



THE UNIVERSITY of TENNESSEE

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VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AND STUDENT SUCCESS

Update on Pilot Programs Testing Online Learning Technologies

It's been a little over three months since we announced plans to study the efficacy of alternative platforms for delivering education online and already significant progress is being made.

As engaged administrators, faculty and staff who are either participating in our pilot program with Coursera or who have expressed interest in ongoing communication about the initiative, I'd like to update you on what's happened since May and what's coming next.

The first course using the Coursera platform launched last month at UT Chattanooga in a hybrid model, and the second and third courses are set to launch at UT Martin later this semester and at UT Knoxville by the first of the year. Teams of faculty and staff at each institution have worked overtime to make this happen in a rapid time frame.

As you know, we're committed to this being a collaborative approach. We've been gathering feedback and conducting periodic interviews with participants that will be used to help determine future plans. By spring, we hope to share preliminary student outcomes and faculty perceptions with you.

Coursera is the first of several platforms we are exploring; we have recently finalized a partnership with edX as well. As you may know, edX is a nonprofit player in the MOOC industry that also offers creative approaches with high levels of interactivity. We anticipate offering three more courses for evaluation using the edX platform in either spring or fall 2014 and are currently working with the campuses to identify the most appropriate pilot courses and interested faculty. Through careful evaluation of both pilot programs, we hope to learn how these platforms and methods could help us meet challenges as we identify them.

I would like to emphasize that the academic programs, curricula and classrooms are the purview of the faculty of our campuses and are designed for optimal student outcomes. The pilot projects are not designed to lead to curricular mandates of method or platform, and we are still not venturing into the MOOC market, although some UT units have expressed interest in using the platforms to reach statewide constituents.

Although we can't yet predict what the technology of the future will do for educational access, retention and graduation, we must be participants in the process of exploring new models and willing to test the tools available to us.

Thank you for your continued interest in this initiative. We hope you will remain engaged in discussions among about these and other opportunities that could help us meet the needs of our students and the state.

Additional information and answers to frequently asked questions about the pilot programs are compiled at:

<http://www.tennessee.edu/system/academicaffairs/online-education/index.html>.

As always, please feel free to contact me directly (khigh@tennessee.edu) if you have questions, concerns or suggestions about this initiative.