



Questions and Answers about the UT System / edX Collaboration

What is edX?

Founded by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Harvard in May, edX is a non-profit corporation offering high-quality online courses taught by internationally renowned experts. Not simply digitized versions of traditional lecture classes, edX's courses emphasize inquiry, problem solving, collaboration and hands-on learning. The courses include interactive laboratories, discussion forums, simulations and other innovative learning tools. Harvard and MIT each committed \$30 million to edX. Additional financial support has come from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and other donors. In July, the University of California, Berkeley, joined edX.

In addition to offering online instruction to anyone with an Internet connection, edX examines how students learn online, with a goal toward improving teaching methods and student learning outcomes.

If UT institutions are already offering online courses for credit, what is the benefit of partnering with a group that currently offers certificates of mastery?

The UT System will work with edX to adopt a "tiered" model of courses. Along with the free version of a course, the model may include tuition-paying students taking the courses for credit. Those students would receive a full range of support and greater contact with the instructor. Partnering with edX not only allows UT faculty to showcase their work on a global stage, but also provides UT students the opportunity to take classes from their choice of UT institutions, as well as MIT, Harvard, Berkeley and future "X" universities.

Why edX rather than another online platform?

The UT System closely examined all the alternatives and determined that edX offered the best fit in terms of alignment of mission, platform and revenue model. The strength and reputation of the partner institutions – MIT, Harvard and Berkeley – was also a huge consideration. EdX is committed to both blended and online learning and to a non-profit, open source model. It is also governed by a board of academics with a commitment to excellence in learning.

How much will the UT System invest in edX?

The agreement calls for a \$5 million investment in the platform, which is far less than it would cost the System or the campuses to develop a high quality platform on their own.

Considering that edX only offers seven non-credit classes, what are the benefits of participation?

EdX hopes to collaborate with the leading universities in the world. Over time, it will offer many more courses and these classes will reflect best practices in online education. EdX will provide a platform for our campuses to offer online and hybrid versions of essential gateway courses – those intro classes that tend to be large and impersonal – and provide executive level professional development, adult learning and degree and certification programs.

When will UT institutions offer classes through the edX platform and can any UT student receive credit toward their degree with it?

We are committed to offering one course in summer 2013 and four in fall 2013. Decisions about credit will be made by the appropriate faculty governing bodies.

Because most universities in the country are engaged in some type of online learning, why is this one special?

The partners make this special. The participation of MIT, Harvard and Berkeley is a testament to a commitment to excellence. These courses will meet the highest standards in terms of quality, production value and pedagogy. They will include a wide range of innovative features: interactive laboratories, simulations, virtual reality environments, discussion forums and many other tools. Many students are already taking courses online; we want to ensure that they have access to the very best online courses available—and we think students will be blown away by the remarkable features of the courses we will develop.

How will UT health institutions benefit from edX?

Our health institutions will offer courses to meet a wide range of needs. UT brings something unique to the collaboration with six renowned health institutions as part of our system. There will be degree and certificate and professional development and training programs for health care professionals. There will be online and hybrid versions of certain specific core classes for current health science students. There are also likely to be courses targeted at undergraduates to better prepare them for advanced training and careers in the health sciences. In addition, we will develop remarkable simulations that will help health science students acquire essential skills and knowledge.

Not only will edX showcase the expertise of our health sciences, but will also allow our health science institutions to share best practices with health care professionals worldwide.

What are specific benefits for students?

The edX collaboration will expand student access to courses of the highest quality and increase students' options. They will have more ways to learn, whether in a technology-enriched face-to-face class, a blended class or a totally online class. It will also allow us to diagnose and address student learning difficulties much more effectively. Students from community colleges will have access to free courses and same quality of instruction. High school students will also have free access to high quality instruction of courses that will get them ready for university level work.

Another advantage is that students will no longer have to delay graduation because they can't get into an essential course. It will improve efficiency for traditional university students who want or need a course for graduation, but might not otherwise be able to take it due to scheduling conflicts.

These courses will provide students with a wealth of innovative resources, including interactive lectures and laboratories, virtual reality environments, access to online tutors and tutorials and the opportunity to network with instructors and fellow students and take part in exciting collaborative projects.