MOOCs are growing in popularity and size, but do students benefit?

Despite the popularity of MOOCs in higher education, there is precious little data on them. Stories of success and failure are almost universally anecdotal, with some statistics coming from MOOC platforms like Coursera and Udacity. To that end, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has donated $1.4 million to nonprofit research group Ithaka S+R to conduct a “multicampus study of MOOCs” as part of a traditional college education:

“Ithaka S+R will monitor, assess, and document lessons learned from these implementations,” [Gates Foundation spokeswoman Debbie Robinson] continued. “Rigorous assessment of how students fared using these technologies will hopefully help reassure those concerned about educational quality, while documentation of obstacles encountered and overcome will help those struggling with implementation.”

One of the most important questions Ithaka hopes to answer is whether MOOCs might enable universities to maintain or improve the quality of their courses while reducing the per-student cost of teaching them, said Kevin Guthrie, the president of Ithaka, in an interview.

Read Assessing Campus MOOCs [1] on Inside Higher Ed.

Studies like this could define public perception of MOOCs and will certainly increase the depth of our knowledge on the topic. The Ithaka study will take about 18 months to complete. In the meantime, we’ve compiled 11 interesting statistics about MOOCs:

- **$60 million** Amount invested by Harvard and MIT to launch edX (Source [2])
- **$21.1 million** Venture capital funding that Udacity has raised (Source [3])
- **1.7 million** Students who have registered for a Coursera class (Source [4])
- **370,000** Number of students who registered for edX courses in fall 2012 (Source [5])
- **150,000:1** The student-to-professor ratio in a fall 2011 Udacity class (Source [6])
- **98%** The percentage of professors that Udacity rejects (Source [5])
38.5% The percentage of free online classes that are taught from the United States (Source [7])

33 Universities that have partnered with Coursera (Source [8])

27% Percentage of MOOCs that focus on computer science (Source [7])

6%–15% Percentage of gross revenue that Coursera pays to a partner university (Source [7])

5% The pass rate in MITX's only massive open online course (Source [9])

Do you think MOOCs will supplement or supplant higher education [10]? Read more here [10].

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Source URL: http://www.edtechmagazine.com/higher/article/2013/02/11-enlightening-statistics-about-massive-open-online-courses

Links:
[8] https://www.coursera.org/universities