

Legislative Budget Request: Innovative and Online Education Initiatives

Total Funds Requested: \$2,113,160, of which \$298,000 is nonrecurring

Description:

After three years of developing and implementing the 2025 Strategic Plan for Online Education, universities are taking the lead on various initiatives on behalf of the system to reduce duplication of effort, increase cost avoidances and savings, facilitate sharing of resources, and provide students with affordable instruction. To advance such affordability and efficiency goals, the SUS requests funds to:

- (1) Increase faculty and student usage of eTexts and open educational resources in order to reduce for students the costs of purchasing instructional materials for their courses;
- (2) Develop and maintain a repository of shared Master Courses and associated course materials, beginning with system-wide general education courses that will be available for use by all faculty in the SUS on an opt-in basis. Availability of these Master Courses will reduce redundant effort across the system to develop course materials on individual campuses, which will reduce development costs system-wide.
- (3) Develop, implement, and maintain a system-wide proctoring resource to ensure academic integrity and to reduce redundant effort across the system. Develop a statewide distance learning licensing website to reduce a duplication of effort and reduce spending/avoid costs in distance learning procurements.
- (4) Seed innovative projects in curriculum and academic technology that will impact quality, cost, and access and have the ability to scale throughout the system.

Supporting Documentation:

- (1) eTexts and Open Educational Resources (OER): The Florida Virtual Campus *2016 Student Textbook and Course Materials Survey* found that the cost of textbooks has a negative impact on student access, success and completion, with students reporting that they:
 - Occasionally or frequently take fewer courses (47.5%)
 - Do not register for a course (45.5%)
 - Drop a course (26.1%),
 - Or withdraw from courses (20.7%)

Used textbooks and textbook rental can provide some savings, but when access to online homework tools and media resources is required, an eText or OER solution is an important strategy for reducing costs. Benefits include:

- First-day access to course material to reduce the potential for students to fall behind and need to drop the course.
- Collaboration and interactive elements to enhance the learning experience.
- Support for mobile devices makes learning available anytime, anywhere.

To increase the usage of OER materials and reduce costs to students, funding is needed to coordinate implementation and usage of a state-level OER/eText catalog tool and an OER repository tool.

- The catalog tool will aggregate lower-cost eTexts and no-cost OER, enabling faculty to identify and select the most appropriate course materials at the lowest price. Through partnership with a vendor or consortium, volume pricing will be negotiated with publishers for eTexts and homework systems to be made available across the system. Student participation would be on an opt-in basis; students who selected the lower-

cost materials would have their billing information sent to the institution's Bursar to be charged to their respective accounts, allowing them to have access to content on the first day of classes.

- The repository tool will provide a mechanism for faculty to share course content in a manner that can be easily searched and incorporated by other faculty for instructional use. Through partnership with a consortium or other entity, access would be made available to faculty throughout the system. Requested funding will support the review process to identify and evaluate materials within the OER repository for inclusion in the catalog tool, as well as be used for documentation, training of faculty, incentive funding for faculty to adopt and vet OER, and support of efforts at institutions.

On behalf of the SUS, _____ will be the lead university to coordinate implementation and usage of a state-level OER/eText catalog tool and an OER repository tool.

Return on Investment: During the 2016-17 school year, implementation of a similar eText initiative saved 40,000 students an estimated \$3.5 million at Indiana University. UF's Fall 2016 IncludEd program provided student savings of an average of 43% off print prices across 79 freshman level courses. Through small incentives to faculty (\$1,000), the first round of six courses in FSU's *Alternative Textbook Grants* program is expected to save FSU students over \$41,000 in textbook costs during the 2017-18 academic year.

- (2) Repository of Master Courses: In order to reduce or contain course development and refresh costs throughout the System, the SUS is proposing to establish a repository of courses and ancillary course materials for use by faculty who are creating or enhancing their courses; such use would be on an opt-in basis. The initial set of courses would be system-wide general education core courses (one instance of each course). Before being placed in the repository, all courses will be vetted to ensure they meet the quality standards agreed upon by SUS institutions; a system-wide faculty committee will provide necessary oversight of the repository, including selecting courses for inclusion in the repository and ensuring all courses are refreshed on a cyclical basis. Providing funding for the refresh costs will give faculty an incentive for contributing their respective courses to the repository. UF will be the lead university for creating and managing the repository on behalf of the State University System.

Return on Investment: This repository will provide an efficient, cost effective mechanism for the development and/or enrichment of courses offered by institutions. An estimated \$25,000 of development costs could be saved for each instance in which a faculty member chooses to adopt a Master course in full. New faculty members or faculty members teaching a course for the first time are expected to be the primary beneficiaries of complete courses initially, with others tapping into ancillary course materials when it is time to refresh their own courses, saving an undetermined amount of time and expense. Institutions currently offering few or no general education courses online will especially benefit from the repository, as their faculty will be able to use the deposited courses or elements thereof to develop such courses at reduced costs.

- (3) Proctoring Network: Currently, postsecondary institutions in Florida are independently developing content and resources to support proctoring and academic integrity initiatives. The development of

a proctoring website will reduce the current duplication of effort and facilitate the advancement of proctoring. Core components will be:

- Proctoring service instructions, guidelines, procedures and resources on academic integrity;
- Resources on the best practices for course design to mitigate the risk to academic integrity;
- Repository of qualified proctors/proctoring locations across the state; and
- Proctoring service vendor information, pricing, and support.

Streamlining/sharing of software and services: The second component of this request is to develop a statewide licensing website to reduce a duplication of effort and reduce spending in technology procurement. The development of a statewide licensing website would assist in the exploration, evaluation, and procurement of technology.

On behalf of the SUS, _____ will be the lead university for developing and maintaining the proctoring website and the statewide licensing website.

Return on Investment: Increased collaboration on procurement of distance learning resources and services will result in cost savings or cost avoidances through lower negotiated rates statewide, and identifying software or services in use by other institutions will allow any institution to benefit from licensing contracts already in place.

- (4) Innovative and Disruptive Projects: The SUS is committed to expanding access to - and reducing costs for – quality education, which requires pushing the boundaries of current academic technology and practice. A system-wide coordinating committee will select proposed projects for funding, with special consideration being given to innovative proposals that address significant needs and have the ability to scale. Each project will be required to provide information in three primary categories: Reporting, Evaluation, and Plans for Scaling or Discontinuing. Project categories will include, but not be limited to:

- Adaptive Learning
- Competency-Based Learning
- Microcredentials/Digital Badges
- Multiple, accelerated terms
- Shared courses between institutions
- Shared programs between institutions
- MOOCs for credit
- Development of open educational resources (OER)

Awardees and other institutional representatives will be expected to attend an annual Florida Higher Education Innovation Summit hosted by a state institution. The goal of the summit is to disseminate information about each project to help foster the scaling of high-impact innovations across both college and university systems.

On behalf of the SUS, _____ will be the lead university for coordinating the implementation of innovative and disruptive projects.

Return on Investment: By aggregating the collective impacts of each pilot project and then disseminating success across the system statewide, the program is expected to make a significant, measureable difference in educational access, student success, and affordability.