Motion on Massive Open Online Courses

Motion:

A massive open online course (MOOC) is a course that is (a) entirely online and (b) open to anyone (no admissions requirements).

The University Senate affirms that no University-level polices preclude units from granting credits for MOOCs. Moreover, no University-level polices preclude the incorporation of MOOCs into GSU courses. The granting of credit for MOOCs is governed by existing policies regarding the awarding of GSU credit for courses not taken at GSU (Section 1320 of the Catalog).

Appropriate text, explaining GSU's policies regarding MOOCs, will be added to the Undergraduate Catalog as Section 1320.90, Credit for Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs).

Rationale:

GSU recognizes that the attainment of collegiate-level knowledge and skills can occur in many settings. Recently, massive open online courses (MOOCs) have received much attention.

Goal 1 of GSU's 2011-2016 Strategic Plan is to "become a national model for undergraduate education by demonstrating that students from all backgrounds can achieve academic and career success at high rates." MOOCs may well forward this goal. Goal 2 is to "significantly strengthen and grow the base of distinctive graduate and professional programs that assure development of the next generation of researchers and societal leaders." MOOCs may be particularly attractive to working adults seeking graduate degrees. MOOCs are a new development. GSU needs to carefully reflect and put in places the policies and procedures that will maximize their benefits for the learning of our students.

Existing Policies and Issues:

The remainder of this document lays out the ways that existing Georgia State policy allows units to grant credit for MOOCs and discusses issues regarding others ways that the University can respond to the advent of MOOCs.

I. Credit for MOOCs

A. Transfer Credit
If a student receives credit for a MOOC from an accredited institution, this credit will transfer as does any other credit. Georgia State's transfer credit policy does not include any restrictions on the mode of delivery of the course. See Section 1320.10.

[Not a change in policy.]

B. Credit by Examination
If a student takes a MOOC and gains knowledge and skills that lead to a passing score on an approved examination, the student will be awarded credit by examination. See Section 1320.40.

Departmental requests to grant credit by examination for MOOC courses must be approved through the college's normal curriculum review process.

[Not a change in policy.]

Information item: The relevant part of Section 1320.40:
"Georgia State University recognizes that learning can take place in various modes and places other than the traditional college classroom. Knowledge gained through experiential learning and other means is evaluated for possible college credit through examination. The Advanced Placement Program (AP), the College Level Examination Program (CLEP), and the International Baccalaureate Program (IB) are the most commonly used tests for this purpose. These are standardized examinations administered nationally each year. For information on CLEP, contact the University Testing Office, www.gsu.edu/testing. For information on AP and IB, contact your high school guidance counselor.
Other standardized exams or special departmental examinations may be approved for credit. For further information, contact the appropriate college.
Georgia State University serves as a DANTES (DSST) test center; however GSU does not accept DSST credit."

C. MOOCs of Other Institutions Incorporated into Georgia State Courses
Existing or new Georgia State courses may incorporate content from MOOCs. The requirements of a Georgia State course may be nothing more than that students complete the requirements of the MOOC offered by another institution. Alternatively, portions of a MOOC may be assigned as part of a Georgia State course or completing the entirety of a MOOC may be part of the

assignments of a Georgia State course.

[Not a change in policy.]

D. MOOCs Offered by Georgia State
Existing or new Georgia State courses may be offered as MOOCs. Individuals who have been admitted to GSU and officially register for these courses according to GSU's registration procedures will receive credit as they would for any other Georgia State course.

[Not a change in policy.]

Information item: The BOR rules regarding MOOCs
There are no BOR rules about MOOC courses. However, there are rules about online programs.
BOR Academic Affairs Handbook, 2.3.7.2 Distance Learning Approval Procedures
        The Board of Regents encourages the use of distance learning to help meet the instructional needs of the citizens of the State. Approval procedures for delivery of distance learning programs follow SACS requirements and are intended to allow institutions to avoid duplication of effort in the development of material submitted to SACS and the Board of Regents for approval.
        Prior approval by the Board of Regents is required for an initial program delivered fifty percent or more via distance learning by an institution and for any additional distance learning program(s) requiring SACS approval for substantive change (i.e., significant departure from originally approved programs). See SACS Policy on Substantive Change
        Institutions must receive Board approval for their initial distance learning delivery of fifty percent or more of an existing approved program prior to implementing the program. However, once an institution is approved for distance delivery, only notification to the Office of Academic Affairs is needed to offer additional existing approved programs 50% or more via distance learning, unless the distance delivery of the program requires SACS approval for a substantive change. In the latter case, Board approval must be obtained in order to implement the additional program.
        Additional information and request forms for all off-campus instructional delivery may be found at the following website: http://www.usg.edu/academic_programs/external/.

E. Other Options
The state of MOOCs is in flux. Departments who see appropriate ways to give credit for students taking MOOCs that do not fall under A-D above are encouraged to make proposals to Admissions and Standards for the modification of this policy.

II. Issues Regarding MOOCs

Georgia State encourages innovation that improves student learning. Therefore, the University also encourages the rigorous evaluation of new methods of instruction to verify that they effectively support student learning. The following are not policies to be enforced. They are issues that faculty, staff, and administrators should consider when making decisions about MOOCs.

A. A spectrum of the different ways that MOOC might lead to course credit.
    (There are in rough order of ease of implementation.)

1. Transfer credit for a MOOC offered by another accredited institution for which that institution gives credit.
2. Credit by examination for a MOOC offered by another institution.
3. A GSU course that integrates a MOOC offered by another institution.
    a. Students sign up for a GSU course and the entire content of the course is to do the MOOC. The MOOCs assessments are evaluated in the manner specified by the MOOC.
    b. Students sign up for a GSU course and the entire content of the course is to do the MOOC. However, the MOOCs assessments are evaluated by GSU faculty.
    c. Students sign up for a GSU course and part of the content of the course is to do all or part of a MOOC. Other GSU specific assignments are also given.
4. GSU produces a MOOC and GSU students sign up for it.

B. Potential Benefits

1. MOOCs might increase student learning. They might increase student learning for particular students and/or they might increase the number of students who can learn from a course.
2. MOOCs might remove/reduce barriers to higher education. Depending on how they are designed, they might remove barriers such as a commute times, scheduling conflicts, lack of sufficient space at universities, etc.
3. MOOCS might be significantly cheaper than other courses. This cost savings could be substantial.

C. Potential Challenges

1. Assessment is a key issue for MOOCs (as it is for all courses). The quality of the assessments will have a large impact on both student learning and the accuracy of the assessment of student learning. When it comes to MOOCs, assessment may be a challenge because the method of delivery is new to many students and faculty.
2. While it goes without saying that the primary responsibilities with regard to academic honesty belong to the student, faculty and departments designing MOOCs should be mindful to set up courses that support students who seek to be honest and do not reward those who cheat.

Information item: The relevant parts of Section 1380:
"As members of the academic community, students are expected to recognize and uphold standards of intellectual and academic integrity. The university assumes as a basic and minimum standard of conduct in academic matters that students be honest and *that they submit for credit only the products of their own efforts*. Both the ideals of scholarship and the need for fairness require that all dishonest work be rejected as a basis for academic credit. They also require that students refrain from any and all forms of dishonorable or unethical conduct related to their academic work."
"The submission of research or completed papers or projects by someone else is plagiarism…"
"Any work, in whole or in part, taken from the Internet or other computer-based resource without properly referencing the source (for example, the URL) is considered plagiarism."
"Submission for academic credit of a work product, or a part thereof, represented as its being one's own effort, which has been developed in substantial collaboration with another person or source or with a computer-based resource is a violation of academic honesty."
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3. It is unlikely that one type of MOOC (or MOOCs in general) will be appropriate for all courses or for all students. For example, some have suggested that MOOC courses have high DWF rates and are thus better for self-motivated students. Faculty and departments should consider what courses are best suited to what kinds of MOOCs and also the nature of the students appropriate for a particular MOOC.
4. Because a MOOC is a different kind of course, it may be necessary for there to be a MOOC orientation for students. Certain modules of GSU 1010 might be useful. It seems logical that the MOOC orientation would be online. In addition, advisement interventions may need to be specifically designed for students in MOOCs.
5. The economic effects of MOOCs on higher education are unclear. They might cause a serious reduction in university revenues (or they might not).
6. If GSU offers credit by examination to assess the learning in MOOCs, it seems likely that a fee would have to be charged. It is not clear how Board of Regents tuition and fee policies apply to in such cases.
7. The University needs to consider the distinction between giving credit for the course and allowing a course to meet prerequisites but not give credit. In general, the MOOC committee is skeptical of claims that an assessment shows that a student has met the

prerequisites for a course but not that the student deserves credit for the prerequisite course.

8. In order to assess MOOCs effectively, GSU may need to change the coding in Banner so as to allow us to determine the method of delivery of a particular section of a course.

9. The current student evaluation of instructor forms do not appear to be well-designed to provide the data to allow faculty and departments to assess MOOCs.

10. There are many issues surrounding MOOCs and faculty workload. It is not clear how to translate existing workload policies to apply to MOOCs.

11. In designing MOOCs, faculty and departments need to be mindful of the needs of disabled students. MOOCs can offer significant advantages for some students with some disabilities, but the MOOCs must be designed to realize those advantages.

12. GSU will need to set up appropriate incentives for depts/faculty to experiment with MOOCs. Getting the incentives right is both difficult and important.

13. Both the production of MOOCs by GSU faculty and the incorporation of non-GSU MOOCs into GSU courses should be assessed by departments. The annual review process might be one way to organize this assessment.

14. When GSU faculty offer MOOCs, they should work with appropriate offices (e.g., IS&T, the Center for Instructional Innovation) to assure that the quality of the delivery technology is appropriate to GSU standards.