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## Newsroom

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# University System of Georgia partners with Coursera for online learning

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The fast-developing world of massive open online courses (MOOC's) has a new framework today with the announcement of a partnership among ten state university systems and public universities – including the University System of Georgia – and one of the leading platforms for MOOC's, Coursera.

Joining the USG in this partnership will be the State University of New York (SUNY), the Tennessee Board of Regents and University of Tennessee Systems, University of Colorado System, University of Houston System, University of Kentucky, University of Nebraska, University of New Mexico, and West Virginia University.

The non-exclusive partnership will enable the participants to explore how to develop and use MOOC technology and content to improve college completion rates, academic quality and access to higher education, both for students enrolled in colleges and universities comprising the systems as well as Coursera's global classroom of learners.

"We are excited about this partnership because it provides us with the opportunity to better serve students and also contribute to our goal to increase student success and college completion," said USG Chancellor Hank Huckaby.

"If there are resources and services that can assist our institutions in developing and offering affordable, high quality academic courses, programs, and supports, we have an obligation to explore these opportunities on behalf of students," Huckaby said. "This is about being student-centered and fostering system-wide innovative solutions to meet our goals of quality, access, affordability, and completion."

While today's announcement is not about the launch of specific online courses or degrees, it is an important step in the fast-evolving world of MOOC's, virtually unheard of a year or two ago. The initial concept behind MOOC's was to use technology to allow individuals to take college courses online at no cost, but without earning college credits.

Houston Davis, the USG's chief academic officer, said, "One next step in the evolution of MOOC's is to explore appropriate ways for this content to be merged with existing academic content, new academic supports, and rigorous assessments to provide affordable credit opportunities."

"There is a great deal of interest within our institutions in exploring flexible, new models of education delivery, ranging from independent learning opportunities through models that provide more intensive support and instruction," Davis said.

The agreement gives the University System of Georgia faculty and institutions the chance to be an active player in shaping the way that MOOC's will be utilized and expanded.

"However this evolves, we want this to be truly beneficial for Georgians and a path to meaningful credits and degree opportunities," Davis said. "This and other open educational resources can be important tools in improving access and shortening the time to earn a degree while insisting on preservation and enhancement of academic quality."

The new Coursera partnership will allow participating systems and institutions to share knowledge and resources to shape curriculum, adapt existing MOOC content, and experiment with "blended learning" which combines online video lectures and content with active, in-person classroom engagement.

In Georgia, the University System also will focus on policy flexibility and options for the USG campuses to experiment and be innovative with open educational resources and course offerings. Davis noted the USG's efforts will be focused on Georgians and will not use resources for audiences outside the state.

USG institutions will be invited to develop new learning models as well as initial implementation of these tools to improve access and degree completion for Georgia learners.

"As our campuses work to increase the percentage of Georgians with some level of college completion, new and flexible academic offerings such as MOOC's will play an important, but not the only, role in this effort," said Davis. "This resource partnership complements on-going completion initiatives at many of our institutions that are being led by our world class faculty and staff."

It is expected that initial USG institutional efforts will begin by exploring limited course offerings and supplemental supports that can be evaluated for overall academic quality and student success. These initial activities may span the use of external MOOC platform providers' content and services and the development of similar in-system capabilities in the areas of content, support, and assessment.

In time, the Georgia efforts will serve as a clearinghouse of high quality, affordable, complementary credit pathways developed by USG institutions and utilizing MOOC and MOOC-like resources, including potentially:

- Additional resources and support for faculty to focus on individualized instruction in the classroom;
- Credit sequences for general education core completion;
- High-demand associate degree completion options;
- Selected certificate, bachelor's and master's degree options;
- Additional supports for students in freshman gateway courses; and
- Flexible options to match student preferences on a course-by-course basis.

The partnership will provide USG campuses with increased flexibility and options for experimentation and because the partnership with Coursera is non-exclusive, the USG will retain the freedom to look at other technology options as the MOOC and open education resource world grows and evolves.

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