

Big Bad MOOCs

Are You Afraid?

MEET THE MOOCs

Thanks to the media deluge, you've probably heard of the precipitous rise of the MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) and maybe even peeked into a MOOCourse or two. If you haven't—or hoped to just ignore them—you might want to think again.

Wikipedia is a good place to learn about MOOCs: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mooc>

After you've brushed up on the definition, you could check out some of the MOOCourse offerings themselves.

- Coursera: <https://www.coursera.org/>
- Udacity: <https://www.udacity.com/>
- edX: <https://www.edx.org/>

THE GRIFT

UAF eLearning has always promoted open access to a rich variety of educational materials. But collecting a bunch of materials together with a discussion board and calling it a course, while relying on peer-review with little or no interaction between student and teacher, is a scam...one that has the potential to wreak havoc on our institution (and many others).

OUR FEARS REALIZED

Many of the old, unwarranted fears about elearning are relevant when it comes to MOOCs. In particular:

- MOOCs are pedagogically unsound, relying on passive learning and the transfer model of teaching.
- MOOCs use new technologies, but in service of regressive teaching methods we've worked for years, at UAF, to move beyond.

ARE FACULTY DISPOSABLE?

We don't think so, but MOOC providers essentially do. If those who make the financial decisions for the university believe they can use the MOOC model to teach thousands of students while *reducing* costs, why wouldn't they?

MOOCs can be very inexpensive; Coursera is partnering to provide core English classes for universities at a cost of just \$25 per student. When budgets are tight, the prospect of eliminating the cost of physical classroom space, administrative support and faculty salaries is a strong, potentially dangerous lure.

WHAT ARE WE DOING ABOUT IT?

The MOOC train is coming. It threatens not just individual faculty and programs, but entire institutions.

We aren't just closing our eyes. The key to success in the next 5 years will be to *differentiate* our rich offerings from the anemic MOOCs in ways students and the public understand.

To do this, UAF eLearning is—in collaboration with UAF instructors—actively exploring MOOCs and MOOC models in order to *co-opt* them in service of our teaching and learning and *adopt* the positive and emerging practices springing from them.

HELP US HELP YOU

UAF eLearning doesn't want UAF to become a MOOCiversity. We want all UAF courses—online or off—to use technology in rich ways to support the teaching and learning experience that MOOCs can never hope to rival.

Let me know how we can help:

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