

Dear Colleagues:

9/21/2012

As the media has been trumpeting, an online-learning revolution with profound implications for global education is underway. Last year, a Stanford professor offered an online course with an initial global enrollment of 160,000; it employed a pyramidal, mostly peer-supplied assessment scheme. The 20,000+ students who finished the course ranked it highly. In recent months, most of our peer institutions have joined consortia to deliver such courses. To date, Cornell has been watching from the sidelines. Given the strong interest of some faculty and the potential for revolutionary change, Cornell must grapple with the topic of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and issues related to online delivery of education. The more the faculty knows about this subject, the more effectively we will participate in this decision. Some background sources are listed on an attached page.

Like many of you, I believe that Cornell benefits when the faculty has a strong voice in the University's direction. Our engagement must be proactive rather than reactive. Faculty perspectives are especially important in periods when economic times are difficult, higher education is being challenged, and a critical faculty renewal is just beginning. Our voices are most persuasive to the administration and the Board of Trustees when we are knowledgeable, engaged and articulate on issues that matter. Hence, I urge the faculty to participate in the first **Faculty Forum**:

MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses): What Should Cornell Do?

This topical meeting will be held on Thursday, September 27, 2012, 4:30-6:00 pm in the Statler Auditorium. As an experiment in open dialog, we are inviting the Cornell community to this event, but will reserve seating at the front of the auditorium for faculty; we will also have preferred speaking privileges. The forum will explore MOOCs, look at how pedagogy might change locally and globally, and consider whether Cornell can benefit by soon joining a consortium of universities offering MOOCs.

Cornell faculty and leaders of educational consortia will address the history of online education, envision the future of MOOCs and comment on new educational modes.

- David Easley (Economics and Information Sciences) and Eva Tardos (Computer Science, Information Science and CIS) will introduce the topic and describe why this version of online education differs dramatically from past attempts.

- Anant Agarwal (edX) and Daphne Koller (Coursera), leaders of two of the three most prominent consortia, will describe their consortia via video.

- David and Eva will comment on how MOOCs can radically alter current pedagogy and then host a panel that includes Steve Strogatz (Mathematics, Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering), Ted Dodds (Cornell's Chief Information Officer) and Chris Proulx (chair of eCornell).

Please join the speakers for light refreshments and conversation after the forum.

We are developing resources on the University Faculty website to facilitate further electronic conversations. Look for a blog and background information there; we will also post a video of the Forum. (For background reading, see the second page of suggestions.)

I look forward to seeing you Thursday afternoon.

Joe

Joseph A. Burns
Irving P. Church Professor of Engineering
Professor of Astronomy
Dean of the University Faculty

Homework Assignment

We look forward to your participation in the first Faculty Forum. The following resources will give you appropriate background to frame your questions and contributions to the discussion.

General Background. A compendium of articles from the *Chronicle of Higher Education* is available at <http://chronicle.com/article/What-You-Need-to-Know-About/133475>.

Videos that introduce some of the educational leaders driving this revolutionary model can be readily found via Google. Daphne Koller's (Coursera; Stanford) TED talk is entitled "What we're learning from on-line education"; on the Charlie Rose Show Sebastian Thrun (Udacity; Google) extols how MOOCs will change higher education; and the *NYTimes* and *Smart Planet* have articles about Anant Agarwal (edX: MIT).

A listing of the latest schools to join the Coursera consortium appeared at <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/09/19/coursera-doubles-university-partnerships>. The smaller consortium 2tor is presented at www.2tor.com.

A listing of available courses (syllabi, calendars and faculty) given by Coursera and Udacity is found at www.class-central.com.

Yale's former director of institutional research describes his experience taking a MOOC at http://goldinoldie.blogspot.com/2012/08/my-encounter-with-mooc_7.html

A brief video (<http://epic2020.org>) mentions some history and then presents a provocative forecast of massive changes possibly coming in American higher education.

Look soon for a Cornell faculty blog, where faculty members can ask questions and contribute your viewpoints; it will reside on the usual University Faculty website <http://theuniversityfaculty.cornell.edu>