PCF5 Panel on 12 Best University Courses
Free First University for development Panel (150 minutes)

A new open courseware alternative might consist of digital repositories of the world's best courses for a university first year. They would all be online –fully accessible, totally free, completely adaptable, always changing, and determinably peer reviewed to ensure intellectual excellence. It would marry the best pedagogy with content. Most importantly, these courses would include the universally "difficult" courses with the highest failure rates. The aim would be to significantly improve student learning not only in these difficult subject areas, but as they become benchmarks, to improve learning in more advanced courses. These courses could help to guide instructors in new pedagogies and technologies, and set new trends in e-learning research

What might be an alternative to the current open courseware practices, which are often little more than the mutterings of the "sage on the stage" in an online format? Are there alternatives to the tens of millions of national currency units being spent by institutions, foundations or governments on converting existing lecture or print courses to open e access? What might these be? How can differing cultures avoid the marginalization that the curriculum of a single internationally and seductively ranked American or European institution might impose? Any truly open access initiative should be global, should be culturally sensitive, should allow continued contributions to excellence, should be accessible regardless of technological readiness, and should recognize the culture of the next generation of learners.

The panelists, through short presentations followed by an open discussion format will enable participants to exchange opinions on the pros and cons of building the 12 best university first year courses. There are many questions that will continue to be asked around the open courseware table, regardless of whether it is at the COL, UNESCO or ICDE table. What subjects should be offered? Everything or a few well designed courses? Who should be the target of specially created open courseware? Should it be the challenged student or the challenging student?
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The 150 minute panel will consist of no more than 55 minutes of presentations by panelists, each followed by a brief question period. Then the presentations will be followed by an open discussion format addressing the topics identified by the speakers and others of interest to the audience. For example: How would post secondary institutions be kept fiscally whole? Would students or teachers be the targeted beneficiaries? How would cultural differences be recognized?

The Panel:
    Dr. Frits Pannekoek, President, AthabascaUniversity
    Dr. Olugbemiro Jegede, Vice Chancellor, Open U of Nigeria
    Dr. Robin Mason, OUUK
    Dr Inocente Vasco Mutimucuio, Dean Faculty of Education, Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, Mozambique