



VIEW*S* & VISIONS

A publication of Bowles Rice LLP

Fall 2013



Education for All? The Promise of MOOCs

Dr. Sue Day-Perroots, Associate Vice President for Academic Innovation
West Virginia University

Dr. Sue Day-Perroots is associate vice president for academic innovation at West Virginia University. She provides leadership for WVU's Online and Extended Campus, the teaching and learning commons, summer session, K12 digital initiative and ACCESS courses for high school students.

Dr. Day-Perroots directs the successful entrepreneurial models for online programs and summer sessions, which have increased enrollment across colleges and resulted in substantial fiscal return.

She has built a national reputation for her work in distance education. During the past three years, she has served as president of the National American Association of Summer Sessions (2010); was named chair of the American Distance Education Consortium (ADEC) (2013); received the prestigious ADEC Irving Award for Outstanding Leadership (2012); and served as institutional representative for the APLU-AASCU Distance Education Deregulation Advisory Committee. Dr. Day-Perroots also has served as a peer-reviewer and team chair for the Higher Learning Commission.

Welcome to a new era of education – Massive Open Online Courses – known as MOOCs. The New York Times identified 2012 as “The Year of the MOOC.” With topics ranging from Artificial Intelligence to Law and the Entrepreneur, the courses are free and primarily delivered via streaming video lectures. During the past two years, hundreds of thousands of students in nearly 200 countries have registered for courses taught by professors from the world’s most prestigious universities.

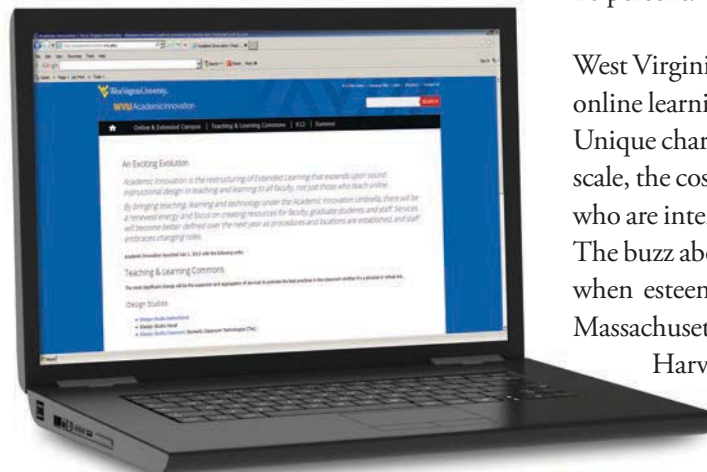


WVU believes MOOCs can increase the visibility of the university’s research strengths, engage alumni and the global community and increase enrollment.

In May 2013, West Virginia University was invited to join Coursera, a California technology company founded by Andrew Ng and Daphne Koller from Stanford University. Coursera hosts 90 partner institutions worldwide and nearly

five million students from 195 nations. WVU is currently asking faculty for proposals to offer a MOOC in the fall of 2014 to introduce the university to new global audiences. WVU believes MOOCs can increase the visibility of the university’s research strengths, engage alumni and the global community and increase enrollment. This is an exciting venture that builds upon our robust WVU online programming and 20-plus online degrees.

How does it work? The majority of MOOCs use video lectures and activities that are enhanced by machine-graded learning to guide student responses and provide immediate feedback. Because of the large number of participants, there is usually little faculty-to-student interaction; however, peer tutoring, mechanized grading and group collaboration provide primary forms of feedback. The learner must be motivated and self-directed to keep up with the video and assignment components. While tens of thousands may enroll in a single course, completion rates have been averaging at less than 10 percent.



West Virginia University was an early adopter of online learning with its first web class in 1998. Unique characteristics of MOOCs include the scale, the cost and the prestige of the universities who are interested in online programming. The buzz about MOOCs was ignited in 2011 when esteemed universities, such as Stanford, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard, entered the distance education arena. In the fall of 2011,



Sebastian Thrun and Peter Norvig delivered an artificial intelligence course to more than 160,000 students. The two Stanford professors set up a makeshift studio in the basement of Thrun's guesthouse to stream video and utilized a web-based platform to engage students in interactive activities. Nearly two-thirds of the students participated from 190 countries outside the United States, for

which more than 100 volunteers translated the lectures into 44 languages.

MOOCs have been touted as the latest disruptive innovation in education today and a tool for democratizing education. The disruptiveness of MOOCs is created by making some of the world's greatest thinkers accessible to everyone for free! To illustrate this point, Harvard has had more individuals register for MOOCs in a single year than have attended the university across its 377-year history. The numbers of students globally participating in MOOCs provide a compelling story, particularly when they are not earning academic credit. With the increasing cost of higher education, MOOC registrations are evidence of the quest for knowledge beyond the credential and many have taken notice.

While MOOCs have captured registrations massively, the next wave of acronyms are SPOCs, or Small Private Online Courses. These courses are scaled down in numbers very similar to current online programs, but remain free, for now. Many learners of all ages see knowledge as

a path toward sophisticated skills and high-paying jobs, without traveling, paying tuition or collecting a college degree.

For more information on WVU Online or WVU's upcoming MOOCs, visit **AcademicInnovation.wvu.edu**. 