

# NCHE E-Letter

December 2012

Volume 8, Number 1

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## DEADLINES TO NOTE

Davenport Nominations	February 4, 2013
Request for Labels for NCHE Elections	February 4, 2013
Emerging Leadership Academy	February 22, 2013
Proposed Amendments to Bylaws	January 22, 2013

## DAVENPORT AWARD NOMINATIONS

NCHE presents an award at its Regular Annual Meeting that honors James Davenport (1938–1989), the first president of the National Council for Higher Education. A faculty member at Washtenaw Community College, Michigan, he worked tirelessly for over two decades for higher education members and programs within the NEA and internationally. His dedication to the higher education community and belief that all educators must work together as one family (preK–G) are memorialized in this award. For nomination form hit CTRL + click to [access the form](#).

## NOMINATIONS FOR EMERGING LEADERSHIP ACADEMY BEING SOLICITED

The NEA Higher Education Division is seeking nominations for its Emerging Leadership Academy. The program provides an opportunity for NEA higher education members who would like to become more involved in their local and state associations and to learn about the NEA and how it interfaces with local and state affiliates. Application deadline is February 22, 2013. To find information and nominations forms, go to <http://www.nea.org/home/37067.htm>

## NCHE MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Have you renewed your NCHE membership? Within a few weeks you will receive a 2012-2013 NCHE membership renewal invoice if you have not already renewed. You can also renew at <http://www.nea.org/home/32974.htm> You can also renew individual and organizational memberships at the first session of the NCHE Regular Annual Meeting in Portland, OR on March 21 & 22, 2013. Individual and organizational voting credentials are only available to members who have paid their dues. Please return your NCHE membership today. We look forward to your continued support and seeing you in Portland.

## 2013 NEA HIGHER EDUCATION CONFERENCE

The 2013 Higher Education Conference will be held March 22-24, 2013, at the Portland Marriott Waterfront Hotel in Portland, Oregon. This year's theme is "Faculty, Students and the Common Good." To register: <http://www.cvent.com/d/qcqcqdy> And, don't forget Leadership Day on March 21, 2013.

As our nation becomes increasingly partisan and polarized, especially between rich and poor, and as public education becomes increasingly underfunded and targeted by anti-egalitarian forces, what is the role of faculty, academic professionals, higher education support professionals and students in creating a more democratic, more decent society? What is the public good, and what does it mean to fight for it?

This year's conference is designed to provide participants an opportunity to engage in organizing training, professional development workshops, skill sessions in the areas of higher ed policy issues, funding, higher ed reform, negotiations, building stronger locals, organizing with social media, building internal and external relationships, engaging members and more. Here are some conference highlights:

Conference Highlights Include:

Keynote Speakers

§ Dennis Van Roekel

§ Michael Gecan

§ Patrick Callan

§ Richard Lapchick

§ Lily Eskelsen

Leadership Day

Higher Education Local Presidents Training

Workshops on organizing, local best practices, engaging members, higher ed policy, higher ed funding, social media and more.

Role alike "coffee" networking groups

Poster networking reception with NEA Almanac Authors

State and local "best practices" networking reception

Workshops facilitated by NEA Executive Committee members:

§ Greg Johnson

§ Joyce Powell

§ Earl Wiman

Open space workshop opportunities to create your own agenda

Professional development workshop tracks

**Registration fee included:** a reception, dinner and entertainment on Friday; breakfast and lunch on Saturday; and breakfast on Sunday

**Early registration is \$250.00.** Early registration will open December 20th and will close on January 20th.

**Early Registration Incentives:**

- The first 20 people to register for the conference will receive free Wi-Fi on site for the duration of the conference.
- The first 75 people to register for the conference will be entered into a drawing for a \$50.00 Starbucks gift card to be given away at the opening of the conference.

**General Registration** [January 21-February 24] is \$300.00.

- Late Registration is \$350.00 and begins on February 25, 2013.

➤ Non-members registration is \$350.00.

**Online registration** closes on March 10, 2013. However, on-site registration will be available on March 22, 2013.

## NCHE REGULAR ANNUAL MEETING (RAM) AND NCHE ELECTIONS

The NCHE RAM will begin on Thursday, March 21, 2013, 7 p.m.-9 p.m. and continued on Friday, March 22, from 9 a.m.-11 a.m.

NCHE elections will take place on Friday, March 22 from 8 a.m. to 9 a.m. Elections will be held for president, vice president, membership chair, and three at-large seats for the NCHE Executive Committee.

## GRADING PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

By [Paul Fain](#)

Grades earned by many students at Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College will soon factor in “soft skills,” such as whether they show up for class on time or work well in groups. And next year the college will issue workplace readiness certificates alongside conventional credentials to recognize those skills.

Located in Asheville, N.C., A-B Tech, as it is commonly known, has developed a [template](#) that helps faculty members determine how to incorporate eight primary workplace expectations into grading, including personal responsibility, interdependence and emotional intelligence. Soft skills should count for 8 to 10 percent of grades in courses that adopt those guidelines, college officials said.

“We’re teaching our students to walk the walk,” said Jean B. Finley, an instructor of business computer technologies.

Academic departments will have flexibility in deciding how to use workplace readiness grading. For example, some soft skills might be easier to measure in disciplines like nursing or culinary arts, which generally lead to jobs with clear demands. Liberal arts programs can be trickier. However, the central concept will be applicable across the curriculum, according to college officials.

A certificate based on a student’s passing marks on self-awareness – one of A-B Tech’s soft skill categories – might seem like a squishy idea. But the benefits of learning to how behave and perform in the workplace are very real, said Sue Olesiuk, A-B Tech’s dean of academic success.

Read more: <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/12/13/nc-community-college-issue-grades-certificates-soft-skills#ixzz2F9fTeu7j>

## ADJUNCT HEALTH INSURANCE LAWSUIT IN MA

*by Joseph Rizzo, MCCC Grievance Office for Divisions of Continuing Education*

On behalf of the Massachusetts Community College Council (MCCC), the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA) filed a law suit several years ago on stating that adjunct faculty who teach half-time or more should be offered health care coverage by the Group Insurance Commission (GIC).

Oral arguments on the summary judgment motion were conducted in the Suffolk Superior Court on October 24, 2012. Attorney Matthew Jones of the MTA represented the MCCC members (Plaintiffs).

There are two facets to this case. First, the MCCC/MTA is asking that the court mandate that part time faculty working half time or more be offered health care coverage by the (GIC) in accordance with G.L. c. 32A. This law provides insurance for regular state employees working half time or more. To be more than half time, the employee must work 18.75 hours or more per week. The suit asserts that the course preparatory time must be considered as well as classroom contact time in making this determination. Given the work is in service to the Commonwealth as specified in the law, it ought not matter if the teaching is spread among several state-run colleges. Second, the colleges do not pay the employer portion of the health insurance premium to the Health Connector as provided by the Massachusetts health care insurance reform. Although MCCC part time members must still purchase Connector insurance, they do so without an employer contribution. Some members may qualify for low income assistance from the state, but the colleges, as the employer, are failing to fulfill their obligation under the law.

The Connector representatives argues that the suit against itself be dismissed since it is the employer that refuses to treat the adjunct faculty as eligible employees and has failed to establish a protocol with the Connector for coverage.

There were several arguments by made by the state. One was that part-time faculty were hired based on individual course assignments so that someone teaching five courses per semester would technically be five people rather than one. A second argument was that although a plaintiff taught continually at a substantial workload, there is nothing to say that such a pattern would continue. The management attorney argued that adjuncts lack continuity in their employment and may not want to continue employment so as to pursue other interests. A third argument was that adjuncts are hired in intervals of time so that employment is interrupted by unpaid breaks between semesters. A fourth argument by the state's attorney questioned whether the judge had authority to order insurance coverage since there would be a resultant cost without a state-legislated appropriation.

The judge's ruling may take six-eight weeks, but there is no fixed time on when the ruling can be expected.

## LEARNING FROM ONE ANOTHER

By [Steve Kolowich](#)

“A little bit loopy and elliptical, but interesting.”

That is how J.R. Reddig, a 61-year-old program director for a Virginia-based defense software contractor, described his classmates' essays in [Internet History, Technology and Security](#), a massive open online course (MOOC) the University of Michigan is offering through Coursera.

The course, which largely focuses on the history of cyber-infrastructure, is one of the first humanities courses run by Coursera, the largest MOOC provider. That means it is an early proving ground for Coursera's peer-grading system -- the company's answer to the challenge of running a course with tens of thousands of students and only one professor. For every essay they submit, students in the course have to read and evaluate four others written by their classmates.

“Did you learn from them?” asked Charles Severance, an associate professor at the University of Michigan, who is teaching the course. Severance is sitting with Reddig and eight other students in the basement of a modish downtown coffee shop here, where he has arranged an “office hours” meet-up -- one of several he has held in cities around the country. A miniature fountain babbled nearby. Ambient jazz trickled out of unseen speakers.

Reddig shook his head: “Umm, no... no.” Not about the essay topics, anyway. Mainly, Reddig said, he learned how to read past the spelling and grammar hiccups of non-English speakers and try to grade them based on their ideas. “I said, Well, O.K., you can't apply an empiric standard to them,” said Reddig. “These people attempted to follow a thought, and so give them a 10.”

John Norman, a middle-aged tech contractor, shared a similar experience with a fellow student.

“Technically, [he] did everything perfect, but terrible writing -- it didn't flow,” says Norman, recalling a particular classmate and essay. “But I think I ended up giving him a nine, because it was somewhat interesting.”

Severance seemed pleased that his students were making an effort to look past language barriers when assessing their peers. But his students' testimonies highlighted the challenge of teaching a MOOC that deals heavily in writing assignments to an open classroom that includes a high rate of non-native English speakers. Coursera estimates that about 62 percent of its 1 million registered students live outside the United States.

And while many of the courses the company and its partners have offered thus far rely on the universal language of math and scalable, automated grading systems, Coursera and its partners are preparing to roll out a dozen courses in the humanities and social sciences that will probably rely on peer grading.

Severance ran into the language barrier in week two of his seven-week course. After 45,000 people signed up, 23,000 actually logged in when the course began in June. By the end of the first week and the first quiz, 11,000 had stuck around. Not the kind of retention rate Severance was accustomed to at Michigan, but par for the course in a MOOC.

That's when Severance made what was, in retrospect, a tactical error. "I wanted to try the peer assessment as fast as possible," he says. So he assigned a short essay -- 400 words or so -- with the following prompt:

"In many ways, the Internet is the result of experts exploring how people, information, and technology connect. Describe one example of these areas (people, information, and technology) intersecting, and how that connection ultimately helped form the Internet. Your example should be taken from the time periods we covered in the first two weeks of course."

That's when things started to go awry.

"Probably a third of the students do not have English as a primary language," says Severance. "A problem I have never had before is ... suddenly I've got people in 15 languages. I'm trying to be subtle and draw out some insight, [and] they want something they can really translate and understand."

After that assignment, the active enrollment in his course dropped to 6,000.

Now Severance has changed the assessment criteria for the course to exclude participation in the peer-grading system as a requirement. Instead, there will be a certain number of points students will have to accumulate in order to pass, all of which can be earned via multiple-choice quizzes. "So if you don't speak English, and you don't feel comfortable writing or reviewing, [you can] opt out -- you'll be fine," says Severance. "You'll get your certificate. And I'm not going to mark the certificates as with peer grading or without."

That might be a viable workaround for Severance's course, which is oriented to history with shadings of technical training. But for Severance's colleague Eric Rabkin, essays are impossible to avoid.

Rabkin, an English professor at Michigan, is teaching Coursera's first literature course, Fantasy and Science Fiction. Rabkin says he does not know how many of the 39,000 people who originally registered for the course, or the 8,000 who are still submitting and grading essays, are non-native English speakers -- nor whether English-speaking students in the course worry that the subtleties of their own essays are being lost on ESL classmates who are grading their work.

Rabkin himself is not worried. While he takes care that his lecture videos and syllabus reflect the rigor of a University of Michigan course, he has no illusions that a peer-grading system will accord with his own standards for academic achievement. "I believe that we are going to get a standard of passing work that is appropriate for this community," he says. That community includes students who might not have full command of the English language.

And here is where the philosophy of MOOCs collides with the idea of certifiable achievement in a literature course: "If we're going to keep this completely open," says Rabkin, "then no credential can have a well-understood meaning."

Daphne Koller, one of the co-founders of Coursera, says that the peer-grading experiment is still very much a work-in-progress. "We will undoubtedly learn a lot from the experiences of our instructors as they encounter this phenomenon, and then have a better sense of where exactly the tensions lie and how one might deal with them," she says. "We also have some ideas of our own that we'll throw in the mix and evaluate as we plan the next phase of this experiment."

Severance feels he can afford to give his students a little more wiggle room to duck writing assignments without compromising their ability to demonstrate learning. But, at his "office hours" in the basement of the coffee shop here, he is still trawling for suggestions about how to make the peer-grading system better.

Dezzie Garcia, a 26-year-old Web developer in dark-rimmed glasses and a blue blazer, has an idea.

"I think when someone tries to write in a language that they're not fluent in, the reader -- particularly us, who are English speakers -- we have this latent bias about the content of what they're writing," she says.

But what if foreign students were allowed to write in their native language? "At the beginning of the course, you could [administer] a survey where you ask the person if they fluently speak another language, and then perhaps you could route assignments when you do peer review," Garcia continues. "For example, I speak Spanish and French, so you could route those [essays] to me."

There are murmurs of agreement from around the table. “That’s a great idea,” says Reddig. Other students join the conversation, building on Garcia’s suggestion. Severance takes notes.

Read more: <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/08/30/first-humanities-mooc-professors-road-test-courseras-peer-grading-model#ixzz2F9mxUoOT>

## MUM'S NOT THE WORD

By [Colleen Flaherty](#)

The American Association of University Professors on Wednesday released a [draft](#) of a new policy against blanket confidentiality requirements for faculty members serving on shared governance committees.

A trend of complaints over time from professors – some of whom have been asked to sign confidentiality agreements – prompted the policy. AAUP finds such requirements problematic because faculty often are selected or choose to serve on committees to represent the views and interests of fellow faculty members.

“The default should be the expectation that faculty serving as representatives be allowed to inform and confer with the faculty they represent,” said Hans-Jeorg Tiede of AAUP’s Committee on College and University Governance. The computer science professor at Illinois Wesleyan University helped write “Confidentiality and Faculty Representation in Academic Governance,” AAUP’s first explicit statement on the topic.

The draft attempts to differentiate between shared governance roles in which the faculty member’s primary purpose is to represent the faculty, such as on faculty senates, and roles for which the faculty member has been selected due to his or her particular qualifications, such as faculty personnel committees. The former roles should not require confidentiality, while the latter roles may require confidentiality, AAUP contends.

Examples of nonconfidential matters include faculty status and curriculum, as well as those that aren’t traditionally considered the primary responsibility of faculty, such as budgeting, administrative searches and long-range planning. Potentially confidential information includes that relating to individual privacy, such as appointments, reappointments, tenure, promotions, grievances or internal grants.

Ultimately, the policy places the burden of proving the need for confidentiality on the institution, rather than on faculty members to prove that confidentiality isn’t necessary. It also advises faculty against preemptively committing to or signing confidentiality agreements (other than those serving on personnel committees).

Concerning search committees for presidents and other chief academic officers, AAUP acknowledges the need for confidentiality during certain stages of the process, but recommends an “open phase” toward the end, in which search committee members as well as the general faculty can discuss and review finalists’ names and credentials before a decision is made. Candidates who wish to remain anonymous can drop out of the search before that phase, the policy states.

Although he agreed that an open phase could keep some candidates from applying, Tiede said “that consequence will have to be balanced against the longstanding position of the AAUP that faculty should have an important voice in the selection of administrators, certainly presidents, provosts and deans.”

But search committee experts took exception to that logic.

Jamie Ferrare, principal of AGB Search, said he likes open searches, as they’re a win-win for communities and candidates that have an opportunity to vet each other. But the policy could shrink the candidate pool, especially at the presidential level, he said. Search format choices should be therefore left to individual institutions.

Susan Resneck Pierce, president emerita of the University of Puget Sound and a former search consultant who now advises faculties and administrations on a variety of issues, agreed that the policy could have negative consequences. “Higher education is replete with stories of sitting presidents whose candidacies for other positions alienated their boards, including cases where boards have fired their presidents for looking elsewhere,” she said

Read more: <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/12/13/aaup-recommends-against-confidentiality-agreements-shared-governance#ixzz2F9hPFYyS>

## FREELANCE PROFESSORS

By [Paul Fain](#)

"Self-employed professor" could soon be an actual job title, thanks to two companies that are helping a small group of college professors market their own online courses, set prices for them and share the tuition revenue.

In January StraighterLine will launch 15 professor-taught courses. This is new territory for the company, which currently offers 42 low-cost and self-paced online courses. A growing number of colleges have agreed to issue credit for at least some successfully completed courses at StraighterLine, which is not accredited and is ineligible for federal financial aid. Students can also earn credit recommendations from the American Council on Education (ACE).

Although online tutors are available to help, the company's course material is automated. With the new "Professor Direct" courses, however, a [pilot group](#) of instructors will lead courses. The instructors will pick their own tuition premium amount, which will be tacked on top of StraighterLine's base fee of \$49 per course and \$99 per month for enrolling, among other pricing options. There will be no cap on the professor premium, but most will probably range from \$50 to \$125 or so.

Sarah Tidwell will teach an English 101 course for the company in January. She'll keep whatever she chooses to charge above the \$49 base price, as well as a \$25 per month for each student she attracts to her course, for as long as those students stay enrolled at StraighterLine, even when they move on to other courses.

"You're getting paid like a sales associate," said Tidwell, who has graded papers for StraighterLine and also worked as an adjunct instructor for an online for-profit. She said her friends in higher education are intrigued by what she's told them about the experiment. "I think the word's going to spread."

StraighterLine only hires instructors who have a master's or doctoral degree in the discipline they will teach, said Burck Smith, the company's CEO and founder. The initial list includes several Ph.D.s. as well as others who hold a master's as their highest degree. Tidwell, for example, has a master's from the University of Phoenix. Most of the group, which includes a former college president, have taught primarily at open-access, online institutions.

Whether Tidwell or her Professor Direct peers succeed will have a lot to do with how well they sell their courses to prospective students.

StraighterLine students can currently choose between fully self-paced courses and ones with start and end dates. In professor-taught courses they will be able to choose eight or 15-week courses, as well as those that are self-paced. They will have other choices to make under the new model. Professors will sometimes teach the same course with different textbooks, from multiple publishers. They will start with an existing course, but can add assessments, assignments and their own teaching style.

StraighterLine's professors will have a personal page on the company's website, where some will post videos that describe their courses (see below). Students can mull which professor, course material and price look best before enrolling in a course.

Smith calls the new course offerings an "eBay for professors," who can now "hang out their shingle" with the company's help. "It used to be that students paid professors directly," Smith said. "We're rebuilding that model, but with a baseline for assessments."

However, the response from at least one faculty group to StraighterLine's new approach was tepid.

Matt Williams, a vice president with the New Faculty Majority, which seeks better working conditions for adjuncts, said the free market doesn't always lead to good results in higher education. For example, he said it's "overly optimistic" to think students will gravitate to the best professor at StraighterLine.

"Students are going to be seeking ways that they can get more for less," he predicts, specifically "more credentialization for less effort."

**Professor-centric**

Professors can also be free agents with Udemy, which is a player in the emerging field of MOOCs, or massive open online courses. By definition, a MOOC is free. But many of Udemy's 5,000 courses include a price-tag, with "tuition" fees set by the professors who create and teach them.

Most of Udemy's courses are not taught by traditional academics. Many lack advanced degrees, and offer courses based on their work experience or knowledge about a topic. But at least a few dozen are actual professors, who are moonlighting in addition to holding faculty gigs.

The company is essentially a professor-centric platform for online teaching, said David Janzen, a professor of computer science at California Polytechnic State University at San Luis Obispo. Janzen is teaching "[Java Essentials for Android](#)" on Udemy. He charges \$89 for the course, which enrolls 450 students.

Janzen said he has five other Udemy courses in the pipeline. Producing the courses is time-consuming, he said, particularly given that he has a demanding day-job. But the work is devising course material, not in fiddling with Udemy's platform. And he said it is satisfying to see the number of students who take his course creep upward.

"They make it very easy for anyone to put a course together and put it out there," Janzen said.

Udemy takes a 30 percent cut of whatever Janzen and other professors make on their courses. The company also gives them coupons that make the courses free or discounted to students. Janzen said he started distributing coupons after he hit \$5,000 for the Java course, an amount which he said covered his time.

Janzen also found another use for the coupons – he gave them to his students at Cal Poly, and he encourages them to watch his online Udemy lectures.

"I retain all of the intellectual property" from Udemy, Janzen said. "I really like being in control."

Cal Poly has been enthusiastic about Janzen's Udemy foray, he said. And the university did not make him ask permission before freelancing online.

### **MOOCs and Freelance Professors**

Hotshot professors are a big part of the supposed draw for MOOCs. The founders of Udacity and Coursera are top academics themselves, having taught artificial intelligence at Stanford University before riding the disruption wave to found their own companies. And MOOC providers talk up the quality of the teaching in their courses, which is handled exclusively by professors at prestigious colleges and universities.

Some big-name professors have decided to go solo online. For example, Tyler Cowen and Alex Tabarrok, both economists at George Mason University, are teaching a MOOC dubbed [Marginal Revolution University](#), which is named after their popular blog.

But Udemy and StraighterLine offer a different path for the entrepreneurial professor. For one thing, there's money involved, maybe even a substantial amount.

The 10 most popular professors on Udemy made a combined \$1.6 million in their first year with the site. To the non-mathematically inclined, that's an annual haul of \$160,000 each.

As for its students, Udemy's leaders say the company is focused on helping adult learners who are interested in career advancement and the convenience of online learning. One student archetype might be the company's co-founder, Eren Bali, who started taking online courses in the rural Turkish village where he grew up and later helped create Udemy.

The platform is open to any potential professor. But its employees review every piece of content, company officials said, and require that professors are experts in their fields.

For now, Udemy courses do not lead to college credit, unless students try to pursue [prior-learning credits](#). That could change, however, said Dennis Yang, Udemy's president and chief operating officer.

"We are seeing interest from institutions that are interested in issuing credit," he said.

Some outside organizations have begun validating the content on both Udemy and StraighterLine. And the two companies have nascent efforts underway to "bundle" courses with partner organizations.

For example, StraighterLine has partnered with the Ashoka, a nonprofit group that advocates entrepreneurship for social change. The group is helping to incorporate social entrepreneurship in four or five StraighterLine courses -- all of which are in general education -- with the goal of creating a full semester's concentration in the subject. A sociology professor from the University of Florida, Kristin E. Joos, is working to adapt the content.

"You can get an entire semester of credit," said Gretchen Zucker, executive director of Youth Venture, an Ashoka offshoot. StraighterLine's low cost made it an attractive partner, she said.

Likewise, Udemy is working with the Jack Welch Management Institute to [create](#) a suite of online management training courses aimed at corporations. The institute, which is a subsidiary of Strayer University, wants the courses to be customizable and able to reach a large number of employees at individual companies.

For now, neither of the bundles of courses is tied to anything resembling a college-issued certificate. But they give a glimpse of how that sort of nontraditional credential might start to materialize.

### Options for Adjuncts?

Cutting out the middleman in higher education, or disintermediation, could be a boon for professors. If the approach pioneered by StraighterLine and Udemy takes off, adjunct professors in particular could have a new avenue to hawk their wares.

Take Corrine Hasbany, who has taught accounting courses for the University of Phoenix, and currently teaches for Southern New Hampshire University. She has taught online and in the traditional classroom.

Hasbany will be among the first group on StraighterLine's Professor Direct, with an introductory accounting course. She and [others](#) like the idea of a potentially self-sustaining platform for professors, but acknowledges that there are plenty of unknowns about the price point of Professor Direct courses.

"It's trying to find that cost markup that the market will bear," she said. "You have to test it out."

Williams, however, remains skeptical. He said the New Faculty Majority is interested in new opportunities for adjuncts, but that it's too early to predict whether StraighterLine's new foray will be good for professors. Smith, unlike some higher education reformers, spoke with the group's leaders to explain the concept.

In the meantime, Udemy is racking up satisfied professor contributors, including traditionalists like Margaret Soltan, who [blogged](#) for this publication about her experience teaching a [free poetry course](#) on Udemy. Soltan, an English professor at George Washington University, has long been dubious about online teaching, but Udemy helped win her over to MOOCs.

Janzen, too, has enjoyed his work on Udemy. But he scoffs at the question of whether he would leave his post at Cal Poly. Janzen plans only to "dabble" in the massive online space, which he said could never replace his love for the classroom.

"You don't have that personal interaction with a student online," he said.

Read more: <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/12/14/two-companies-give-faculty-more-control-online-courses#ixzz2F9jC5xUI>

### MOOCs FOR THE REST OF US

Experts from the National Institute for Technology in Liberal Education on the role of online education at a range of institutions. Massive open online courses (MOOCs) have become the talk of academe, with many colleges and universities debating whether they should start them or join one of the consortia offering the courses. But what of colleges that don't plan to offer their own MOOCs? Are there ways they can use MOOCs or MOOC-like approaches to enhance their curriculum in ways that are consistent with their institutional missions?

On January 22, 2013, at 2 p.m. Eastern Inside Higher Ed presents **MOOCs for the Rest of Us**, a webinar focused on how colleges can consider these issues. Two experts from the National Institute for Technology in Liberal Education will lead a discussion of:

- How to determine the role of online education at institutions of differing missions and finances.
- Why MOOC ideas can be applied to offerings that are not massive or open.
- Examples of programs that apply MOOC-like approaches for liberal arts colleges, regional state universities or other kinds of institutions.
- How to set up new online collaborative programs with other institutions.
- How to engage faculty members in the planning and execution of these ideas.

The webinar will consist of a 30-minute PowerPoint presentation and a 30-minute question period.

Important notes: There is no conference call required for this event--the entire presentation, including audio, is delivered via the web. Your registration entitles you to one connection to the event--you may gather as many colleagues as you like to view the presentation via one monitor, but only one connector per username/password combination will be allowed. This event will be captioned for the deaf and hard of hearing via StreamText.

### **The Presenters:**

W. Joseph King is executive director of the National Institute for Technology in Liberal Education as well as vice president for innovation at Southwestern University. Previously, he was executive director of Connexions.

Michael Nanfito is associate director of NITLE. He previously served as director of instructional technology at the University of Puget Sound

### **FROM BOARDROOM TO CLASSROOM: ONLINE BUT FACE-TO-FACE**

By [Alexandra Tilsley](#)

Students at Yale University enrolled in elementary Bengali meet four days a week in a campus classroom, just like they would for any other course, but there is one big difference: their instructor is almost 300 miles away, in Ithaca, N.Y.

Yale, Cornell University, and Columbia University, backed by a two-year, \$1.2 million grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, have launched a pilot program to conduct classes in uncommonly taught languages, including Indonesian, Yoruba, and Zulu, across the different campuses using videoconferencing technology. In doing so, they're reviving not only language programs on the brink of extinction, but also a familiar concept in distance education. At a time when asynchronous instruction reaching hundreds of thousands of students is increasingly common, these universities are returning to a mode of distance learning geared toward small classes in which students all meet at the same time.

"It's been a while since videoconferencing has been in education," Dick Feldman, director of Cornell's Language Resource Center.

The project evolved after a round of federal budget cuts in 2011 [essentially gutted](#) foreign language programs across the country, taking 47 percent of the budget for National Resource Centers, hubs of foreign language and cultural study. The language directors at the three universities, who knew each other through other collaborations, realized as the cuts began to hit their campuses that they had an opportunity to join forces and preserve some of the rarely taught languages.

"We each had a fair number of languages and it seemed like we also shared the stress of continuing to support our languages because of the federal government cutbacks to NRCs," Feldman said. "It seemed like we were a good fit to share languages."

At the core of the program is the idea that languages – and not just Spanish, French, and Latin – are important, but not financially feasible if only two or three students are interested. By joining forces, the three universities hope to leverage the languages they don't all have, affording students more options, and to deepen existing programs by, for example, facilitating collaboration between instructors of the same language at different institutions.

"The ability to sustain languages with very low enrollments, though morally and intellectually desirable, was

financially going to be brutal in the short term and dubious in the long term,” said Walter Cohen, Senior Associate Dean of Arts and Sciences at Cornell. “We thought distance learning might be a way of sharing resources.”

Fundamental to the program is the use of videoconferencing – not pre-recorded lectures, the modus operandi for massive open online courses, and not webcam video, which is static and is designed to show just one person. Videoconferencing involves higher-quality cameras, larger lenses, and faster compression for sending the video signal, allowing for two-way interaction. It’s a concept often found in the boardroom and occasionally in the K-12 classroom, but still rarely in higher education.

Videoconferencing makes the experience similar to a face-to-face class. Students go to the same video-outfitted classroom every day and sit around a table, but on one wall, instead of a blackboard, there’s a screen showing the teacher and the students at the other campus. There are also computers at the back of the room equipped with cameras, so students can do pair work with their counterparts at the other university. The universities are also introducing tablets and touch-screens, which will allow the teacher to demonstrate scripts and share them with both classrooms, and they use document cameras so students can submit written work in real time. In some classes, they’ve even come up with ways for students hundreds of miles apart to perform skits together, as they might in a regular language class.

Videoconferencing also works particularly well for small classes, Cohen said. These language classes are capped at 14 or 15 students across all institutions, so the students and the instructor can interact and the class can be tailored to students' needs.

"It's not a good model for lecture courses," Cohen said. "There, you run into the obvious problems, and you might as well videotape it."

The technology, which includes large, flexible cameras and other hardware, requires an initial investment from the universities, some of which was subsidized by the Mellon grant. Cohen points out, though, that the cost of adding new technology to one or two classrooms is cheaper than hiring a professor or lecturer. And, he says, if the concept doesn’t prove viable for language instruction, it’s likely those classrooms will be useful for something else.

“It seems to me like [the language pilot] could be a practice run for other things,” Cohen said. “Even in large graduate programs, like English or history, individual sub-areas can be very poorly covered. It wouldn’t be such a bad thing if graduate seminars could be taught in such a way that in relatively small fields, say Turkish history, if you have two people at one school and three at another, you could have a nice seminar.”

One college in Wisconsin has already seen videoconference seminars run successfully, and has recently upped the ante in the realm of two-way distance education.

Moraine Park Technical College’s three campuses are each about 30 miles apart, and in the early '90s the college began looking for a way to offer classes at all three locations with instructors at one location. It settled on videoconferencing, but at the time the program was limited by technology, and administrators found the virtual classes had a lot of downtime because of user error – the system was too complicated for instructors to use effectively.

In fall 2010, though, the college introduced TelePresence, a technology from Cisco Systems that makes participants feel like they’re all seated at the same table. The idea has gained the most attention in corporate boardrooms.

“The people at the other location appear to be the same size, there’s no delay at all when they speak to you, and when somebody speaks from one side of the room their voice comes from that side of the room,” said Pete Rettler, a campus administrator for Moraine Park who also oversees distance education. The college worked with CDW-G to develop the strategy.

TelePresence and other videoconferencing techniques – the college only has one room on each campus set up for TelePresence, so it still uses more traditional videoconference technology in other classrooms – allow Moraine Park to offer courses that a single campus might not have demand for, similar to the language program at Cornell, Columbia, and Yale. The classes are also more satisfying to Moraine Park’s students than online classes might be, according to Rettler.

“The average age of a student at Moraine Park is 36 or 37, so a lot of those students don’t want to do online learning or even blended learning,” he said. “There are a lot of students who still want that face-to-face experience, and it’s hard to argue that TelePresence isn’t face-to-face.”

The technology does not come cheap. Rettler said it cost about \$150,000 to outfit one 14-seat classroom, and the college currently has two 14-seat rooms and one six-seat room set up for TelePresence. That \$150,000 does not include costs for necessary infrastructure upgrades, either.

Still, Rettler sees it as a good investment and an efficient way to offer classes. He’s not sure how to quantify the return on investment, but said it does make for a good marketing tool, and he’s convinced it’s a good educational tool.

Moraine Park’s next step is to partner with four-year colleges to allow Moraine Park students who earn their associate degree to take classes toward a four-year degree from a campus near home. Several colleges already have the technology, Rettler said, so it’s a matter of coordinating credit and scheduling, which isn’t always easy.

Scheduling has been one of the main hiccups at Cornell, Columbia, and Yale, too, as each university has different vacations and different start times, so coordinating students on different campuses can be tough. The other challenge, Feldman said, is recruiting students, but he and his counterparts on the other campuses are discussing ways to reach out to those who might be interested.

As for long-term development, Feldman sees the program as a very specialized – and conservative – niche in the education technology landscape, and Cohen emphasizes that the model, if it works, would only work for seminar-style courses. Still, both believe the project has potential.

“If in foreign languages and other areas we find a way to provide better education at the undergraduate or graduate level, or for that matter faculty collaboration across campuses, than that seems like a great thing to me,” Cohen said.

Read more: <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/12/07/colleges-use-videoconferencing-offer-classes-across-different-campuses#ixzz2F9mJ7Lbz>

## RIDING THE MOOC WAVE

By [Steve Kolowich](#)

As mayor of Rancho Mirage, Calif., Scott Hines is in charge of a town of about 17,000 people in the Coachella Valley. As the chief operating officer of World Education University, a new company that says it “will forever alter the landscape of post-secondary education” by offering free courses online, Hines is now in charge of the personal information of about 50,000 prospective students and more than \$1 million in seed funding.

But as World Education University continues to raise money and populate its database with the personal information of curious students, some observers in the higher education community wonder whether the company, which is not authorized to award degrees and has no formalized academic program, may be a mirage -- an idyllic fantasy that is more likely to dissolve into the landscape than alter it.

The company’s official unveiling earlier this month was timely. Massive open online courses, or MOOCs, have [created huge buzz](#) in higher education and beyond by offering anyone the ability to take online courses from professors at top universities -- including Stanford, Princeton and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology -- at no charge. Coursera, which has [signed deals](#) to host MOOCs from professors at more than a dozen institutions, [last week announced](#) that it had exceeded 1 million registrations. Udacity, a competing MOOC provider, has also attracted hundreds of thousands of curious learners.

Although its ambitions are sprawling and largely abstract, World Education University, which goes by WEU (and encourages you to pronounce it “We-You”), makes a similar proposition. “What if you could get a course from the top educator in the whole world -- from Harvard, or Cambridge, or Stanford, or USC, or the University of Colorado, or wherever you want -- for free?” says Steve Vicory, a marketing and advertising consultant and an “advisory board member” at WEU, in a YouTube testimonial.

Although Hines says he and his business partner, Curtis E. Pickering, have been laying the groundwork for

WEU since well before the MOOC wave began to crest, the company seems to be riding that wave now. As of last week, more than 50,000 prospective students had submitted forms with their names, contact information and academic interests to WEU, even though the company says it has not done any marketing beyond issuing a news release and selecting a shrewdly search-engine-optimized name. Hines says the company has raised over \$1 million from angel investors -- including "hundreds of thousands" from himself and Pickering -- and has plans to seek out venture funding as well.

The company says it plans to open between 120 and 150 courses by the end of November, when it is planning a hard launch. WEU is buying most of these -- about 100 courses centered on trade skills for jobs in health care and legal professions -- from a for-profit college for an undisclosed sum. The college, which is accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, did not want its name used because it did not want to risk running afoul of its accrediting agency in advance of a renewal assessment, according to its president, to whom *Inside Higher Ed* spoke.

Not everybody is encouraged by WEU's arrival on the scene. In the eyes of many online advocates the emergence of the "elite" MOOCs through Coursera, Udacity and edX has finally legitimized online learning as integral to the future of even the most prestigious, financially secure institutions in the business. But the buzz around MOOCs also may open a door for entrepreneurs who, regardless of their intentions, may be tempted to make promises they will not be able to keep.

"I don't know that I would call it 'snake oil' exactly," says Ellen Wagner, executive director of the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies (WCET), a nonprofit that promotes the effective use of technology in education.

"But it is certainly naïve," she wrote in an e-mail. "And opportunistic."

Wagner says she has seen a number of burgeoning companies offering some form of free or über-cheap online education in the wake of Coursera and Udacity, which have each raised millions from venture capital firms on the assumption that they will figure out some way to turn all those registrations into dollars.

"If the internet bubble and subsequent social media tiny-bubble has taught us anything, it's that you need not have a product that you can sell to make money," says David Cormier, manager of Web communications and innovation at the University of Prince Edward Island and a pioneer of the previous generation of MOOCs. "You just need a way to convince investors that you might possibly be able to make money someday."

### **Education Outsiders, Proudly**

WEU, for its part, makes no secret of its intention to make money at least in part by giving advertisers access to its students. The company's materials for students note that it "may share your information with any third party outside of our organization as necessary to underwrite free educational offerings" and "may contact you via e-mail or telephone in the future to tell you about specials, new products or services."

Hines, the chief operating officer, says WEU plans to attract faculty to design courses by offering them a cut of the advertising revenue generated by those courses. He says the personal information about WEU's 50,000 prospective students is sitting in a database -- untouched, for now.

The company's business ideas are not much different, in substance and lack of definition, from those of Coursera and Udacity. But unlike those companies, both started by former Stanford University professors, the Rancho Mirage mayor and his partners are outsiders -- and proudly so. "We don't have a single person involved in education who is invested," says Hines, a former Air Force intelligence officer who has master's degrees in public management and organizational management. "We have business leaders, primarily, and philanthropists."

Another key difference is the company's professed goal of offering licensed degree programs. "WEU will offer a full range of higher education courses to the general public immediately, and eventually full degrees, diplomas and certifications once full accreditation and licensure is achieved," the company says on its website. In a promotional video on YouTube, one beaming interviewee outlines (in the present tense, oddly) a bold vision. "The WEU has preschool starting at age three," she says. "Can you imagine? ... And the kids can learn all the way to get their -- to graduate from high school, and then go on to get their bachelor's, their master's, and their doctorates all for free!"

Wagner, the WCET director, can't imagine it -- at least not any time soon. "I like that breakthrough business model schools are starting to get the traditional academy worked up because that's what it takes to get the conversation going in serious ways," she says. At the same time, Wagner adds, "I also believe that there is naïveté about [how] the academy actually works, which makes it exceedingly hard for schools run as businesses to fit in with schools that are mission-driven."

Accreditation can be a struggle even for aspiring universities that have no commercial entanglements. Shai Reshef, the founder of [University of the People](#), a nonprofit online institution that aspires to offer bona fide degrees for little or no cost, has been building toward accreditation for several years. It has been a laborious and expensive process, he says, and it has forced the institution to take a very conservative -- and not at all lucrative -- approach to growth. Only last year did University of the People get permission, in California, to issue degrees.

And only at that point can any company or nonprofit rightfully call itself a "university," says Alan Contreras, a former watchdog for Oregon's Office of Degree Authorization. Until then, a company like WEU is merely the sum of its marketing rhetoric. "If they are not issuing degrees or academic credits, they are not a degree mill," Contreras wrote in an e-mail.

At the same time, "They are not a university, either," he says. "They are a sack of vapor until they get authorized."

More precisely, they are a sack of vapor with 50,000 leads. For-profit education companies such as Kaplan and the University of Phoenix historically have made their money by taking government-backed tuition dollars. But a recent theme among entrepreneurs in online education has been to get away from relying on those sources, which come with regulatory strings attached.

Companies such as StraighterLine and New Charter University, operating outside of academe, offer courses for \$100 or \$200 per month and stress autonomy among their students. Coursera and Udacity, by charging only exam fees, could push that price bar even lower. And while college credit, accreditation and bona fide college degrees remain the coin of the realm, these alternative models have generated buzz for "alternative credentials" that some believe could eventually have purchase among employers.

And as long as they keep their prices low enough so that customers can pay out of pocket, companies need not obtain permission from regulators or accrediting bodies to offer those credentials. And if they can operate without partnering with universities, neither will they be bound by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), which bars universities from sharing certain information about their students.

"Title IV means nothing to us," says Hines, the COO of WEU, referring to the legislative shorthand for federal financial aid programs. And while the company does plan to pursue accreditation and degree authorization through the official channels, it is already hedging against being locked out. "WEU is committed to achieving accreditation from an agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education," the company says in a legal notice on its website. "At this time no assurances can be given as to when, or if, accreditation might be granted."

Fortunately for Hines and his investors, satisfying higher ed regulators and government watchdogs is not crucial to WEU's success. "Ultimately, accreditation is not the end-all goal for us," says the Rancho Mirage mayor. "We see value in accreditation, but it is not core to our business model. Our core [goal] is to serve students who have no options for education."

The fact that such underserved populations exist, and might benefit from the existence of an entity like WEU, whether it gets accredited or not, is the trump card for any company offering online education for free. When any benefit at all is a net gain, accountability to students seems almost beside the point.

"I think that we're going to see more organizations like this succeed," wrote Cormier, the MOOC pioneer, in an e-mail, "because people will not be able to tell the difference between an organization whose actual aim is to help you improve at something (whatever that might mean to them) and one that is solely focused on getting investors."

Hines brushes off skeptics who worry that WEU cannot fulfill its promises. He says the company's forthcoming academic program, and quantifiable investments in the accreditation and degree licensure

processes, should persuade the world that they take their educational mission seriously.

“Time will tell,” says Hines. “But it’s not easy to be innovators. It’s not easy to be disruptive. And it would be natural and healthy in many ways for skeptics to voice [their] concerns. But we’re O.K. with that.” Read more: <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/08/17/world-education-university-looks-ride-mooc-wave-despite-skeptics#ixzz2F9mjfkKl>

## MOOCING ON SITE

By [Steve Kolowich](#)

The massive open online course (MOOC) provider edX took a step toward boosting the credibility of its “graduates” [announcing](#) a partnership with Pearson’s testing centers that would allow students in edX’s free, online courses to take proctored exams.

Students who pass the proctored versions of the exams will still not receive credit from edX’s partner universities, which currently include the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Harvard University, and the University of California at Berkeley. But the availability of supervised, in-person exams could make it difficult for other degree-granting institutions to deny course credit to students who pass them.

“There’s been a lot of talk about how the whole online methodology is not able to verify identification,” said Anant Agarwal, the president of edX, in a conference call with reporters on Thursday.

“This will take online learning to a next level,” he said.

The Cambridge, Massachusetts-based edX, which this year held its inaugural course, in electrical engineering, gave “certificates of mastery” to the 7,157 students who completed the coursework and passed the online final.

Now students who pass exams at a Pearson testing center will be given a certificate that notes that their final exam was proctored, according to Agarwal.

The nonprofit edX is the second MOOC provider to sign an agreement with Pearson over exam supervision. Udacity, a for-profit venture started by MOOC pioneer Sebastian Thrun, struck a similar deal with the company in June.

Pearson VUE, a subsidiary of the education and media conglomerate, which focuses on testing services, ran its first [exams](#) for Udacity’s introductory computer science course in August. “On the order of 20” students either have signed up to take the exam (for an \$89 fee) or have already taken it — including the course’s instructor, University of Virginia computer science professor David Evans, who passed the exam at a Sunnydale, California testing center, according to Udacity officials.

Pearson expects to administer exams for selected edX courses, which were not named in the announcement, by December or January. (edX will develop the exams.) The emphasis on credentialing in MOOCs is proving to be a boon for Pearson, which is one of the few companies with a physical testing infrastructure that can match the scope and scale of massive, open education.

Site-based testing could persuade some institutions to accept MOOC credentials for credit toward a degree. Colorado State University’s Global Campus, the institution’s accredited online arm, [said](#) on Wednesday that it would grant three transfer credits to students who passed the Udacity computer science exam at a Pearson testing center.

The combination of in-person testing and a software platform that can chart the participation of a student over the course of a semester amounts to a “compelling case” for allowing students to redeem free MOOC learning for valuable college credits, said David Stavens, the chief operating officer at Udacity.

Coursera, another major MOOC provider, has not announced any partnership around site-based testing. But the company has been “looking into automatic plagiarism detection technology,” according to co-founder Andrew Ng. Reports of plagiarism in its first literature course last month prompted Coursera to make students reaffirm their commitment to an honor code each time they submit an assignment.

“We’ve been working on ways to prevent cheating and enhance the value of Coursera classes’ certificates,” wrote Ng in an e-mail.

Honor codes, of course, are not necessarily a reliable deterrent to cheating. Harvard, one of edX's founding institutions, is currently [dealing with fallout](#) from a cheating scandal on its physical campus, and is considering adopting an honor code to curb further breaches. Studies have shown that integrity pledges can mitigate cheating on some campuses, but researchers at Ohio University last year [found](#) that honor codes have less purchase with fully online students.

"The more distant students are, the more disconnected they feel, and the more likely it is that they'll rationalize cheating," said Frank M. LoSchiavo, one of the authors of the study, in an October interview. Read more: <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/09/07/site-based-testing-deals-strengthen-case-granting-credit-mooc-students#ixzz2F9niW0Pn>

## MOOCs' LITTLE BROTHER

By [Steve Kolowich](#)

The buzz surrounding massive open online courses, or MOOCs, has grown nearly as massive as the courses themselves. MOOCs are the new "thneeds," the oddly-shaped items peddled by the Once-ler in *The Lorax*: Everybody seems to want one, even if nobody yet knows exactly what they are or what they mean.

But amid all this MOOC mania, the University of Maine at Presque Isle is attempting a different kind of free online offering — one that would swap the scale of a MOOC for the high-touch experience of a conventional online course.

Michael Sonntag, the provost, calls it a "LOOC": a little open online course.

Small-scale open courses are not an entirely new concept; David Wiley, an associate professor of instructional psychology and technology at Brigham Young University, [began including small groups of non-enrolled learners in an online course](#) at Utah State University when he taught there in 2007.

While Wiley's foray was an individual effort, Presque Isle's open courses are an institutional initiative. Officials at the university say they want to experiment with open teaching to the extent that its modest resources will allow. And while they know the "LOOCs" will never be a cash cow or a disruptive force in higher education, they hope the program might at least help Presque Isle recruit enough students to keep things on an even keel.

"We can't compete with Stanford and the MOOCs" on scale and prestige, says Ray Rice, the coordinator of [the OpenU project](#). But what Presque Isle can offer, says Rice, is a sort of anti-MOOC experience for non-paying students: one that is identical in nearly every way to that of tuition-paying students who are enrolled at the university. "In fact, the OpenU students will learn side-by-side, virtually speaking, with Presque Isle students who are taking the courses for credit."

The lack of "scalability" in the Presque Isle experiment makes it much less significant than the MOOCs as far as redrawing the economics of higher education. But it could shed light on some issues relevant to open education in general. For instance, how important is brand prestige in generating interest in an open course? And how crucial is student accountability and regular contact with an instructor in such courses to performance and attrition rates?

The four open courses at Presque Isle, which the university is piloting this semester under the brand OpenU, are vanishingly small by MOOC standards. Each has admitted two to seven nonpaying students in addition to the 15 or so who are taking the course for \$220 or more per credit at the university. (MOOCs have been known to attract tens of thousands of registrants, thousands of which stick around for the duration.)

Like MOOC registrants, the OpenU students will not be vetted ahead of time and will not receive formal credit for completing the course. However, unlike the institutions that are offering MOOCs, Presque Isle is pledging to draw no further distinctions between its paying students and its nonpaying participants.

"Students are not paying, but they are getting the full experience," says Sonntag. "If they want to write every paper and take every test, our faculty members have agreed to give them feedback."

# MOOC VS LOOC

## Cost

Free



Free

## Size

Come one, come all – some courses have received 100,000 student registrations



Open to anyone, but informal cap set at five non-enrolled students per course

## Format

Online, asynchronous



Online, asynchronous

## Instructor Contact

No direct interaction with instructor



Instructor will give direct, personalized feedback

## Credit

No institutional credit, but students can pay for informal credential



Students can pay for up to 6 institutional credits via prior-learning program

## Pedigree

Stanford U; the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; other top universities



The University of Maine at Presque Isle

## Global Focus

Yes – the majority of registrants hail from outside the United States



Not yet – the current participants hail from Maine

## Strategic Agenda

Improve reach, improve on-campus teaching, make money somehow



Improve reach, attract new paying customers

The great impasse of the “MOOC” movement is idea that massive open online courses can never fully replicate the experience of a normal course. It is a matter of simple economics: professors cannot give tens of thousands of students their individual attention. They cannot apply an expert critique to every essay. They cannot hound them if they are not keeping up with the work. In the absence of such instructional rigor, the high-profile universities that have so far signed up to offer MOOCs say they cannot in good conscience give institutional credit to even their most successful MOOC students.

Presque Isle’s project has no burden of massiveness. That means both instructional rigor and pathways to credit are potentially on the table.

Melissa Crowe, an assistant professor of English at Presque Isle, says she plans to dutifully critique the contributions of her nonpaying students — and that sense of duty will cut both ways: the “open” students will be expected to submit essays, participate in workshops, and generally adhere to the same standards as her regular students. If they don’t, Crowe says she will not hesitate to call them at home — and, if necessary, give them the boot.

If a student wants to redeem his efforts for formal credit, Presque Isle provides an option. Through its prior learning program, the university says it wants to give OpenU students an efficient pathway to at least some formal credit.

“At some point in the future, if you become an UMPI student, you may be able to earn a total of 6 credit hours of prior learning credit from your UMPI OpenU participation,” reads a note on the university’s website.

Alternatively, OpenU participants have the option of enrolling as tuition-paying students if they get hooked before the end of the customary add-drop period.

That is where the strategic side of university’s OpenU agenda kicks in. “If in fact there truly is this large amount of people out there who would like to come back but who are scared, timid, unsure of themselves,” then a free trial becomes a persuasive recruiting tool, says Sonntag. And if they like it, “Well, sure, pay your money and go forward,” he says.

Read more: <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/09/06/u-maine-campus-experiments-small-scale-high-touch-open-courses#ixzz2F9nHP5OD>

## THE MOOC SURVIVORS

By [Steve Kolowich](#)

As the MOOC buzz continues to reverberate across higher education, the question of which subjects and populations these massive open online courses are best-suited to remains a mystery. The data released so far by the companies that run MOOC platforms have offered little insight beyond what countries students are logging in from and some information on who took a particular computer science course.

But new data from edX, the nonprofit MOOC platform financed by Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, offers a limited peek into the basic demographics of a key population: students who not only registered for a particular MOOC, but who performed well.

Observers have gawked at the sheer volume of registrations for MOOCs. So far the free online courses, especially those designed to match the difficulty of a top university course, have seen students drop out at rates that are nearly as dramatic as the initial enrollments.

This was particularly true of edX’s first course, a virtual lab-based electrical engineering course called Circuits & Electronics: 155,000 students registered for the course when it opened in February, but only 23,000 earned a single point on the first problem set, and 9,300 passed the midterm. When the course ended, 8,200 students took the final. Just over 7,000 earned a passing grade and the option of receiving an informal certificate from edX.

When considering what sort of threat MOOCs might pose to certain territories on the higher education landscape, the demography of students who register for MOOCs may not be as relevant as that of the much smaller subgroup of students who perform well enough to earn a credential.

That is the subgroup researchers at edX were trying to reach when they surveyed roughly 6,000 of the Circuits & Electronics students who were still around at the end of the course. Although the survey was not

necessarily limited to those who passed the final exam, the timing of the survey made it likely to be noticed only by students who had performed well, according to Anant Agarwal, the president of edX and one of the co-instructors of Circuits & Electronics.

The findings are limited and have not been formally compiled or analyzed — Agarwal relayed them to *Inside Higher Ed* after logging into the platform's back end from his Cambridge, Massachusetts office. But perhaps the most interesting piece of data is that 80 percent of respondents said they had taken a “comparable” course at a traditional university prior to working their way through Circuits & Electronics.

Of that 80 percent, nearly two-thirds said the MOOC version was better than the “comparable” course they claimed to already have taken. Only 1 percent said it was worse.

Agarwal called the near-unanimity with which students seemed to prefer his MOOC to a “comparable” traditional course “stunning.” But he also acknowledged the ambiguity of the question. “Comparable” could be read a number of ways — some students might have taken a similar course in electronic engineering, but others might have simply been referring to university courses in general.

One way to read the finding is to say that although the Circuits & Electronics course was open to anyone, anybody who had not already paid for traditional education would be ill-equipped to succeed in the course.

To some extent, Agarwal expected that would be the case for Circuits & Electronics, which listed certain physics and math courses as prerequisites. The survey findings affirmed that the successful students were well-educated: about 78 percent of the respondents said they had previously taken a course on vectors or differential equations. Only 4 percent said they had never taken calculus.

But the edX president cautioned against leaping to dramatic assumptions. “I would probably not draw the conclusion that in order to be successful at this, you would need to have completed a university-level degree elsewhere,” said Agarwal.

Indeed, about 30 percent of the students surveyed said they did not have a bachelor's degree. (Six percent said they had a doctorate, 28 percent a master's degree, and 37 percent a bachelor's degree.)

The age distribution of students who stuck it out with Circuits & Electronics favored what higher ed would call “nontraditional” students: Half of them were 26 years old or older. About 45 percent were traditional college-aged students, and 5 percent were in high school. The oldest probable-completer was 74; the youngest, 14.

To some extent extrapolating larger truths about MOOC students from such narrow samples is similar to a blind man to describe the dimensions and habits of an elephant after touching one square foot of its hide. The profile of the student in an adapted MIT course in electrical engineering is likely different from the profile of a successful student in an introductory computer science course, or a course in sociology or world music. Like any online course, the ability of a MOOC to match the outcomes of the traditional version will probably vary by course and professor

Read more: <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/09/12/edx-explores-demographics-most-persistent-mooc-students#ixzz2F9o3r2Dp>

### **A MOOC FOR BRITISH UNIVERSITIES**

Twelve British universities have created Futurelearn as a platform for MOOCs (massive open online courses) to be available free to anyone in the world, *Times Higher Education* reported. Courses will be offered by:

- Cardiff University
- King's College, University of London
- Lancaster University
- The Open University
- University of Birmingham
- University of Bristol
- University of East Anglia
- University of Exeter
- University of Leeds
- University of Southampton
- University of St. Andrews
- University of Warwick

Read more: <http://www.insidehighered.com/quicktakes/2012/12/14/mooc-british-universities#ixzz2F9aFq1MX>

Visit the NCHE web site to download the pdf version of the NCHE E-Letter.

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## **JAMES DAVENPORT MEMORIAL AWARD**

### **National Council for Higher Education**

James Davenport (1938–1989) was the first President of the National Council for Higher Education. A faculty member at Washtenaw Community College, Michigan, he worked tirelessly for over two decades for higher education faculty and programs within the NEA and internationally. His dedication to the higher education community and belief that all educators must work together as one family (preK–G) are memorialized in this award.

The Award is presented at the annual NEA Higher Education Conference. The recipient receives a plaque and an honorarium of \$100.

#### **Past Recipients**

2008 Kathy Sproles, California Faculty Association  
2007 Tom Auxter, Florida Faculty Association Catherine Boudreau, Massachusetts Teachers  
2006 Barry Stearns, Michigan Association for Higher Education  
2005 Gloria Green-Ridley, University of the District of Columbia; L. Alice Peters, Bergen Community College Faculty Association, New Jersey  
2004 Maureen Dinnen, United Faculty of Florida/Florida Education Association; Henry Hank Metcalf, Associated Faculty of the University of Maine  
2003 Peter Helff, Bergen Community College Faculty Association, New Jersey  
2002 Roger Knutsen, Washington Association for Higher Education;  
2002 Ken Margerison, Texas Faculty Association  
2001 Terry Jones, California Faculty Association  
2000 Gerald Faye, Michigan Association for Higher Education  
1999 C. Stewart Doty, Associated Faculty of the University of Maine  
1998 VirginiaAnn G. Shadwick, California Faculty Association  
1997 Ernest R. Therrien, Massachusetts Community College Council  
1996 Shirley K. Rose, Alabama Education Association Post–Secondary Division  
1995 Mary Ann Pacheco, Community College Association/California Teachers Association  
1995 Callie and Gerald Waldrop, Alabama Education Association Post–Secondary Division  
1994 Thomas Shipka, Youngstown State University Faculty Association, Ohio  
1993 Howard Parish, New Jersey State Faculty Association;

Roy C. Weatherford, United Faculty of Florida

1992 Duane Anderson, University of Iowa Faculty Association

1991 Roxanne Bradshaw, Colorado, NEA Secretary/Treasurer, 1983–1990

1990 William D. Crist, California Faculty Association

# **2013 JAMES DAVENPORT MEMORIAL AWARD**

## **National Council for Higher Education NOMINATION FORM**

### **NOMINEE INFORMATION** (May be an individual, a group, or an organization)

Name of Nominee: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

NEA Member: \_\_\_\_\_ Non-Member: \_\_\_\_\_

### **NOMINATOR INFORMATION**

Name of Nominator: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

College or University: \_\_\_\_\_

Local Association: \_\_\_\_\_

NEA Member: \_\_\_\_\_ Non-Member: \_\_\_\_\_

Complete the form on the reverse side and mail to:

Davenport Award Committee, Attn: James F. Rice

National Council for Higher Education

NEA Constituent Relations, Room 410

1201 Sixteenth Street, NW

Washington, DC 20036

Nominations and supporting materials must be received in the NCHE office by **February 4, 2013**.

The Award will be presented at the opening session of the NEA Higher Education Conference.

Please word process all materials and provide up to three (3) pages of support for each criterion selected. Number and place the nominee's name on each page.

### **Award Criteria**

To be eligible for this award the nominee **must be an NEA member** who has engaged in activities of the **NEA and/or a state affiliate** related to **one or more** of the following:

1. Provided leadership in higher education.
2. Promoted, designed, and coordinated programs which enhance the relationship between higher education and the community (preK-12, business, international, etc.).
3. Worked to improve relations and understanding among higher education groups (private institutions, other faculty and staff organizations, NCAA, etc.).

4. Developed and promoted legislation impacting higher education.

5. Contributed to NCHE mission, goals, and advocacy.