



## **President and Provost Roundtable Discussion**

### *Topic: Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)*

#### **Questions**

1. Are MOOCs a game changer, disruptive force, or a fad?
2. Are MOOCs different than massive lecture classes with a lab component commonly employed in higher education?
3. Are there some areas that are logical for MOOCs (i.e. remediation)? For credit or not?
4. Can we differentiate the value of quality online education vs. credentialing concept of MOOCs?

#### **What is it?**

“No budget, no credit, unlimited enrollments.” – Ray Schroeder, Associate Vice Chancellor for Online Learning at the University of Illinois Springfield<sup>1</sup>

A MOOC is a model of educational delivery that is:

1. Massive - with theoretically no limit to enrollment
2. Open - allowing anyone to participate, usually at no cost
3. Online - learning activities typically taking place over the web
4. A course - structured around a set of learning goals in a defined area of study – it generally has a syllabus, readings, assignments and lectures

#### **Who’s doing it?**

1. Typically provided by higher education institutions often in partnership with “organizers” such as Coursera, edX, and Udacity
2. Some MOOCs are offered directly by a college or university such as NYU, University of Washington and Carnegie Mellon.

#### **Why is it significant?**

MOOCs arise from the confluence of several important trends:

1. Disruptive ideas about the sources and processes of education
2. Major changes to the financial model of higher education
3. The development and availability of technologies including consumer hardware, widespread network access, and educational applications

#### **What are the downsides?**

“One of the things that’s dangerous about the MOOCs is that they change the subject and give politicians an easy [excuse for] avoiding a real investment in higher education.” – Tim Hall, President of Austin Peay State University in Clarksville, TN<sup>1</sup>

1. Cost of fees for a partnership with Coursera or edX and local costs are harder on smaller universities.
2. Given that MOOCs do not require tuition, the financial sustainability of these efforts remains unclear.
3. Completion Rates:
  - a. In 2012, the typical MOOC enrolled between 40,000 to 60,000 students of whom 50 to 60 percent returned for the first lecture.
  - b. 15 to 20 percent of lecture-watchers submitted an assignment for grading.
  - c. Of those 15-20 percent, approximately 45 percent successfully completed the course and earned a Statement of Accomplishment.
  - d. In total, roughly 5 percent of students who signed up for the MOOC earned a credential signifying official completion.<sup>5</sup>
4. Earning credit for MOOCs remain uncertain

5. Participants enroll in MOOCs for a wide range of reasons, from curiosity about a topic to preparation for credit by examination, and as a result, the value of peer work such as forums and discussions might be uneven.

### **Where is it going?**

1. A recent search on Google Trends for MOOCs shows the trend picked up in February – March 2012, peaked in March 2013, and was down by almost 20 percent in June 2013. We're seeing the trend of the MOOC disappear and the work of the MOOC begin.<sup>2</sup>
  - a. **Hype cycle** – any much hyped product goes from a “peak of inflated expectations” to a “trough of disillusionment” before institutions figure out how to really use and benefit from a new technology.<sup>6</sup>
2. The Georgia Institute of Technology recently announced a partnership with AT&T and Udacity to offer a low-cost master's degree in computer science.<sup>4</sup>
3. With the possibility that many MOOCs will receive American Council on Education (ACE) equivalency through the ACE CREDIT program, such partnerships will only increase. Institutions that accept ACE-approved credits affects adult learners in two important ways:
  - a. **Shorter time to completion:** At Colorado State University Global Campus (focused on adult learners) students who complete MOOCs can receive undergraduate credit via examination – a MOOC in their spare time added to their normal coursework means less time to graduation.
  - b. **Lower Costs:** Complete college credit without additional debt<sup>2</sup>

Given that MOOCs are indeed disruptive forces, the key question might be how public universities can transform themselves to adapt to the changes that MOOCs bring – and more importantly, capitalize on those changes.<sup>3</sup>

### **What are the implications for teaching and learning?**

“The web has created an opportunity for us to change the way we teach...We're learning how to create interactive an engaging material that allows the students to move themselves along and self-assess and determine their own pace of learning.” – Colleen Carmean, Assistant Chancellor for Instructional Technologies at the University of Washington Tacoma<sup>1</sup>

1. Is retention the right standard by which to measure a MOOCs success?
2. Online education in the style of MOOCs has the potential to greatly reduce barriers to education
3. MOOCs offer new and powerful ways to make learning a lifelong endeavor
4. MOOCs will encourage institutions to seek partnerships and collaborations, facilitating a network of relationships between students and multiple colleges and universities
5. The MOOC's most important contribution to date has been to raise important questions and spark essential conversations about curriculum design, accreditation, what constitutes a valid learning experience, and who has access to higher education.

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#### **Notes**

1. Karen Doss Bowman, “Winds of Change: Is Higher Education Experiencing a Shift in Delivery?”, *Public Purpose*, Summer 2012, <http://www.aascu.org/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=5570>.
2. John Bellum, “The Adult Learner and MOOCs”, *EDUCAUSEreview*, July/August 2013, <http://www.educause.edu/ero/article/adult-learner-and-moocs>.
3. Stephen G. Pelletier, “Triangulating MOOCs: Mapping Your Strategy for Massive Open Online Courses”, *Public Purpose*, Winter 2013, <http://www.aascu.org/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=6307>.
4. Tim Goral, “SPOCs May Provide What MOOCs Can't” *University Business*, July 2013, <http://www.universitybusiness.com/article/spocs-may-provide-what-moocs-can%E2%80%99t>.
5. Daphne Koller, Andrew Ng, Chuong Do, Zhenghao Chen, “Retention and Intention in Massive Open Online Courses”, *EDUCAUSEreview*, May/June 2013, <http://www.educause.edu/ero/article/retention-and-intention-massive-open-online-courses-depth-0>.
6. Ry Rivard, “Beyond MOOC Hype”, *Inside Higher Ed*, July 2013, <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2013/07/09/higher-ed-leaders-urge-slow-down-mooc-train>.