



Educational Innovation  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

April 28, 2014

MEMORANDUM

TO: Michael Bernard-Donals, Chair, University Committee

FROM: Christopher Olsen, Interim Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning  
Jeff Russell, Vice Provost for Lifelong Learning and Dean, Division of Continuing Studies, on behalf of the Educational Innovation (EI) Core Team

RE: Suggestion -- work group to address a potential barrier to educational innovations at the University of Wisconsin-Madison

As part of the Educational Innovation (EI) initiative, whose vision is to enhance capacities for educational excellence and implement transformative teaching and learning projects at UW-Madison, we believe that the current academic staff designation of allowed work areas is a potential obstacle to innovation.

Pursuant to Faculty Policies and Procedures, 1.03 A, academic staff work is limited to teaching, research OR service. Specifically, academic staff members with research titles are not able to participate in teaching activities on campus, which limits their ability to contribute to the education of students. This issue presents an opportunity for improvement—we can impact teaching and learning on campus by better engaging a large sector of our staff community in our institution's educational mission.

We ask that the UC consider establishing a work group to explore this policy. By exploring channels for greater flexibility in the roles that our academic staff can assume, we will better serve the needs of our students. We believe the formation of such a work group is an important next step to advance EI efforts, including blended learning, new degree offerings, expanded access for traditional and post-traditional students, curricular transformation and restructuring, etc. The EI Core Team would be happy to act as a partner in this effort, and would support the formation of this committee however possible.



## **University of Wisconsin-Madison Massive Open Online Course Pilot**

### **PHASE ONE**

#### **Course information:**

**Video Games & Learning (offered October 3, 2013, 6 weeks)**

**42, 482 total registered, 24, 924 active registrants**

- Constance Steinkuehler, associate professor of digital media, Department of Curriculum and Instruction & co-director of the Games+Learning+Society Center, Wisconsin Institute for Discovery
- Kurt Squire, professor, Department of Curriculum and Instruction & co-director of the Games+Learning+Society Center, Wisconsin Institute for Discovery

**Markets with Frictions (offered October 30, 2013, 6 weeks)**

**32, 969 total registered, 14, 871 active registrants**

- Randall Wright, professor, Wisconsin School of Business

**Human Evolution: Past and Future (offered January 21, 2014, 8 weeks)**

**41, 652 total registered, 20,316 active registrants**

- John Hawks, associate professor, Department of Anthropology

**Globalizing Higher Education and Research for the "Knowledge Economy" (offered March 24, 2014, 7 weeks)**

**Evaluation data for this course is pending**

- Kris Olds, professor, Department of Geography
- Susan L. Robertson, professor, University of Bristol (United Kingdom)

#### **Phase one pilot goals:**

1. Develop standards for quality UW-Madison MOOCs.
2. Document faculty, learner and staff support needs.
3. Understand and evaluate MOOC learning platform requirements.
4. Understand MOOC learners and learning outcomes.
5. Summarize current business models for sustained MOOC efforts and examine the possibility of credit-bearing MOOCs.

## Lessons Learned:

We learned several key lessons from our phase one pilot MOOCs, based not only on our formal evaluation process, but also through reflection on the course design process. A few of the key lessons include:

**Learners will jump in and out of a MOOC** - This does not indicate failure, rather it is common for individuals that have a successful MOOC experience. Participants are likely to come to a MOOC with extrinsic motivation that informs their behavior.

**Understand the need for tools and triage** - MOOCs require an investment in a “triage” role to facilitate the technical and logistical needs of participants, who are learning anywhere and all the time. The discussion forums often become a confusing space for students, unless a dedicated instructor or TA serves as a guide.

**Include diverse perspectives** - Learners appreciate a rich diversity of experience in a MOOC, whether in the form of content, activities or the guest experts that are showcased. By leveraging their networks, faculty were also able to provide learners access to global expertise.

**Know your audience** - By focusing on a primary audience, instructors can better identify who will benefit most from their MOOC. By succeeding with a primary audience, a MOOC is more likely to have broad impact and deeply engage participants.

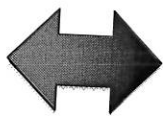
**Learners attach to content that is personal or contextual** - Participants who are able to apply MOOC content to their own context or community seem better able to engage with a course.

**Understand learner motivations** - Participants fell into three discernible motivational categories. *General* interest participants wanted to explore MOOCs and connect with interested others. *Career* interest participants were investigating career possibilities or exploring topics relevant to their current job. *Educational* interest participants were students and teachers interested in MOOCs for their own classes, or for teaching and learning.

**Understand MOOC typographies** - Two overarching models for MOOCs became apparent during phase one: The Global “Niche” MOOC and the “Big Show” MOOC. The typographies are depicted below.

### Global “Niche” MOOC

- Training on a new or unique topic
- Desire for regular check-ins/quizzes
- Keep courses short! (3-4 weeks)
- Participants are interested in paying for a credential
- Audience is focused, & potentially small



### “Really Big” Show

- Broadly accessible knowledge (*think Nova episode*)
- Length of MOOC is unimportant
- Quality of video is **very** important
- Participants are interested in donating to help fund the MOOC

Please do not hesitate to contact us via email at [jrussell@des.wisc.edu](mailto:jrussell@des.wisc.edu) or [jorn@wisc.edu](mailto:jorn@wisc.edu). For more information on Educational Innovation and MOOCs, visit <http://edinnovation.wisc.edu/moocs-2/>

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**PHASE TWO**

**Course information:**

*\*Course release dates are pending. All phase two courses will be approximately four weeks in length.*

**Understanding Aldo Leopold's Legacy**

- Timothy Van Deelen, associate professor in the Department Forest and Wildlife Ecology
- Janet Silbernagel, professor in the Department of Natural Resources and Landscape Architecture and associate program director of the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies
- Paul Robbins, professor and director of the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies

**Changing Weather and Climate in the Great Lakes Region**

- Steven Ackerman, professor of Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences
- Margaret Mooney, Senior Outreach Specialist for the Space Science and Engineering Center

**Virtual Shakespeare**

- Jesse Stommel, assistant professor, Department of Liberal Studies and the Arts
- Sarah Marty, faculty associate, Department of Liberal Studies and the Arts
- R L Widmann, associate professor of English at the University of Colorado Boulder

**Energy and the Earth**

- Alan Carroll, professor of geoscience

**Forests and Humans**

- Tom Gower, professor, Department of Forest and Wildlife Ecology

**Climate Change and Public Health**

- Jonathan Patz, professor and director of the Global Health Institute

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## **Unique aspects of phase two:**

**Engaging our campus and community** - A campuswide kickoff is planned for either the fall or spring of 2014 to highlight UW's uniqueness in the MOOC space, generate momentum for phase two, and highlight the role of the humanities in MOOCs.

**Fostering equal participation** - We are unique in the MOOC space, because our faculty and academic staff are participating equally in the design and instruction of phase two MOOC pilot courses. Half of our courses currently feature unique and interdisciplinary instructional partnerships.

**Creating thematic ties** - Themes of environment, sustainability, and choices and challenges will showcase community engagement and position Madison as a "high tech" and "high touch" institution in phase two. We are promoting a "sifting and winnowing" of ideas, and providing a 21<sup>st</sup> century space for public discourse.

**Connecting with Wisconsin citizens** - This second phase of MOOCs allows UW-faculty to put information in the hands of people who can use and take action with the information. Our MOOC faculty are partnering with Wisconsin organizations such as the public libraries and American Players Theatre to connect with citizens around real-world challenges and to use the MOOC as a catalyst for facilitating direct and meaningful change.

**Leveraging MOOC content and design for future University of Wisconsin Madison learning experiences** - Phase two aims to create a seamless link between MOOCs and other educational opportunities available through UW-Madison (i.e., professional development, post-baccalaureate programs, non-credit options, for-credit courses etc.)