ANNOUNCEMENT

Lumen Learning Receives Funding to Create Next-Generation Courseware Targeting Disadvantaged Students

Digital course materials, funded by the Gates Foundation, will boost student learning outcomes through personal learning pathways, personalized teaching and open content

PORTLAND, Ore. (Sept. 30, 2014) – Lumen Learning has been selected to receive funding as part of the Next Generation Courseware Challenge, a $20 million grant competition from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to build exemplary, affordable digital course materials that improve student success among low-income and disadvantaged learners. Inspired in part by the groundbreaking work of Benjamin Bloom, Lumen’s courseware will apply educational strategies that show promise for improving learning outcomes: personal learning pathways for developing subject mastery; personalized teaching; and effective use of open educational resources. The result will be “next generation” courseware for four introductory-level college courses that enroll millions of students every year: Introduction to Business; Principles of Marketing; Microeconomics; and Macroeconomics.

“Students learn best when education is personalized to their needs and goals,” said Daniel Greenstein, director of Postsecondary Success at the foundation. “There is a growing body of evidence that courseware, when integrated effectively by faculty in instruction, can personalize learning at unprecedented scale. This latest round of investments represents our belief that a new generation of courseware is beginning to emerge with capabilities that will have tremendous benefits for students and faculty and enable colleges and universities to more effectively advance their educational missions.”

In addition to Lumen’s substantial in-house expertise in open educational resources, learning science and instructional design, the grant-funded project will assemble a “dream team” of project partners working at the forefront of learning, educational content and technology.

“Our work to date has demonstrated the transformative possibilities of courseware designed using open educational resources to engage students, successfully moving the needle on student success,” said Kim Thanos, CEO of Lumen Learning. “This funding allows us, together with our project partners, to build on that successful model with highly enriched and interactive content, insightful analytics and tools for personalized learning and teaching that help faculty members create more productive connections with their students.”

Working together to achieve this vision, Lumen’s project partners include:

- **BBC Worldwide Learning**: Lumen’s courseware will incorporate high quality educational videos that draw from BBC Worldwide Learning’s extensive library of engaging, informative and global subject matter.

- **Dr. Constance Steinkuehler**: One of the world’s leading experts in game-based learning, Dr. Steinkuehler will guide the development of lightweight games and simulations for a hands-on, interactive learning experience.
• **Difference Engine**: Difference Engine is tailoring its learner-centric platform to the unique requirements of mastery learning and open content, creating a personalized learning platform to adapt content to students’ needs as they master course competencies.

• **The Inclusive Design Research Centre (IDRC), OCAD University**: The acclaimed IDRC will design the courseware’s universally accessible user experience through a highly iterative, inclusive and learner-centric process.

• **Norman Bier**: Drawing on his work with Carnegie Mellon University’s Open Learning Initiative and forging connections with the Simon Datalab, Mr. Bier will establish a Learning Lab tasked with harnessing data to generate learning science insights and drive continuous courseware improvements.

• **The Online Learning Consortium (OLC)**, formerly Sloan Consortium: Faculty training and professional development for the courseware will be developed and delivered in conjunction with OLC, a leader in best practices for technology-assisted teaching and learning.

• **OpenStax College**: Core content and subject matter expertise will come from OpenStax College’s high quality, peer-reviewed, open textbooks which allow tremendous flexibility to adapt, remix and repurpose content to fit the project’s progressive course design.

“Thirty years ago, Benjamin Bloom discovered that when you combine mastery learning and personal instruction, the average student outperforms 98% of students taught in a conventional classroom setting,” said Dr. David Wiley, a longtime advocate of open education and chief academic officer of Lumen Learning. “Until now, the expense of this approach has made it financially untenable, impersonal, and asocial. The goal of our courseware is to replicate Bloom’s success affordably and on a wide scale, enabled by this new generation of learning and communications technologies.”

Collaborating with the Lumen courseware project as co-development partners are eight educational institutions including two-year colleges and four-year universities from across the U.S.: **Broward College Online** (FL), **Cerritos College** (CA), **Pittsburg State University** (KS), **Salt Lake Community College** (UT), **Santa Ana College** (CA), **Tidewater Community College** (VA), **University of Maryland University College** (UMUC), and the **Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges** (SBCTC). Together these institutions serve more than 300,000 students annually. On average among these institutions, nearly half of all students are considered low income and/or disadvantaged.

“We’re excited about the opportunity to work with this talented team, validate course design, and refine the experience for students and faculty as we pioneer the new courseware and instructional approach,” said Raúl Rodríguez, chancellor of the Rancho Santiago Community College District. “Even more importantly, we look forward to gleaning insights from this process about how students learn and what’s most effective, to help us better educate and serve the needs of all students.”

With project kick-off taking place later this year, Lumen Learning anticipates developing the new courseware through the first half of 2015. The first wave of participating faculty members will teach with the pilot courseware during the 2015-2016 academic year. Informed and improved by learning data from the pilot year, Lumen anticipates general availability for the new courseware in 2016. Targeting courseware affordability as a major requirement for winning the grant, the company plans to provide platform hosting, ongoing courseware support and updates for approximately a quarter of the average cost of traditional commercial textbooks.
About Lumen Learning
Lumen Learning provides high quality open courseware and support for institutions seeking to transition high enrollment courses to open educational resources (OER). Lumen’s OER-based courseware and support have been used by 60+ higher education institutions, including six of the 20 largest U.S. community colleges and system-level agreements in three states. Lumen Learning pioneers research-based approaches to successful adoption of open educational resources. Lumen projects typically reduce total spend on textbooks and course materials by 90%, while achieving 5-10% improvements in student success. Visit us at lumenlearning.com. Follow us on Twitter at @LumenLearning.

About the Project Support Partners

BBC Worldwide Learning: BBC Worldwide Learning is a premium provider of short-form content for the global education market with thousands of high-quality learning videos in its collection. It offers custom video solutions from clip licensing to fully produced projects that educate, inform and entertain.

Difference Engine: Difference Engine is the operating system for learning, and helps top education providers rapidly launch personalized learning experiences and deliver them at scale.

Inclusive Design Research Centre, OCAD University: At the IDRC an international community of researchers, scholars and open source designers and developers work together to ensure that emerging digital systems and practices are built for the full range of human diversity and leveraged to support inclusive participation in all aspects of our society.

Online Learning Consortium (OLC), formerly Sloan-C, is a member-sustained professional organization originally created in 1992 and devoted to advancing the quality of online learning worldwide.

OpenStax College: OpenStax College is a nonprofit organization committed to improving student access to quality learning materials. An initiative of Rice University, OpenStax College provides free textbooks, developed and peer-reviewed by educators to ensure they are readable, accurate and meet course requirements.

For More Information

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