Coursera to Offer New MOOC Options for Teachers

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A leading platform for the popular "massive open online courses" offered by elite universities is moving into a new realm: the expansive field of continuing education for teachers.

Coursera [1], the California-based for-profit platform for MOOCs from 62 leading universities such as Stanford, Princeton and the University of Pennsylvania, planned to announce Wednesday a new range of partners that include education schools and, in a first, non-degree granting institutions such as the American Museum of Natural History that help train teachers.

The announcement would give teachers pursuing their continuing education requirements, or courses that could give them a salary boost, a new set of options to learn from master professors at leading education schools such as Vanderbilt and the University of Virginia, along with a handful of museums and other institutions.

It would be up to the schools or districts that employ teachers to decide whether the courses meet their requirements, but Coursera co-founder Daphne Koller said she expects they will find them high-quality. Another advantage: The courses are free — a preferable option to the training, often expensive, that districts often pay for themselves.

The classes could also be more flexible for busy teachers, Koller said, and their large size could be an advantage.

"If you're the sole physics teacher in a small town somewhere, you really don't have a peer network," Koller said in a telephone interview. "This is creating a nationwide and in fact a worldwide peer network."

Coursera currently offers 341 free courses built around video lectures and interactive components, on topics ranging from pre-calculus to introduction to guitar, but has been moving more into more professionalized continuing education topics. Nearly 3.5 million students have signed up, though most don't finish the courses.

Coursera isn't a university so it cannot award credit itself, though for a small fee students can get their completion verified, and Coursera and other MOOC providers are increasingly partnering with institutions on "blended learning" models with institutions that are able to award credit.

The new offerings will include courses with titles such as "Art and Inquiry: Museum Teaching Strategies For Your Classroom" and "Surviving Your Rookie Year of

Teaching."

Dave Levin, co-founder of the KIPP schools network, will offer a course on "Teaching Character and Creating Positive Classrooms."

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Online: www.coursera.org [1]

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