Academic Partnerships Launches MOOC2Degree Initiative

_Credit-bearing MOOCs offered by public universities as first step to degree_

DALLAS, TEXAS (January 23, 2013)—Academic Partnerships, one of the largest representatives of public universities offering online learning in the United States, is collaborating with many of its 40 public university partners to launch a major innovation in Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), a MOOC2Degree.

Through this new initiative, the initial course in select online degree programs will be converted into a MOOC. Each MOOC will be the same course with the same academic content, taught by the same instructors, as currently offered degree programs at participating universities. Students who successfully complete a MOOC2Degree course earn academic credits toward a degree, based upon criteria established by participating universities.

Some of the early participants in Academic Partnerships’ MOOC2Degree initiative include: Arizona State University, Cleveland State University, Florida International University, Lamar University, University of Arkansas System, University of Cincinnati, University of Texas at Arlington College of Nursing, University of West Florida and Utah State University. Additional universities are joining the initiative in the months ahead as they work through their processes for providing MOOCs.

Open online courses have risen in popularity over the past year, but they have generally not been tied to a university credential. “Making the first course in an online degree program a MOOC brings real value to both the student and the university,” said Randy Best, Founder and Chairman of Academic Partnerships. “The free start is just the encouragement many working adults need to enroll in a degree program that will have a big impact on their future success. For universities, MOOC2Degree will potentially attract larger numbers of qualified students into their degree programs.”

“The foothold that Academic Partnerships’ initiative’s first-step MOOC creates for students and universities is truly exciting,” said Clayton Christensen, a professor at the Harvard Business School, broadly known as a scholar of disruptive innovation. “This is exactly the spot in a market where successful disruptions always take root.”

Belle Wheelan, the president of Southern Association of Colleges and Universities said, "The MOOC2Degree concept seems like a good idea and could segue more qualified
students into degree programs."

“While the number of online education opportunities continues to grow at an incredible pace, there are still many adults who are apprehensive about the experience and demands of learning online,” said Phil Regier, Executive Vice Provost and Dean of Arizona State University Online. “We want people to experience what a high-quality online course is really about, with all the academic rigor, interactions and opportunities we provide. This is a terrific way for someone who is interested in a specific subject area to try online learning, expand their knowledge base and decide if advancing their education online is right for them.”

Elizabeth Poster, Dean of the College of Nursing at the University of Texas at Arlington, added, “We are committed to providing nurses with more and creative opportunities to expand their education. This innovative initiative allows nurses nationwide to experience the flexibility and convenience of online learning risk-free as the first step toward obtaining their BSN degrees.”

Among the first MOOC2Degree movers is the University of Cincinnati, which is offering its Innovation and Design Thinking course as a MOOC. The course can lead to Master level degrees in the Colleges of Business and Engineering. Dr. Larry Johnson, Interim Senior Vice President and Provost at the University of Cincinnati, said, “Initially, we were not confident that a standalone MOOC was a truly viable and sustainable concept. By incorporating the MOOCs into our degree curriculum, we can provide prospective students with an entirely new way to fully experience the value of our classes without any long-term commitments. We’re confident that once MOOC students begin interacting with our expert faculty and their fellow classmates, they’ll begin forming a lasting educational relationship with the University.”

“MOOC2Degree is a truly novel way to look at MOOCs because it turns the MOOC into a practical tool that we can use to grow and compete locally and globally”, states Donald R. Bobbitt, President of the University of Arkansas System. “Making the first course in a degree program open and available at no cost provides students risk-free access to a high quality experience, allowing them to assess if they are suited for the online learning environment.”

Due to the partnership between Academic Partnerships and Canvas, universities can use the Canvas Network at no cost to offer MOOC2Degree courses. Canvas is widely lauded as the industry’s most innovative learning platform because of its intuitive design, flexible pedagogy, integrated multimedia, deep social network integration and easy-to-use authoring system.

The first MOOC2Degrees courses will be launched in spring 2013. Additional information on the MOOCs being offered may be found at www.mooc2degree.com

About Academic Partnerships
Academic Partnerships (AP) helps universities convert their traditional degree programs into an online format, recruits qualified students and supports enrolled students through graduation. Serving more than 40 state institutions, AP is one of the largest representatives of public universities' online learning in the United States. The company was founded by social entrepreneur, Randy Best, an 18-year veteran of developing innovative learning solutions to improve education. AP is guided by the principle that the opportunities presented through distance learning make higher education more accessible and achievable for students in the U.S. and globally. For more information, please visit http://www.academicpartnerships.com.

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