

PRESS ROOM

PRESS RELEASES AND STATEMENTS

Gates Foundation Announces Finalists for \$20 Million in Digital Courseware Investments

Next generation challenge aims to develop personalized courseware that improves outcomes for low-income postsecondary students

SEATTLE (September 30, 2014) – The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation today announced seven finalists in a \$20 million challenge to develop next generation digital courseware that personalizes instruction based on mastery learning principles and learning science, with the goal of helping low-income and disadvantaged learners succeed in high-enrollment general education undergraduate college courses.

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The digital courseware solutions developed with the foundation’s support are intended to surpass what is currently available to the market in terms of quality, price, scalability and adaptability, and – most importantly – improve the postsecondary success of more than 1 million low-income students by 2018.

The Next Generation Courseware Challenge finalists are: [Acrobatiq](#), [Cerego](#), [CogBooks](#), [Lumen Learning](#), [Rice University OpenStax](#), [Smart Sparrow](#), and the [Open Learning Initiative at Stanford University](#).

The Next Generation Courseware Challenge was launched to inspire the world’s most talented online learning teams (e.g., digital courseware providers, publishers, media organizations, analytics organizations and postsecondary institutions) to leverage the best of what is known about technology-enabled learning and create comprehensive online courseware that dramatically changes the trajectory of a student’s higher education experience.

“Students learn best when education is personalized to their needs and goals,” said Daniel Greenstein, director of Postsecondary Success at the foundation. “There is a growing body of evidence that courseware, when integrated effectively by faculty in instruction, can personalize

learning at unprecedented scale potentially enabling all students — not just those who are able to attend the most elite, expensive colleges — to get the best and most effective education at a reasonable price.”

In May 2014, the foundation invited more than 100 of the most promising digital learning innovators to create ambitious proposals to develop a new generation of adaptive digital courseware targeted to benefit low-income undergraduate students in 100- and 200- level college courses with high student enrollment. Innovators were encouraged to partner with others in the field as well as work with colleges and universities to increase adoption, performance, and impact of their courseware. The foundation received 51 applications, with more than half of those including multiple organizations.

In July, the applicant pool was narrowed to 17 organizations that participated in a comprehensive RFP process. After reviewing these applicants and conducting extensive interviews, seven finalists were selected to move forward for final funding consideration, which the foundation plans to finalize later this year.

“Since 2008, the foundation has invested more than \$60 million to accelerate the development of great courseware and worked with faculty to advance our understanding about how to use it well in support of undergraduate education,” Greenstein notes. “This latest round of investments represents our belief that a new generation of courseware is beginning to emerge with capabilities that will have tremendous benefits for students and faculty and enable colleges and universities to more effectively advance their educational missions.”

Projects selected to receive challenge awards will agree to engage in a comprehensive, 36-month effort that includes a combination of design, development, distribution, adoption, implementation and delivery of “exemplary” digital courseware that ultimately aims to help more than 1 million undergraduates in general education subjects. All finalists will also participate in rigorous third-party research evaluations to measure student impact and capture and share relevant lessons and learnings for broad dissemination to improve the field’s understanding of such innovative approaches.

About the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people’s health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, Washington, the foundation is led by CEO Sue Desmond-Hellmann and Co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett.

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Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation aspires to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. We are dedicated to discovering and disseminating innovative approaches to addressing extreme poverty and poor health in developing countries and improving the U.S. education system. Because our financial resources, while significant, represent a small fraction of what's needed to address these challenges, we work in partnership with governments, the private sector, and other donors and organizations to achieve the greatest possible impact. www.gatesfoundation.org