

OEI Updates: Building Our Online Learning Ecosystem

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The California Community Colleges (CCC) **Online Education Initiative** (OEI) has been actively engaged with colleagues statewide to expand support for online education in our system, specifically aimed at student completion toward transfer and enhancing access to high quality online learning opportunities.

The OEI team, participating college staff and vendor partners have been engaged in various aspects of the project ranging from Course Exchange deployment, Canvas implementations and expanded engagement with student and academic support tools, to governance, funding and regulatory activities. Below are some highlights related to the Course Exchange and Canvas. In the next issue, I'll share more about the work we are doing to secure regulatory changes to boost student access and some of the innovations we see in student support areas.

Course Exchange

The OEI has continued to expand the number of colleges with live students in the Course Exchange, with five of the eight full-launch pilot colleges in production. Additional pilot colleges are in the pipeline to make the Course Exchange available to their students once local testing in pilot environments and other local technology or programmatic issues are resolved.

I have learned that each college has its own strengths and challenges, particularly when implementing something this complex, and therefore each pilot college brings its own timeline to bear for deployment. The live colleges are preparing to engage in the first pilot of priority registration across colleges within the coming weeks as some colleges open Fall 2017 registration to their local student populations. This is the next major milestone for the Course Exchange pilot as this test of mapping priority levels between institutions plays out with an intentionally limited set of students this spring.

In addition, the OEI Steering Committee and OEI Consortium have adopted criteria for expanding access to courses that are part of an Associate Degree for Transfer, have a C-ID designator and meet a local need or help to fill out a transfer pattern such as IGETC. An initial survey of pilot colleges produced data suggesting an additional need for students to have additional access to online courses such as Introduction to Business, Financial Accounting, Child Family and Community and Argumentative Writing and Critical Thinking, to name a few. The OEI Consortium is in the process of developing procedures for regularly convening enrollment managers from consortium colleges with the goal of fostering collaboration between colleges so that students and colleges benefit from increased access to courses and programs through the Course Exchange.

On the technical side, the development team from the CCC Technology Center continues its effort to deliver new core features to the Course Exchange software. The most notable new feature will be the ability to automate portability of the BOG Fee Waiver status from a student's home college to the teaching college, as well as automation for combining eligible federal financial aid units between colleges and districts. This process has been informed by a dedicated group of college financial aid directors working in partnership with the product team to identify the technical requirements and workflows. While it may not seem like the most glamorous part of the OEI, this piece is a critical step toward simplifying the financial aid process for students in the Course Exchange.

Canvas

Interest and adoption of Canvas as the Common Course Management System (CCMS) remain very strong. Large numbers of colleges up and down the state are engaged in adoption and migration processes. Our system has a significant number of colleges that are currently running legacy course management systems alongside their new Canvas instances.

Periodically, I bump into distance education coordinators or college IT staff who will share about the amount of attention they pay to faculty and students at their colleges while managing the transition. I'm so proud of these front-line professionals and their high degree of devotion to their colleagues. One thing I almost universally hear in these conversations is when, almost to a person, they will say things like "It's worth it" and "Our faculty are really happy with it." I continue to be amazed by the groundswell of goodwill and interest across our system as colleges have come together in this space around a shared vision for our students and faculty.

On that note (spoiler alert!), plans are being made for our first CCC Canvas User's Group gathering. Details will be shared soon, so be on the lookout for this amazing event!

Collaboration At Our Core

Finally, I've been thinking a lot lately about one of the bullets our team used to include in some of the OEI presentations. The phrase read, "Innovation is messy." It's something that those of us working intently with dedicated faculty, administrators and staff have lived out very directly.

Through this initiative, our system is creating new paradigms, new agreements, new processes and new technologies as we go. I've learned that, ultimately, the OEI is an initiative about collaboration more than it is about technology. Achieving agreement, fostering goodwill and engaging in trust have been – and will continue to be – core to the work that we are collectively doing to expand student access and student support through online education.

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