolving. If today's MOOCs become widely available for credit, concern would be merited.

However, if most credit-bearing distance education is "actively taught," then the risks are lessened, if only because the costs of actively

taught distance education can be just as great as the costs of traditional education.

Besides, without dramatic change, institutions of higher education, many of which are in financial distress, face a highly uncertain future. The question to ponder: how a future with distance

education compares to all other possible futures for higher education.

Joel Shapiro is associate dean of academics at Northwestern University School of Continuing Studies and has taught in and led distance education programming at Northwestern for more than six years. ■

MOOCs and the Quality Question

Because of their lineage, the highly publicized courses are widely assumed to set the standard for online education. But the first wave of them don't come close, writes Ronald Legon.

By Ronald Legon

Overnight, MOOCs -- with free tuition for all, attracting unprecedented enrollments reaching into the hundreds of thousands, and the involvement of world-class faculty -- have captured the imagination of the press, public and even legislators looking for ways to expand the availability of higher education at minimal cost.

But thus far little attention has been paid to the quality of MOOCs. Quality in online learning can be defined in many ways: quality of content, quality of design, quality of instructional delivery, and, ultimately, quality of outcomes. On the face of it, the organizing principles of MOOCs are at odds with widely observed best practices in online education, including those advocated by my organization, the Quality Matters Program. Many of the first MOOCs are providing quality of content, but are far behind the curve in providing quality

of design, accountable instructional delivery, or sufficient resources to help the vast majority of students achieve a course's intended learning outcomes.

Previous nontraditional forms of education have been greeted by widespread skepticism and required to prove themselves, over an extended period of time, as worthy alternatives to traditional classroom education.

In contrast, the early MOOCs appear to have been given a free ride. With Stanford and Harvard professors leading the way, the assumption seems to be that those at the top of the educational pyramid would not only deliver the best content, but also know best how to teach more effectively online than do faculty and staff at lesser institutions.

This assumed connection between content expertise and a mature grasp of the challenges of online teaching, however, has not been demonstrated in MOOCs.

The first wave of MOOCs (MOOC 1.0) were designed by faculty from elite institutions that, ironically, had largely ignored online learning as an acceptable approach for their own students. They chose to model their MOOCs on successful lecture courses rather than consult the hard-won knowledge of effective strategies for delivering courses in this new medium, as developed at hundreds of two- and four-year colleges and universities over the past 20 years.

The result is a format that may be effective for the bright self-starter, who can work independently and is, focused on his or her own educational goals. On the other hand, the format is strikingly unsuited for encouraging and sustaining the average or challenged student, who requires the instructor to establish clear, measurable objectives, engage students individually and with their peers, monitor progress and hold students to deadlines and performance benchmarks, provide regular feedback on their work, and encourage their efforts on an almost daily basis.

MOOC 1.0 incorporates many features of established credit-based online courses, but differs in a number of critical ways. Students must

register to gain access, but while the absence of standards for admission or prerequisite knowledge requirements generates massive enrollment, it also results in a mix of students, from the highly qualified to those without the basic knowledge or skills to move past the opening lessons of the course. There is a set schedule, start and end dates, and due dates for assignments, but no attempt to require students to observe this calendar. While MOOCs offer an array of exercises and activities, often quite well-designed, the exercises are usually machine-graded or self-assessed, devoid of contact with or feedback from an instructor. Some MOOCs have student discussion boards, but they are not monitored or guided by qualified instructors, and the task of keeping discussions relevant and shared information accurate is crowdsourced by the students themselves.

Since they do not carry academic credit and are not selective, MOOC 1.0 courses take no responsibility for learning results. While acknowledging that these courses lack the full apparatus of credit courses, their sponsors try to have the best of both worlds by inviting other colleges, universities, and organizations to supplement MOOCs and award academic credit

by whatever means they choose. But without fully integrating the monitoring, engagement, and evaluation of students with content delivery, even the best intended retrofitting of MOOCs to approximate college courses is too little, too late for the mainstream student.

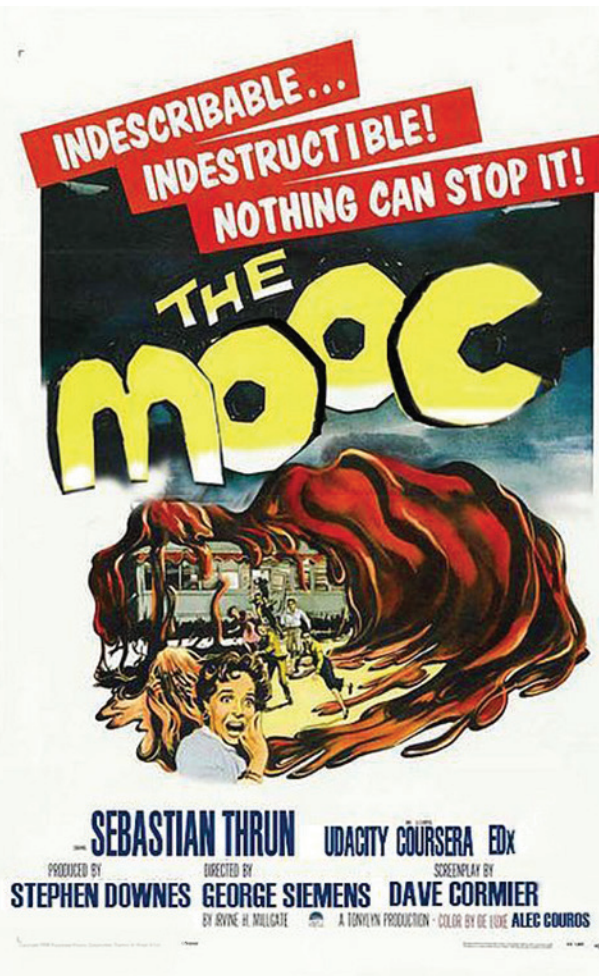
(commonly 10 percent or less) finish and earn certificates of completion. What makes the lack of a structure to support the typical college student (regardless of age) alarming is the claim made by some advocates (and increasingly embraced by legislators in some states as a policy solution) that

MOOCs can replace college-based credit courses, expanding access to higher education and dramatically reducing its costs.

Early responses to MOOC 1.0 within the academic community have been ambivalent. Leaving aside the threat of their students being lured away by the siren call of MOOCs, what are most institutions and faculty to make of free courses that are not accepted for credit at the home institution of the star faculty teaching them, courses without prerequisites or any form of screening to assure that students possess requisite prior knowledge, lack of accessible instructors, measurable objectives, or grades, and with completion rates averaging around 10 percent? What credit course, program, or academic institution would be allowed

to survive with that kind of student completion rate?

Nevertheless, in the past year, many traditional institutions have committed to building MOOCs of their own, or developing ways of enticing MOOC



Source: Giulia Forsythe

The deficiencies in the first generation of MOOCs would not matter so much if the courses were intended to fill a sink-or-swim niche in higher education, where it might be acceptable that only a small fraction of enrolled students

takers into their own online programs by offering to validate and award credit for MOOC credentials.

This response is not based on the track record of MOOC 1.0 beyond its proven ability to attract large numbers of students, most of whom never complete. Many institutions wish to be part of the conversation on an educational phenomenon that has attracted so much attention and may have as yet incalculable consequences for higher education. They also see new opportunities to attract investment in their distance learning efforts by state and private funders. Whatever the motivation, however, their involvement is bound to change the very nature of MOOCs.

Enter MOOC 2.0

As the complex and contradictory reactions to first-generation MOOCs within academia play out, we are seeing the emergence of a second generation of MOOCs. Investments are being made by leading foundations, state agencies, and institutions themselves to build MOOC 2.0 courses that focus on the typical student, integrate more effectively with established distance and on-ground programs, and lead to

trustworthy credentials.

These courses, sponsored in most cases by institutions with track records in effective distance education, will experiment with some enrollment restrictions, reachable instructors and facilitators, clarity about fees for enhanced services and evaluation, and more tangible guarantees of credit or recognition for those students who successfully complete.

Thus, the potential exists that MOOC 2.0 will evolve to incorporate many of the best practices of distance learning. The best MOOC 2.0 courses may turn out to be “hybrids” that combine the characteristics of quality online courses with a lower threshold for risk-free exploration, enabling them to reach more online learners and stimulate them to further their education. We should encourage and welcome this trend.

As the MOOC concept evolves, it is becoming more difficult to define a MOOC or distinguish among a growing jumble of similar acronyms that emphasize different characteristics. MOOC 1.0 may survive as originally conceived – massive and open – as a means of sharing and exchanging

cutting-edge knowledge with the best and brightest students.

But the millions of more typical students, who need guidance, encouragement, and frequent feedback to achieve their academic and career goals, will still rely on the infrastructure, services, and resources of traditional academic institutions to succeed.

These are the institutions that do now and will continue in the future to educate massive numbers of students. MOOC 2.0 has the potential to add a useful tool to their kits.

The promise of MOOC 2.0 is that by adopting proven strategies that promote success for the average or challenged student, MOOCs may give a boost to the already productive distance education movement by attracting more students and providing a low threshold means of entering online study.

The paradox is that the next generation of MOOCs may no longer possess the features that initially attracted the attention of the public and the media.

Ron Legon is executive director of the Quality Matters Program. ■

“As the complex and contradictory reactions to first-generation MOOCs within academia play out, we are seeing the emergence of a second generation of MOOCs.”

Dead or Dormant?

California's controversial online education bill may be on hold, but just because it hasn't passed doesn't mean it hasn't had a significant impact, write Phil Hill and Dean Florez.

By Phil Hill and Dean Florez

California's controversial bill to allow third-party, online courses to count for credit at the three public systems of higher education has met an ignoble end. Or has it? On July 31, we learned that Senate Bill 520 (SB 520), authored by Senate President Pro Tempore Darrell Steinberg, is being moved to the two-year file, and will remain dormant for at least a year.

Is this a telling defeat for powerful state politicians who went too far in trying to advance online education options, or did the process of introducing the bill and debating it in public actually create the same goals and opportunities that drove the bill in the first place?

We believe that despite the tremendous and dramatic opposition and perceived defeat of SB 520, quite a lot has been accomplished as a direct result of the initial bill language. Despite spectacular headlines, the bill itself is not dead, but rather has simply been moved to the two-year file where it will be revived as needed.

How Did We Get Here?

As described in a position paper written by Phil Hill and Michael Feldstein for the 20 Million Minds Foundation, when the California Master Plan was adopted in 1960, the basic premise was to guarantee students a

place within one of the three public systems based on their high school record. It was assumed that by having a place in a public institution, the student would have access to needed courses. As the state budget has crumbled, unemployment rates have skyrocketed and enrollment demand has surged without the resources to accommodate it, this assumption is no longer valid. Across the state, literally hundreds of thousands of students have been turned away from needed courses at the California Community Colleges (CCC), the California State University (CSU), and the University of California (UC).

In January of 2013, in an effort to address the growing public education access problem facing California, the 20 Million Minds Foundation brought together students, faculty, administrators, state leaders, and ed-tech pioneers for a one-day symposium. The "Re:Boot California Higher Education" conference promoted a robust discussion that examined not only the challenges, but also the potential technological solutions to the major issues facing California's three segments of higher education. During his opening address to the Re:Boot participants, Senator Steinberg indicated:

[Online education] is a [...] revolution and possibilities abound using technology in ways that not only equal or enhance quality but also reduce the cost of higher education for struggling students and their families.

Resistance

In March of 2013, during an online press conference, Senator Steinberg unveiled Senate Bill 520, announcing the legislation that would "would reshape higher education, in partnership with technology we already use, to break bottlenecks that prevent students from completing education."

The newfound involvement of state government officials in this level of higher education, and the nature of the bill itself, which proposed the heretofore unheard-of use of controversial, potentially disruptive, large-scale solutions such as MOOCs for credit, generated significant resistance from faculty groups and the systems themselves. In particular, a *New York Times* article "broke the news" that a powerful senate leader was going to challenge the status quo without getting agreement from faculty groups first, and this publicity helped rally vocal opposition to the bill. Of course, this level of resistance should not have surprised anyone involved in higher education in California.

The nature of government is that real legislative movement most often occurs for two reasons – bad press or a crisis. Senator Steinberg sees course access as a crisis for public higher education, and he introduced a bill designed to wake up the

higher education community. The bill essentially sent the message that “we need to solve these problems of access whether our colleges and universities do it themselves or whether we need outside help.” This challenge to go beyond the ordinary thoughts and discussions in public policy pushed the boundaries and made many groups quite uncomfortable.

In parallel, Governor Jerry Brown added fuel to the fire by proposing additional funding to the CCC, CSU, and UC with the caveat that certain conditions be tied to the funding. The language in the proposed budget obligated the funds “to increase the number of courses available to matriculated undergraduates through the use of technology, specifically those courses that have the highest demand, fill quickly, and are prerequisites for many different degrees.” This language was interpreted as telling the systems how to do their job. After CSU and UC indicated they would follow the same guidelines, but execute the solution their own way, Governor Brown used a line-item veto to remove his own proposed earmarks creating conditions for the additional funding.

The result of the intense opposition and debate during the legislative process led to significant amendments to SB 520. Originally envisioned as the gateway to public-private partnerships with a common pool of courses, the bill has been transformed into a grant program for each system to implement individually. Even with the passage of the amended bill in the Senate, the bill is currently on hold.



Press conference in California on potential use of MOOCs and other non-traditional forms of education.

Movement From Systems

All three systems have proposed new programs that broadly meet the same goals outlined by SB 520, largely based on the additional funding for online initiatives, with the new emphasis being the introduction or expansion of online courses with cross-enrollment across each system.

The California Community Colleges currently enroll as much as 17 percent of their students in various types of online or distance education. The system is poised to continue to advance and expand its online programs with a strong focus on career technical education as well as workforce development programs as outlined in the CCC System Strategic Plan, updated in June of this year.

In July, the CSU introduced a new Intrasystem Concurrent Enrollment program, allowing students at each campus to sign up for one of 30 online

courses offered in the program from other “host” campuses. Under the current plan, students will be limited to one course per semester.

In January, UC introduced the Innovative Learning Technology Initiative, updated in May, as “a direct response to the governor’s plan to earmark \$10 million from UC’s FY 14 core budget to use technology to increase access to high-demand courses for UC matriculated students.”

Despite the welcome news of these programs, we are already hearing widespread concerns over the pace and scale of implementation. Lieut. Governor Gavin Newsom, a noted supporter of more effective use of technology, following the online program presentation at the July meeting of the UC Regents, stated, “I don’t think we’re running at full speed here. We’re moving extraordinarily slowly.... Californians are looking to

us” for progress in online education.

What to Expect Next

This is what Phil Hill and Michael Feldstein wrote in our position paper: “Students enrolled in California public colleges and universities should be guaranteed timely access to the core courses that they are required to take in order to graduate. Given that there are a variety of ways in which the institutions could meet this obligation, the state should avoid being overly prescriptive about the method. Rather, it should supply the mandate for educational access, support institutions in meeting this mandate, and provide a safety valve to ensure the mandate’s right is preserved.”

The focus should remain on finding effective solutions to the course-access issue -- providing students with high-quality courses they need while reducing costs. Before this year,

this was not happening for a variety of reasons, and it remains to be seen just how much the institutions will do without the pressure of earmarked funding in the state budget or pending legislation such as SB 520.

We believe the best outcomes for online education occur when faculty and institutions are motivated and supported to design high-quality options for students. Ideally, colleges and universities would craft solutions, but use third-party courses as safety valves to ensure students have access to necessary classes. The hope is that the three public systems will continue their progress, find real solutions to the course access problem, and not fall into the trap of doing the same old thing again, just with online options.

At this point, one might actually suggest that a welcome policy outcome has indeed been accomplished as a

direct result of the initial language in SB 520. The bill is certainly not dead. The bill itself could now be thought of as a safety valve, providing an option in case the three systems fail to show real progress in meeting the challenge of course access. We are, however, cautiously optimistic that viable and effective change is, at least for now, in the formative stages.

Phil Hill is a consultant and industry analyst covering the educational technology market primarily for higher education. He is co-publisher of the e-Literate blog and co-founder of MindWires Consulting. Follow him on Twitter at @PhilOnEdTech.

Dean Florez is the former Senate majority leader of the California State Senate and the current president and CEO of the 20 Million Minds Foundation (@20MillionMinds). Follow him on Twitter at @DeanFlorez. ■

The ‘No Wake Syndrome’

College leaders must have a strong backbone to build a viable online program and be willing to handle the results if they pull it off, writes Kenneth E. Hartman.

By Kenneth E. Hartman

While many of us spent 2012 writing, reading and debating about whether massive open online courses (MOOCs) will forever change American higher education, Richard Linder was quietly and methodically becoming what historians will no doubt cite as America’s first true MOOCer.

For the past four years, the 21-year-old , who left his home at age 16, was cobbling together enough MOOC-like online courses to earn an associate degree for under \$3,000 -- with not one of the MOOC-like courses being taught by an accredited college.

The truth is that MOOCs are just a

small and largely undefined “pebble” within online education; yet this pebble has caused a ripple that has turned many campuses on their heads and nearly cost a president her own. That president, like many college presidents today, faces what could be called “The No Wake Syndrome,” whereby key institutional stakeholders demand leadership and action on a host of mission-critical issues, yet are not willing to accept the wake caused by change, albeit small, that will ensue as a result of the action.

E-learning is one such issue; one such wake.

Having helped build one of the most

successful online degree programs in higher education, it is worth sharing a few thoughts and suggestions with other like-minded institutional leaders seeking to find their way in the online world, including how best to prepare their stakeholders for the wake that will undoubtedly follow.

Over the years, dozens of college presidents have asked how Drexel University built such strong and scalable online programs. The answer is simple: it's having the will and knowing the way.

The Will

It all starts with an open and honest discussion. We've learned from history that when a ship is taking on water, it does little good for the captain to simply order the band to play louder; hope is not a strategy.

Future economic and political circumstances will fundamentally change the role of a college president from one of building more buildings and growing their endowment, to one as lead advocate for the fundamental transformation of the institution's core academic product and, in doing so, taking the hit from the "wake" of change that will undoubtedly come fast and hard from defenders of the status quo (see illustration on next page).

Suggesting, for example, that your institution may someday offer or give credit for a \$15 MOOC course, when your institution's financial model is based on much-needed tuition revenue from large enrollment, introductory courses (e.g., Psychology 101) is both fiscally suicidal and



morally disingenuous. Just ask the folks at Moody's who recently issued a negative outlook for the entire higher education sector, stating their concern for the "potentially destabilizing trends like the rise of massive open online courses."

The fundamental question that must first be addressed (and consciously built around) is: "Why are we doing e-learning?" Is it to increase tuition revenue? Decrease costs? Create greater access? Allow greater flexibility for our students? Experiment with new pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning, so as to better educate a different generation of students? All of the above?

Without a clear and unwavering "will," it makes little sense for a college president to discuss the "way," because ultimately the senior no-wake proponents on campus will delay and/or sabotage any meaningful e-learning

strategy.

The Way

Once the will is established, it's time to communicate the "why" to key stakeholders from the top to the bottom of the organization, including board members, faculty, deans, students and alumni. All must understand the risks and benefits involved in advancing an e-learning strategy. By the same token, all must understand the risks of NOT advancing one.

The key to succeeding is to incentivize faculty and senior staff. Those colleagues who help should be compensated through the sharing of tuition revenue generated from online courses and/or financial support for scholarly activities, such as paid attendance at professional conferences, new lab equipment, etc.

These same individuals must be engaged in defining and ensuring the highest level of quality of the online

student experience, to include course development standards, teaching expectations, proper advisement and support services. The focus, above all else, must be on student-faculty engagement, both in and outside of the course.

Related and essential to a successful and scalable online program is a measurable retention strategy. While retention figures for online students are hard to come by, it's generally agreed that much more attention and greater accountability is needed in this area. A baseline for retention must be established (certainly no lower than the baseline for on-campus students) and a retention "dashboard" created to enable the provost to monitor all online programs.

Here we all could take a few best

practices from for-profit colleges, who learned long ago that it is cheaper to retain an existing student than it is to recruit a new one; not to mention their ethical obligation and the fact some risk losing their national accreditation for failing to maintain high retention rates.

For those institutions just jumping into the e-learning sector, it requires the thoughtful use of both internal and external resources, including independent marketing research. Much like diving into an unknown swimming pool, unless you know where the deep and shallow ends are located, you risk either drowning or breaking your neck. Here the careful use of third-party vendors and consultants to properly assess your institution's market niche is typically a

good expense.

Final Thought

George Orwell once wrote, "To see what is in front of one's nose needs a constant struggle."

The struggle for today's college presidents is having the courage to navigate their stakeholders away from the no-wake syndrome and toward a more personalized, technologically advanced and affordable online degree program.

Let's hope that that Mr. Linder's actions will serve as good reason for the struggle, as nothing less than the future of our profession, and our nation, is at stake.

Kenneth E. Hartman is a senior fellow at Edventures and the former president of Drexel eLearning at Drexel University. ■



Where Are the Learners?

One group seemed largely missing from the digital learners' bill of rights that a group of educators and others released this week, writes Anya Kamenetz: online learners themselves.

By Anya Kamenetz

A bunch of educators, several of whom I know and respect quite a bit, got together last month to write a "bill of rights" for online learners.

They included the rights to access, privacy, openness, to create public knowledge, to "pedagogical transparency" (to understand the ways

you are being taught and the value of any credentials offered), "financial transparency" (Where is my tuition money going? How will this "free course" be paid for?), to have great teachers, and to become teachers.

I can't find myself disagreeing with anything much that they had to say, except for one screaming contradiction

that brings the whole thing down.

"All too often, during such wrenching transitions, the voice of the learner gets muffled," this group wrote in their introduction.

The problem is, this group didn't include any learners. Of the 12 signatories, I count 8 Ph.D.s or Ph.D. equivalents. They didn't reach out to any learners on public forums. They didn't ask any learners what they wanted to put in the document. The voice of learners is absolutely silent.

Sure, we're all lifelong and informal learners in some sense, but let's draw a real distinction here. Let's talk about people who don't have a bachelor's degree and need one or the equivalent

to make a decent living and participate in society on an equal footing. I'm not asking why the group didn't poll Udacity users in Pakistan or Colombia, or YouMedia high school students in Chicago, or middle schoolers around the globe making their way through Khan Academy math videos, and find out exactly what their concerns are and how they would prefer to have them represented in such a document. Although really, it wouldn't have taken much time or many resources to do this kind of research. I'm asking why they wrote a "learners' bill of rights" without including one actual learner in their little group of 12.

I'm not going to be tendentious and draw parallels with other bills of rights. I'm not going to ask about the advisability of men writing a feminist Bill of Rights on behalf of the women they care about so deeply. Or of the North writing a bill of rights for Southerners after the Civil War. Or of employers writing a bill of rights for their employees.

Suffice it to say that educators are in a historical position of no small authority over learners. And when one group of people with authority over another makes up the rights for the second group, they tend to get some things wrong.

The fact is, this isn't a bill of rights for learners at all. It's a set of principles

to support the interests of a group of educators, who share concern for learners, blended with concern for their own group. They tip their hand in the eighth principle, "The right to have great teachers."

"Students should expect -- indeed demand -- that the people arranging, mentoring and facilitating their learning online be financially, intellectually and pedagogically valued and supported by institutions of higher learning and by society. Teachers' know-how and working conditions are students' learning conditions."

I am in favor of all who work with learners being fairly paid, and I am definitely in favor of great teachers. But I am not in favor of students being drafted onto the metaphorical or actual picket lines.

Students in state four-year institutions are paying more and more of the salaries of their instructors and going into sometimes-extreme debt to do it. There's an uncomfortable moment where the interests of the learners actually diverge from the interests of the career academics, and it should be discussed openly.

But enough. The authors intended this to be a living document, and I respect that there's time to revise and collect comments from the hundreds of thousands of online learners out there. It's not going to be that difficult.

When I first found out about this bill of rights, I posted it to OpenStudy, the online learning community.

I got this response from an undergraduate computer science major within 45 minutes, which reads in part:

"you deserve education BASED ON WHAT YOU WANT TO DO IN LIFE..

Teach kids real world problems, and have them enjoy it...

Teachers/professors who care. In my time I have met a lot of wonderful professors, mentors, teachers, coaches, and a ton of HORRIBLE ones...

The job market sucks, and with students being taught the same thing, and not really learning what they wish it's hard to distinguish someone from the rest of the pack.

If we want to succeed we need to produce students who enjoy learning, and have the tools to learn what THEY WANT TO LEARN."

Another wrote: "The rights I want in the ever-growing digital era are not anything different than what I would want outside of it. We have to expand these rights to be applicable into the digital world."

That's a good start. Now there's time to come up with a set of amendments -- a real learners' bill of rights.

Anya Kamenetz is a writer and author of DIY U. ■



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