

# Faculty embraces plan to expand online education

Yale UniversityYale University

Yale will expand its Summer Session courses for credit online and initiate a pilot of online courses during the regular semester, as the first steps in implementing recommendations from the [Report of the Dean's Committee on Online Education](#) [1], which was reviewed by the Yale College Faculty this month.

"There was widespread interest in the next steps set forth in the report," said Professor Craig Wright, co-chair of the committee. "Numerous faculty expressed their support for advancing Yale's efforts, based on personal experiences with their own online courses. And several faculty already are developing new online courses for credit and are eager to disseminate their materials with the world through Massive Online Open Courses, or MOOCs."

Professor Paul Bloom, the other co-chair of the committee, agreed. "As the conversation progressed, the faculty began to express their aspirations for online education," Bloom said. "For me, the chance to teach online was one of the most important pedagogical experiences during my Yale career, and I'm excited at the idea that many of my colleagues will now have this opportunity."

The online education report included the following recommendations to guide the University in 2013-2015:

- Yale should preserve and continue to make available the valuable assets of Open Yale Courses.
- Yale College should expand the successful program of Yale Summer Session Courses online.
- The College should experiment in the next two years with expanding the already existing online courses for credit in the languages by offering a small number of online courses in other subjects during the academic year that could be available to Yale College students as well as students enrolled at peer universities elsewhere.
- Yale should pursue affiliation with one or more increasingly sophisticated platforms so as to ensure that interested faculty can pursue pedagogical innovation (such as student-to-student collaboration and rigorous online assessment) and further dissemination of their teaching materials.
- A faculty member who creates an online course for credit should be encouraged to post some part of the materials for open dissemination for those who are not taking the course for credit. This would expand access to Yale's teaching

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materials in much the same way that Open Yale Courses has done.

- A teaching workshop should be developed and offered to all graduate students who are teaching fellows in an online course to introduce them to teaching techniques that are most successful for online instruction.
- There should be a University-wide standing committee reporting to the provost that is charged with the ongoing evaluation of digital dissemination initiatives for the University.

Several members of the faculty who served on the committee with Wright and Bloom expressed their enthusiasm for the expansion of Yale's online learning opportunities.

"I am excited about the directions set by the committee," said Professor Laurie Santos, a recipient of one of Yale College's teaching awards. "I have taught a Yale Summer Session course for credit online, and it was amazing. It is already a pleasure to teach several hundred Yale students on campus each year, but a MOOC will let me share the exciting science much more broadly. A worldwide audience will also help me be a better teacher on campus."

Professor June Gruber noted that she would be able to share her interest in central questions about happiness and emotion with a broader audience for the first time. "Teaching online will provide a unique environment to engage with students from around the world," Gruber said. "It is particularly exciting to be able to take advantage of the instructional opportunities afforded by these new technologies. For instance, with a MOOC I'll be able to connect students with distinguished thinkers in the field through a series of online interviews for each lecture's topic."

Professor Diana E.E. Kleiner, who was the director of two of Yale's pioneering online initiatives, AllLearn and Open Yale Courses, said, "As someone involved in Yale's online education since it began, and who has seen the extensive worldwide interest in our Open Yale Courses, I look forward to the expansion of Yale's offerings, which will bring the University's outstanding faculty to an ever-growing audience."

Yale's Office of Digital Dissemination, directed by Lucas Swineford, partners with faculty to produce the online courses. "I am delighted by the prospect of working with more faculty who want to teach an online course or disseminate their teaching materials around the world," Swineford said.

Bill Whobrey, dean of the Yale Summer Session program, said the experience with the online courses that have been offered has exceeded expectations. "The online learning management system employed during the intensive summer session allows faculty to replicate a seminar environment, with live small-group interaction," Whobrey said. "These interactions are as meaningful as face-to-face discussions, and students have the opportunity to interact in other, asynchronous ways as well. We have all been somewhat surprised by the 'intimate' environment that can be created online, as our students so familiar with this technology already know. We're not involved at the moment in transmitting this experience to large

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groups, but instead are focusing on providing students and faculty with a very personal Yale experience that earns Yale credit as well.”

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