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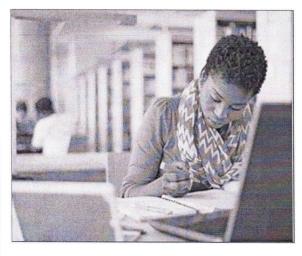
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Online Course Exchange Set For Pilot Launch

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Starting this fall, California Community Colleges (CCC) students will be able to easily cross-register for online courses offered at eight colleges through a course exchange system designed by the CCC Online Education Initiative (OEI).

The goal of the OEI Course Exchange is to streamline CCC students' completion of transfer degrees by giving them access to required courses online through other colleges when those courses are full or unavailable at their local campus – and to do it without students having to separately enroll at each college or reapply for financial aid.

This is enabled through custom software and a groundbreaking set of business processes that let colleges share student data for matriculation purposes, but is completely invisible to the students.

Limited Group To Start

In a test phase known as the OEI Full Launch Pilot, eight colleges will offer the course exchange to students registering for classes for the 2017 winter quarter and spring semester. The Full Launch pilot group includes Butte College, Coastline College, Foothill College, Fresno City College, Lake Tahoe Community College, Mt. San Jacinto College, Shasta College and Ventura College.

Latest News

According to John Sills, OEI Course Exchange Product Manager, the initial phase will involve a small subset of students and C-ID course sections, which are courses that use a common numbering system to guarantee articulation between colleges.

"The pilot colleges agreed on 20 C-ID courses to start with. We asked the colleges to assign five seats per section to the exchange to enable a small-scale testing of the exchange technology," Sills explained. "Students will be limited to two exchange courses per semester, and they must be registered in courses at their home college before they will be able to access the exchange."

Another 16 colleges will join the pilot in the spring, for a total of 24 colleges teaching exchange courses in Fall 2017, Sills added. The OEI is expecting to allow wider college participation for exchange courses to be taught in Spring 2018.

Meeting Degree Requirements

Courses offered through the exchange are high-demand courses that are required for an Associate Degree for Transfer, which guarantees admission as a junior to the California State University system. Providing access to these courses through the exchange will enable many CCC students to complete their degrees sooner, and not waste additional semesters waiting for the one or two classes they need, according to the OEI.

The list of exchange courses that will be offered during the pilot can be found on at CCCOnlineEd.org/spring-2017-courses/. A more comprehensive list of exchange courses is under development, Sills said.

To ensure students have access to the full suite of OEI services, exchange courses will be taught in the Canvas course management system. Canvas incorporates online-learning readiness assessments, online tutoring services and other OEI resources.

Unprecedented Cooperation

The cooperation between colleges to create the exchange for the benefit of students is "revolutionary," said Louis Delzompo, Chief Technology Officer of the California Community Colleges Technology Center (Tech Center), which worked with the OEI to develop the exchange's underlying technology. The business processes that were developed to allow students to seamlessly register for courses between participating colleges have never been considered within the CCC.

"It's very impactful that the colleges have agreed to share student data in this way," Delzompo said.

That data sharing is made possible by a Tech Center-developed software component known as the "college adapter." Designed to be installed locally behind the college's firewall, the college adapter allows the exchange to communicate with disparate Student Information Systems, like Banner and Colleague, without students experiencing any lag time between, say, registering for an online course and being able to access the course management system.

The college adapter is part of a larger Tech Center initiative known as Project Glue that will eventually enable all the colleges to connect in a standardized way to a host of technologies being rolled out systemwide over the next few years, Delzompo explained.