A "modest proposal" for the benefit of California's taxpayers, students, and institutions of higher education

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The University of California has not yet determined how it will participate in the onrushing "tsunami" of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs).

Particularly for a public institution, responding to the allure of "new markets and revenue streams", "branding" and "monetization" risks losing focus on the core mission: providing a high-quality, low-cost education to the state's students and taxpayers.   Despite the high visibility of such initiatives and startups as EdX, Coursera and Udacity, no viable business model for MOOCs has emerged. Indeed, startups are already casting about for revenue through headhunting and job placement, exam administration, or other activities that are quite ancillary to the actual delivery of courses. In this context, university administrators are paralyzed by such questions as:
- Can MOOCs generate more revenue for the university without cannibalizing existing tuition revenue or otherwise sowing the seeds of the university's eventual downfall?
- How will incremental costs and revenues associated with MOOCs be apportioned among those who create and deliver instructional content, along with departments, schools, campuses, new administrative infrastructures, and many other potential "owners" within the university?
- If our university doesn't act now, will it miss the boat, or at least lose "first-mover advantage"?
- Will universities that fail to join the MOOC revolution become dinosaurs, destined for inevitable extinction?

Here is a simple, "modest proposal":

> **The State of California should enable <u>California-resident</u> students to receive up to some reasonable limit of UC (and/or CSU, and/or California community college) credit through achieving above-threshold grades in <u>UC-provided</u> MOOCs.**

By focusing solely on California's residents and California's own institutions of higher learning, this proposal avoids the paralyzing issues of "competition", "new markets", "scalable business model", etc.[1] It asks only that the University of California be tasked with the delivery of high-quality MOOCs to California-resident students who aspire to enrollment in California's own state universities.

If implemented, this proposal would result in a number of positive benefits for California taxpayers, students, and public institutions of higher learning.
- It would induce a large, 'captive' (i.e., resident) market for UC-provided MOOCs (which, given the talent in the UC, would doubtless be at least as high-quality as MOOCs provided by other universities).
- It would decrease the cost of both providing and purchasing education at California's state institutions. This will be a great relief to the state's overburdened taxpayers, to the overburdened institutions that cannot provide enough courses to meet demand, and to the overburdened students who struggle today with both unavailability of classes and skyrocketing tuition costs.
- The potential cost savings of instruction delivery, as well as other direct financial benefits, could be used to offset the cost of creating high-quality, UC-provided MOOCs.
- The state's public institutions will reverse the trend of negative publicity seen in recent years due to increased tuition and fees coming hand in hand with decreased access to courses and enrollment.
- With lowered costs and greater accessibility of a high-quality UC education, California residency will become more attractive to employers, families and students, and the state will enjoy the benefits of having a better-educated populace and workforce.

I believe that if the state of California were to implement this "modest proposal," it would be to the benefit of all Californians.   I for one am ready to help however I can to make it a reality.

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[1] Several key obstacles to MOOC deployment (logistics of student-teacher interaction across time zones; logistics of secure, in-person exam administration; language barriers; etc.) become more tractable by limiting both geography and population.