



ANNOUNCEMENT

Competency-based Education and Open Educational Resources Converge in Washington Community Colleges' Newest Online Degree Program

Lumen Learning to Provide Adaptive Courses Using OER for Self-paced Online Business Transfer Degree

OLYMPIA, Wash. and PORTLAND, Ore. (Sept. 18, 2014) – College students in the state of Washington will soon have an innovative new option for earning an associate degree. Starting in January, several Washington state community colleges will offer a competency-based online business transfer degree in which all courses are designed using [open educational resources](#) (OER), thus eliminating the cost of commercial textbooks. Portland-based [Lumen Learning](#) is designing the self-paced online courses to adapt content and activities based on each student's prior knowledge and where they need to focus their learning to master course objectives or "competencies."

"Competency-based education lets students progress at their own pace as soon as they've learned the subject matter," said Connie Broughton, project director for competency-based education (CBE) programs at the [Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges \(SBCTC\)](#). "We expect this competency-based option to a business transfer degree will save students time and money because they can move rapidly through material they have already mastered with prior learning and work experience."

To develop the courses, faculty members from Washington colleges are collaborating with courseware provider Lumen Learning to define learning outcomes and related competencies for each of the 18 courses included in the degree program. For each course, the Lumen team curates OER including textbooks, video, images and other educational materials that are free and openly licensed for anyone to access. Lumen team members organize this content into a cohesive, "mastery learning" course structure designed to help students develop and demonstrate mastery of all the competencies. Embedded assessments gauge each student's progress and are used to generate personalized learning pathways tailored to individual learning needs.

"This approach is exciting because it combines the benefits of competency-based, mastery learning with the advantages of open educational resources," said David Wiley, chief academic officer of Lumen Learning. "Mastery learning ensures students gain a solid grasp of foundational skills and knowledge before moving on to new material, and research indicates this strengthens learning outcomes. Using instrumented open content, we can glean data about student performance and use it to enhance and expand the course materials and learning pathways to continuously improve student success."

The self-paced courses for Washington’s online CBE business transfer degree program will be delivered through the Candela Mastery Platform, an adaptive learning platform co-developed by Lumen Learning and [Difference Engine](#), a developer of learner-centric technology solutions powering top education brands.

“The SBCTC program blends innovative adaptive learning technologies and progressive pedagogy to create a breakthrough experience for learners,” said Dr. Jonathan Mott, chief learning officer at Difference Engine. “Competency-based education will offer a fast, affordable, learner-centric path-to-degree for Washington students. We are thrilled to be part of the solution for making education more affordable, accessible and efficient.”

With an eye towards sustainability of the program’s adaptive, OER-based courses, Lumen Learning will provide platform hosting, ongoing courseware support and updates for approximately a quarter of the average cost of traditional commercial textbooks.

“This program is an unequivocal win for students ready for this innovative kind of education,” said Jan Yoshiwara, deputy executive director for education for SBCTC. “There are no textbook costs. Students complete the program at their own pace through well-designed, convenient online courses. A motivated student could complete a 2-year transfer degree in just 18 months. All this adds up to quicker completion at a lower cost, while achieving the same learning outcomes required for traditional courses and programs.”

The first courses in the online CBE degree program will launch in January 2015. Thirteen Washington community colleges have signed on to participate in the pilot, with Columbia Basin College as the lead institution. Other system colleges will join after the pilot year. By summer 2015, institutions beyond Washington SBCTC may also benefit from the project’s investment in OER-based courses. Lumen Learning plans to make them available to the broader education community as Open Mastery Courses that are suitable for use in traditional or hybrid settings as well as self-paced online delivery.

Washington students can contact their local area-serving community colleges to learn more about the new CBE program. Later this month, academic leaders may preview the course structure and design for Open Mastery Courses at the [EDUCAUSE 2014 Annual Conference](#) by visiting either Lumen Learning or Difference Engine in the Exhibit Hall.

About the Washington State Board for Technical and Community Colleges

The Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges is led by a Governor-appointed board and provides leadership, advocacy, and coordination for Washington’s system of 34 public community and technical colleges. Each year, nearly 400,000 students train for the workforce, prepare to transfer to a university, gain basic math and English skills, or pursue continuing education. Visit our website at [SBCTC.edu](#).

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). Founded in 2012, the Lumen team delivers OER-based courseware and support to 40+ higher education institutions, including six of the 20 largest U.S. community colleges and system-level agreements in three states. Lumen Learning has pioneered research-based approaches to successful adoption of open educational resources. Its pilot

projects typically result in eliminating textbook costs, as well as 5-10% improvements in student success. Learn more at lumenlearning.com. Follow us on Twitter at [@LumenLearning](https://twitter.com/LumenLearning).

About Difference Engine

Difference Engine helps top education providers rapidly invent personalized learning experiences and deliver them at scale. Difference Engine combines: a cloud-based, modular technology platform; professional services to customize the platform for any content or learner; and seamless integration across multiple platforms.

Difference Engine is a division of Learning Objects, Inc., a Washington, D.C.-based education technology incubator founded in 2003.

For more information: difference-engine.com, or [@DiffEngine](https://twitter.com/DiffEngine) on Twitter.

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