

## **A CROSS-CAMPUS APPROACH TO ONLINE EDUCATION: A COLLABORATIVE FACULTY-DRIVEN APPROACH TO REDESIGNING PRINCIPLES OF MARKETING**

Glen H. Brodowsky, California State University, San Marcos  
Susan Cadwallader, California State University, Fullerton  
E. Vincent Carter, California State University, Bakersfield  
Kirti Sawhney Celly, California State University, Dominguez Hills

In recent years, colleges and universities have begun to consider new technology-based approaches to higher education. MOOCs (Massively Open Online Courses) seem to have become all the rage in higher education circles. Leading academic institutions have begun to offer online courses – some for credit, some not for credit – to thousands of students in every corner of the globe. Several have teamed up with for-profit vendors such as Udacity and Coursera, as well as major academic publishers, with the goal of reaching a global audience desiring university courses.

Faced with massive budget constraints, legislators and governors have begun to turn toward technology-assisted online education as a potential solution to cutting costs in public higher education. The California State University (CSU) is the largest public university system in the United States serving the needs of more than 400,000 students across the twenty-three campuses in the system. Access to Excellence, a major part of the CSU's mission, aims to provide access to as many qualified students as possible. Faced with enormous budget deficits in recent years, access has become limited. Certainly, it is reasonable for legislators and political leaders to look for alternative means to meet the growing demand for higher education within the state.

Alongside its mission to provide access to qualified students, the CSU is also committed to excellence and student success, as measured by graduation rates. The university needs to remove bottlenecks in terms of scheduling and class availability to help students take the courses they need when they need them and in a medium that works for their schedules. Online or technology-assisted education would seem a reasonable means of achieving these goals.

Nonetheless, early experiments with online education have shown poor persistence rates for students enrolling in online courses and MOOCs. Online education puts a great deal of responsibility on students to become self-directed learners. However, many of the students who come to the CSU come from backgrounds that require a great deal of remediation before they are ready to tackle college level material. These students may, due to their backgrounds, be less self-motivated and need more guidance to succeed in an educational endeavor. Indeed, this turned out to be the case in a much-heralded launch of a program offered by San Jose State, a CSU campus, in conjunction with Udacity. The results indicate that at-risk students have low persistence and completion rates in large online classes.

In short, online education goes very far in increasing access to many students. However, the jury is still out in terms of how well such approaches may work lead to the type of excellence that helps students complete bottleneck and remedial courses. The approach provides access, but does not seem to guarantee completion, excellence or success.

Perhaps a missing ingredient in the recipe for successful online education has been the role of the faculty. While administrators and legislators should rightfully be focused on providing access, the subject-area faculty must be in charge of designing educationally rich, viable, and appropriate programs to be delivered in person, online, and/or in hybrid combinations of the two approaches to ensure excellence. To this end, the Governor of the State of California

earmarked \$10 million for faculty-led redesign of bottleneck courses. One of the courses that was listed as a bottleneck was Principles of Marketing.

Fortunately, CSU marketing faculty represent the largest bloc of members in the Marketing Educators' Association (MEA), the premier organization dedicated to excellence in marketing pedagogy. In a unique, cross-campus approach, a small consortium of four faculty representing four campuses in Southern California have been funded, under the governor's grant, to work collaboratively to develop an online Principles of Marketing Course – including the use of online lectures and learning modules to be offered to students from each of the four campuses. Students enrolled in the online course could register and receive credit on their home campuses (with FTES accruing to those campuses).

The consortium of instructors represents a broad range of marketing sub-disciplines, including sales, global marketing, and services marketing. Thus, the instructor with the greatest expertise in each sub-disciplinary area will develop content for each particular module. Students would be exposed to lectures by faculty from different campuses and with different backgrounds. The content and syllabi would be developed across campuses to facilitate articulation and transfer across campuses. This would also ensure that a group of discipline experts – through their collaboration—could guarantee high quality in terms of content and maintaining rigorous standards for assessment.

This small group of faculty hopes that once the course is developed and tested, that it could be offered at other CSU campuses across the state. In the spirit of continuous improvement, we welcome other faculty from other campuses to critique our work and add content – through their own lectures and assessment materials – to develop an online Principles of Marketing course that could be used state-wide as a faculty-led open-source teaching materials clearinghouse.

Continuous improvement is a goal for online instruction among CSU marketing faculty as well. Although the main learning focus is on increasing access and excellence for students, marketing faculty members face pedagogical challenges associated with online course design and delivery. Different approaches to the deployment of online marketing courses are being pursued by each of the CSU campuses. In some instances online instruction is assigned to faculty members from above, based on the decisions of deans and chairs. In other cases, online instruction emerges from below, with faculty members volunteering or vying for courses based on their teaching interests. Sometimes, online instruction is coordinated by special committees and administrators empowered to manage faculty course assignments and curricula. These varying approaches for assigning marketing faculty to online course instruction can create confusion and consternation.

Indeed, the dramatic rise of online course platforms and the popularity of online courses among the current generation of students, presents a professional development challenge for marketing faculty. A growing faculty schism exists between experts and novices in online instructions, leading some to embrace it as an opportunity for advancement and others to evade it as threat of falling behind. Possibly, an open platform model for becoming acquainted with online instruction with professional peers in a risk-free environment can bridge this gap between experts and novices to optimize continuous learning for marketing faculty. Availing marketing faculty of faculty-developed open source options for retooling their online pedagogical skill set and clarifying ambiguous curricular initiatives provides a win-win outcome for faculty, students, and administrators who all share the goal of increasing student enrollment and success.

Beyond the immediate benefits of breaking through the bottleneck created by the Principles of Marketing course system-wide, the CSU stands to benefit in other ways from this cross campus effort. First, the design team can build a repertoire of course materials including assignments

so that courses of various lengths can take a modular approach and use the materials to fit various course schedules. Availability of CSU created content can also reduce or eliminate course textbook expenses assuming course materials can stand alone--a key priority for the CSU. Finally, since the CSU professors designing the course are active scholars in marketing pedagogy, there are many opportunities for assessment and research to improve online pedagogy.

In this special session, the four faculty members will discuss the following issues:

- The genesis of the cross-campus effort
- The process of designing the program
- The benefits and difficulties of cross-campus collaboration
- Issues and concerns related to intellectual property and academic freedom
- Opportunities for assessment and study of online pedagogy in marketing
- Creating a collaborative faculty development forum for online pedagogical skills and cross-campus curriculum initiatives.