

Columbia College

Free On-Line Quality Education Model

April 2011

	NOTE:	Clarification of Terms
Should:	Must; Shall; Will:	These words or phrases indicate actions or activities that are <i>essential</i> or <i>mandatory</i> .
May or Could; Can:		This word implies that it is highly desirable to perform certain actions or activities, but not essential or mandatory. These words imply freedom or liberty to follow an alternative to the action or activity being presented in a document.

Background

On April 4, 2001 MIT announced that by 2011 it would place virtually all its course content on the web making it free for learners around the world. Educational material presented in this manner is referred to as open-course ware (OCW). MIT's decision has been celebrated by educators, educational institutions, governments, employers, and learners around the world. Its leadership has been followed by other leading institutions in many countries.

This decision has allowed individual learners to access course materials, such as lectures and lecture notes, course outlines, and other course content that was never before available to the public without first enrolling in a course and paying tuition.

However, it should be noted that individuals accessing course content do not have access to faculty members, advisors, tutors, and other educational or technical specialists. They do not have the opportunity to interact with other learners, participate in learning activities, discussion groups, debates, or exercises. Nor do they complete assignments, tests, or other evaluation activities that indicate the degree of knowledge or skill acquisition they have acquired. Finally they do not receive feedback and guidance from instructors. Nor do they receive course grades, certificates of completion or formal degrees indicating their competency in their field of study.

A Significant Opportunity

This open-course ware (OCW) movement presents real opportunity for Columbia College to bring together, in a structured way, course content developed by leading college and university researchers, scientists, and professors, from a wide variety of institutions, with extensive on-line learning resources, activities, exercises, experiences, simulations, and games developed by Columbia College.

These learning resources are complemented with continuous informal on-line learner quizzes and/or assessments meant to apprise the learner of their progress. The College would also design a formal on-line learning system which would allow learners, who wish to gain formal academic credit, to proceed, on a nominal fee basis to independent formal assessment of their acquired knowledge and skills.

At each stage of their experience with this On-Line Quality Education model, learners would be able to seek assistance from volunteers. These individuals would include other current or previous learners (peers); module or course subject specialists (tutors); industry and/or career specialists (mentors); delivery, system, service, and pace of learning advisors; and/or technical advisors. In some cases learners may opt to pay specialists on a fee-for-service basis. These specialists would include tutors; mentors; and delivery, system, service, and pace of learning specialists. All specialists will be available at each stage of their experience with this delivery model.

Introducing a Dream

The following pages briefly introduce some of the features of Columbia's Free On-Line Learning Model. It also describes how learners, employers and other educational institutions may utilize this on-line learning site to support learners from a number of perspectives. As Columbia College is currently not a degree granting institution, it will begin delivering on-line education in such areas as K to 12 education, college level certificates and diplomas as well as corporate training courses and programs for free.

In this model, virtually all learning could potentially take place on-line. This would significantly reduce the cost of education at the K to 12 level, college and university level, and corporate training level. It should also be noted that Columbia's on-line materials will be presented in "plain language" to make it easier for a larger group of learners to successfully learn. Please refer to the attached flow-chart to review this model as a learner would proceed through it.

Fees and Finances

- No fees will be charged to enroll; to be initially assessed; to take programs, courses, or individual modules; or report on learner progress.
- Revenue to support this model will come from advertising. One hundred percent of all revenue will be used to operate and expand this model.

Flexible Approach

- Learners may enroll for credit, which will require a fee based formal assessment of a learner at the completion of the course. They may also enroll credit-free, which does not require a formal assessment or test and therefore will be free.
- Depending on their individual needs, learners may enroll in a full program, one course, or simply a module within a course.
- Learners may enroll in a course or module 24/7 and complete it 24/7.
- Learners will have access to this site from home, work, school, or the community.
- Learners may choose whatever program, course, or module they wish to take and in whatever order. However, they will be advised what order is recommended. Learners will also be advised when there are prerequisite course requirements for some courses.

Progress and Support

- Learner may progress at their own pace as quickly or as slowly as they wish. However, they will be encouraged to set a course completion plan and be reminded by the computer to follow it.
- If the learner leaves the course or module for an extended period it will close down.

Support to Other Learners and Organizations

- Any portion of a program, course, or module on the Columbia site may be used by other faculty members, employers, or other education institutions to enhance what their students/employees are learning.

- Employees/students may access this system when experiencing difficulty with material or resources in their own working or learning environment.
- Individuals may access this site to review material previously learned as well as take modules and courses containing new knowledge.

Long Term Success

- To ensure the educational materials are of the highest quality, Columbia will seek to identify the highest standard of education and/or training in a country or region of the world and then exceed this standard.
- Learners will also be asked on a continuous basis to provide feedback at each stage of their experience with this model in order to improve its effectiveness.
- The long term success of this model will depend on the quality of the on-line learning environment, associated services, ease of access and use, and Columbia's commitment to continuous improvement.

On-Stage 2011

In June of 2011 Columbia College will begin offering its first two on-line education programs in Health Care Aide and Security Services. It should be understood that these two offerings will not have all features described in this document. However it is the intention of Columbia College to begin adding additional features to each of these offerings as it moves forward.

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