CIC CONSORTIUM FOR ONLINE HUMANITIES INSTRUCTION

Announcement and Invitation for Applications

The Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) invites applications from member institutions to participate in the CIC Consortium for Online Humanities Instruction, a multi-year project (2014–2016) to assess the effectiveness and cost-savings potential of online teaching and learning in the humanities at CIC colleges and universities. This last year has seen a flood of interest in a phenomenon that barely existed two years ago. When MOOCs (massive open online courses) burst onto the higher education scene, they stimulated several new approaches to online learning, including open online courses, closed online courses, online courses for college credit, disaggregated online courses for certificates and badges, online courses with and without tuition, and assessments of student learning separate from the instructor’s evaluation of student performance.

Now, while the online learning technologies are still new, is the time to learn more about their effect on teaching and learning. As William G. Bowen has said, “The world of educational technology continues to develop very rapidly and could go in a great many directions. While we cannot afford to remain totally on the sidelines right now, we need to proceed with caution. . . .”

CIC member institutions already have demonstrated considerable interest in online teaching and learning in many different formats and fields of study, so this project is building on many innovations to learn about effective practices through careful evaluation. The evaluation will be led by Ithaka S+R, the nation’s leading research and consulting service for academic innovation in the digital environment. The Consortium is funded through a generous grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Goals

The Consortium will explore the use of various online teaching methods as feasible alternatives to traditional upper-level undergraduate courses in the humanities. Selected teams of faculty members and administrators from 20 institutions will develop and offer courses with significant online content and contribute to a national study of student learning outcomes and instructional costs. Consortium members also will explore how liberal arts colleges can use online learning to enhance rather than detract from the core mission of such institutions.

The Consortium has three goals: 1) to explore how online humanities instruction can improve student learning outcomes; 2) to determine whether smaller, independent liberal arts institutions can make more effective use of their instructional resources and reduce costs through online humanities instruction; and 3) to provide an opportunity for CIC member institutions to build their capacity for online humanities instruction and share their successes with other liberal arts colleges.
CIC hopes that the project will help answer the following questions:

- Many liberal arts colleges find it increasingly difficult to provide a wide range of specialized humanities courses at affordable costs. How can online humanities instruction help address this strategic challenge? What is the potential of online learning to replace existing pedagogical approaches for the education of traditional undergraduates but at a lower cost and with comparable or superior student outcomes?

- Much of the discussion about MOOCs and other online modes of instruction has focused on subject areas in the sciences and certain professional fields that are inherently sequential and cumulative. Far less is known about the value of online approaches for intermediate and advanced courses in the humanities. Do the same teaching strategies increase student learning in fields that do not have as clear a sequence of knowledge and skills?

- The standard MOOC model of providing online instruction to massive numbers of students seems at odds with the mission and values of most CIC member institutions, which emphasize low student-faculty ratios and close working relations between faculty members and students. How can liberal arts colleges embrace aspects of the new teaching and learning technologies without sacrificing such fundamental aspects of smaller colleges?

- How can academic leaders and faculty members understand better the increasing number of online platforms and instructional content providers? What do existing technology providers have to offer them?

- How can academic leaders proceed responsibly in offering online instruction when so little rigorous evidence exists about the efficacy of new technologies, especially for upper-level humanities courses?

- Given widespread apprehension about the potential impact of new learning technologies on faculty workload, how can academic leaders engage faculty members and foster their support for new online initiatives?

**The CIC Consortium for Online Humanities Instruction**

The CIC Consortium for Online Humanities Instruction offers 20 colleges and universities selected from among the CIC membership a rare opportunity to provide national leadership in exploring the future of online teaching and learning in the humanities. The three-year Consortium will begin in 2014 and conclude in late 2016. Each Consortium member will be represented by a three-person team including a senior academic officer (such as a chief academic officer or divisional dean) and two full-time faculty members in the humanities who are committed to exploring new approaches to online learning. Each institution will develop two intermediate or advanced undergraduate humanities courses that incorporate substantial online instruction. Each course will be offered twice, in pilot and revised versions, and will be evaluated in relation to both instructional costs and student outcomes. The second version of each course will be open to students at other institutions in the Consortium.

Proposed courses may involve the creation of new online instructional content, the reuse of existing online content, or the incorporation of emerging technologies for student collaboration, automated evaluation, peer grading, and other elements of instruction. CIC will consider any
upper-level humanities course that incorporates significant amounts of online instruction in pursuit of superior student outcomes and reduced instructional costs.

Examples might include:

- Creating a hybrid (or blended) course using content licensed from an existing MOOC;
- The collaborative development of online content that will be shared among several institutions as part of hybrid or blended courses offered at the individual campuses;
- The collaborative development of a “SMOC” (synchronous massive online course) or other shared online course for students at multiple institutions to enroll in simultaneously.

The transformation of existing courses and the development of new courses, especially courses that could not be offered effectively without access to online resources, also will be considered. The creation of noncredit MOOCs for public use will not be considered.

CIC seeks models of online or hybrid instruction in the humanities that will advance the goals of the Consortium as well as the strategic goals of participating institutions. Proposals should be consistent with the mission and values of the institution.

**Benefits of Participation**

Institutions selected for participation in the CIC Consortium for Online Humanities Instruction will receive the following benefits:

- Development of new institutional capacities to offer and evaluate online humanities courses;
- The opportunity to collaborate with institutional peers and experts from Ithaka S+R to experiment with online instruction. Ithaka S+R will work closely with each Consortium member on course design, implementation, and evaluation. Ithaka S+R also will provide guidance on technical issues to be considered and can serve as a helpful liaison to technology providers.
- The experience of making a significant contribution to the national discussion about online learning and the costs of higher education.

Consortium members will receive the following financial support:

- A $4,500 stipend for each of the two faculty members for the preparation and pilot offering of a new course and a $3,000 stipend per faculty member to revise and offer the course a second time.
- Support for all team members to participate in four workshops (two national and two regional). Support includes meals, lodging, materials, and a travel stipend of up to $1,350 per institution for each national workshop and up to $200 per institution for each regional workshop to defray some of the college’s costs of sending team members to the workshops.
- Small travel grants will be available for faculty members to visit other participating institutions.
Faculty members also will be able to request supplemental funds. Funds will be available for approximately three faculty members in the second year of the project and again in the third year to develop additional online humanities courses, with a preference for courses that involve collaboration among institutions. Start-up funds may be available to support innovative approaches to multi-institutional instruction, such as the development of a MOOC that will be shared by all the Consortium members.

Expectations of Participation

If selected, the institution will agree to:

- Develop two new courses in upper-level humanities using online technology;
- Send the team members to two national workshops and two regional workshops; institutions may be able to send additional institutional representatives to the workshops at their own expense;
- Collect, analyze, and share evidence of student learning and cost savings with Consortium members and Ithaka S+R, which will assess the effectiveness of the collective project;
- Submit written progress reports at regular intervals;
- Participate in webinars, conference calls, or other activities to share information;
- Provide a final report describing the outcome of the projects, including a reflection on the successes and disappointments of the experience with possible recommendations for future projects;
- Permit the inclusion of information about its project in publications about best practices, including a report to be released at the conclusion of the project; and
- Identify the funded activities as supported by CIC and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Eligibility

To be eligible for participation, applicants must be Institutional Members of CIC and remain members in good standing throughout the project. Applications are welcome from institutions that have extensive experience with online learning as well as those with relatively limited experience, but applicants must be committed to offering upper-level humanities courses to traditional full-time undergraduates. Courses developed as part of wholly online programs or designed exclusively for distance learners are not eligible for support through the Consortium.

Selection Criteria

The selection committee will use the following criteria to review applications:

- Does the application address clearly defined strategic challenges facing the institution?
- Is the institution’s experience in the Consortium likely to help a larger group of institutions facing similar challenges?
- Are the two courses proposed in the application of high quality?
• Will the proposed courses strengthen the humanities at the institution?
• Is there evidence that the new courses will reduce instructional costs?
• Will the institution bring appropriate experience and enthusiasm to the collaborative process?
• Is the proposed assessment of student learning feasible and well developed? Is the proposed assessment of instructional costs feasible and complete?

Members selected to participate in the Consortium will represent a range of humanities disciplines and approaches to online instruction and reflect the diversity of independent higher education.

**Consortium Timeline**

January–April 2014: Application development

**April 4, 2014: Deadline for submitting proposals**

April 25, 2014: Selection of Consortium members

July 23–24, 2014: Opening (national) workshop

Summer–Fall 2014: Pilot course development

October–November 2014: Regional workshops

November 2014: Deadline to apply for additional course development support

Spring 2015: Pilot courses offered

March 2015: Deadline to apply for second round of additional support for course development

Fall 2015: Pilot courses revised

October 2015: Regional workshops

Spring 2016: Revised courses offered

Summer 2016: Closing (national) workshop

Fall 2016: Final evaluation and summary report

**Application Instructions**

Institutions may apply in collaboration with one or more other institutions to develop courses that will be offered by all the collaborators. Each institution should have its own three-member team and submit its own application, using the letters of support and narrative statements to describe the nature of the proposed collaboration.

Each application should include the following:

**A. Cover letter**

The institution should submit a signed cover letter from the president that indicates the institution’s support of the application and commitment to the Consortium’s goals and expectations. The letter should include the following acknowledgment: “I understand that any instructional materials created as part of the Consortium may be re-used by other Consortium members during the duration of this project.”
B. Application form and team description
Use the online application form to submit the names and contact information for the three team members from your institution. You also will be asked to upload a brief biography or CV for each team member. Teams should consist of a senior academic officer (chief academic officer, dean of a humanities division, etc.) and two full-time faculty members in the humanities who are willing to develop and offer new courses and who are expected to be continuing members of the faculty beyond the end of the project in 2016.

C. Proposal narrative
Include a narrative of no more than five pages that addresses the following points:

- **Goals:** Why is the institution interested in participating in the Consortium? What strategic goal(s) is the institution planning to address? What long-term decisions about curriculum, faculty personnel matters, technology adoption, or budget might depend on the outcome? What does the team hope to learn by participating in the Consortium?
- **Online experience:** What experience in online instruction will the institution bring to the Consortium (in the humanities or other subject areas)? Describe the nature of faculty interest in online instruction at the institution, particularly in the humanities. What infrastructure is currently in place to support online undergraduate instruction?
- **Team members:** Why are the proposed faculty members and their proposed courses appropriate for this project? What experience will they bring to the Consortium? How were they selected?
- **Description of two (2) proposed courses:** Descriptions should include the course name, brief description of the content and learning outcomes, online resources that faculty members plan to incorporate, and a description of the delivery format. Syllabi are not required; CIC staff understand that the proposed courses may undergo significant transformation before they are offered. Priority will be given to upper-level courses in humanities disciplines that usually draw small numbers of students but are viewed as important to majors in the humanities. For collaborative applications, please describe how the resources will be shared across partner institutions.
- **Anticipated outcomes:** What new capabilities or resources does the project team expect to build at the institution? How will these be sustained beyond the end of the project? What plans does the team have to use the lessons learned from the project to improve teaching and learning at the institution?
- **Evaluation:** What would success look like for the proposed project? What tools and criteria are already in place for assessing the effect of Consortium activities on student learning and instructional costs? Note that all Consortium members will be expected to track learning outcomes and instructional costs in a common format with the guidance of Ithaka S+R.

D. Supporting documents (optional)
You may include supplemental documents such as syllabi for current courses or descriptions of other online learning initiatives at your institution.
Application Submission

Applications should be submitted via the CIC website at www.cic.edu/Programs-and-Services/Programs/Pages/Online-Humanities.aspx. The deadline for application is Friday, April 4, 2014, at 5:00 p.m. EDT.

Questions?

A list of “Frequently Asked Questions” about the CIC Consortium for Online Humanities Instruction is attached. Further information about the Consortium will be posted on CIC’s website at www.cic.edu/Programs-and-Services/Programs/Pages/Online-Humanities.aspx. Please contact Philip M. Katz, CIC’s director of projects, at pkatz@cic.nche.edu or (202) 466-7230, with any additional questions. Our colleagues at Ithaka S+R also will be available for consultation while institutions are preparing their applications.