



# RUTGERS

THE STATE UNIVERSITY  
OF NEW JERSEY

Robert L. Barchi, President

October 24, 2013

Mr. Kenneth Swalagin  
University Senate  
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey  
ASB III, Suite 110  
Cook/Douglass Campus

Dear Mr. Swalagin:

I am writing in response to the Report and Recommendations on Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) prepared by the Senate's Instruction, Curricula and Advising (ICA) Committee and adopted by the University Senate in February 2013. As the Report itself notes, this is a rapidly changing area. I have asked Richard Novak, Interim Vice President for Continuing Studies and Distance Education, to provide me with an update on the status of MOOCs at Rutgers. Dr. Novak has provided the following information in response to that request:

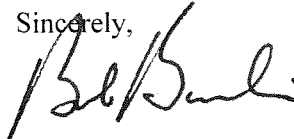
- Since former Vice President David Finegold briefed the ICA Committee in October of 2012, Rutgers was invited and has joined Coursera, after consultation and endorsement by the Center for Online & Hybrid Learning and Information Technology (COHLIT) Advisory Council.
- The three courses that were outlined for the Committee last October are the same three courses that are currently under development as Rutgers' first MOOCs. The third course, based on the work of James Martin, is being revised upon the recent death of Dr. Martin. The Division of Continuing Studies (DoCS) is working closely with the School of Arts and Sciences (SAS) to highlight various SAS faculty on major 21<sup>st</sup> century themes that are the corpus of Dr. Martin's book.
- MOOCs have proved to be extremely costly to produce as Rutgers has sought to develop superior offerings through the use of high quality video production. The costs have been absorbed and underwritten by DoCS, using solely non-state, non-tuition-based revenue.
- For the most part, the Rutgers MOOCs in Coursera are based on existing fully online courses that are offered for credit, but represent only a portion of the full course content. Thus, Rutgers MOOCs are being offered as non-credit courses with certificates of completion.
- Despite the potential benefits MOOCs could provide to the University, at this point in time, these first three MOOCs are the only ones being offered and proposed. As long as MOOCs remain so costly to produce and there is no monetization plan for revenue from these courses that could be used to sustain the process, only proposals for new MOOCs that are accompanied by significant funding will be considered.
- DoCS and COHLIT will carefully monitor the outcomes once the three Rutgers MOOCs are implemented to see what can be learned, and will continue to consult with other institutions that are offering MOOCs regarding their experiences. There is some initial conversation within the Big Ten's Committee on Institutional Cooperation about the consortium creating its own MOOC platform; however, those discussions are in the very early stages and no recommendations have been offered at this time.

Mr. Kenneth Swalagin  
October 24, 2013  
Page 2

Given this current state of Rutgers' progress with respect to MOOCs, I can report to you that the COHLIT Advisory Council, which has significant academic representation among its members, has been consulted on all decisions regarding these online courses. This group is being reconstituted and reorganized in consideration of COHLIT's current priorities. Since our decision has been to begin with only these three MOOCs on a trial/pilot basis, general MOOC guidelines and strategies are not being established at this time. Should we decide to initiate additional MOOCs in the future, such guidelines and strategies will be developed by an advisory group and shared with the Senate ICA Committee for review at that time. With respect to the academic matters addressed in recommendations four through ten, I assure you that these academic safeguards are already in place and that COHLIT and DoCS fully support and work within these guidelines.

I thank the members of the Senate's Instruction, Curricula and Advising Committee for their careful examination of this important topic, and by copy of this letter ask Interim Vice President Novak to keep the Senate informed as our advancement in this area progresses.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bob Barchi", written over the word "Sincerely,".

Robert L. Barchi

c: Richard L. Edwards, Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs  
and Interim Chancellor, New Brunswick Campus  
Richard Novak, Interim Vice President for Continuing Studies and Distance Education