



DREXEL UNIVERSITY

College of

Computing & Informatics

MOOCs at the College of Computing & Informatics: Successes and Challenges

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BACKGROUND

Drexel University's College of Computing & Informatics has recently developed and offered two free massive open online courses (MOOCs) delivered in winter term of 2014. The MOOCs covered the diverse topics of *multicultural resources* and an *introduction to informatics*, offering continuing education opportunities to the community, and attracting new students.

Multicultural Resources for Diverse Populations

- 6-week graduate –level course
- Explores diverse user populations in libraries
- Geared towards librarians & educators

Introduction to Informatics

- 5-week introductory course
- Overview of the field of informatics
- Geared towards prospective students & general population

COURSE DEVELOPMENT

The MOOCs were collaboratively developed in summer term of 2013, by the following team:

- Faculty – Monica Maceli, Ph.D. (Monica.Maceli@drexel.edu) & Vanessa Irvin Morris, M.S.L.S., Ed.D. (vmorris@drexel.edu)
- Instructional designer – Vicki J. Brace, MSIO, MSed. (vjb36@drexel.edu)

Course structure:

- Modules (5 or 6, respectively) included video lectures, readings, and assignments
- Assignments included discussion board posts, short quizzes, and/or student video creation
- Hosted on Blackboard's CourseSites

INTERESTING FINDINGS

- Quality of work submitted (discussion postings, videos, etc.) appears to be of a higher quality than discourse in the university setting.
- Examples: Respectful reference and citation to assigned readings and videos; Well-written work; deep critical thinking applied to discussing topics.
- Students take the course very seriously, emailing about absences and lateness of work submitted, even though the course is free and without university credit.
- Students express feeling challenged by keeping up with the course (in particular, the graduate course).
- Initial retention rates appear typical for MOOCs (i.e. final completion rates typically fall below 10%). So far:
 - 90 students registered for the informatics MOOC; 30 completed Module 1
 - 59 students registered for the multicultural MOOC; 10 completed Module 1

CHALLENGES

- Presenting course material that is relevant to an international audience
- Connecting with students from a diverse population, with varying levels of presence in the course
- Technical issues with the hosted model (e.g. downtime, relying on external company for technical support)
- Determining what level of student retention is appropriate

FUTURE WORK

Our experiences are relevant to future MOOC development at Drexel University, helping inform the larger Drexel community as to the opportunities and challenges generated by this novel trend in education. Our experiences raise many questions to be addressed in the future, including:

- How to measure and understand the effect of the MOOCs on attracting students to CCI;
- How to use our findings to improve our existing online course offerings; and
- Whether to offer these MOOCs and/or develop additional topics within new, future MOOCs

SOURCES

CourseSites by Blackboard. (2014). *Get The Most Powerful Tools For Your Classroom*. Retrieved from <https://www.coursesites.com/webapps/Bb-sites-course-creation-BBLEARN/pages/learn.html>.

