

Geospatial Education Online

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Online Geospatial education is experiencing a new age of challenges and opportunities. Demand for a spatially-aware workforce remains strong, and the constant evolution of the geospatial domain provides an imperative for lifelong learning. To meet these challenges, geospatial educators are developing new approaches for teaching, ranging from intensely individualized lab/research experiences, all the way up to Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) which reach thousands at a time around the world. While there is much promise in both the needs we face as well as the means we have to meet it, there remains a critical challenge to appropriately design online geospatial education experiences to reach their full potential in terms of quality, value, and access.

Here are five key issues I believe we should address going forward:

1. Provide online geospatial education options to learners of all types, focusing on adult learners and those in economic circumstances that make same-time, same-place education an impossibility. Ensure we are designing options for learners that include, but *are not limited to* those who are 18-21 and coming with ample financial resources to attend on campus programs.
2. Offer coursework that provides fundamental knowledge in analytical and representational practices in Geography, through experience with real-world applications and tools. The latter must include both commercial as well as open-source solutions. Strengthen our value proposition by developing more explicit linkages with allied disciplines (civil engineering, political science, climatology, epidemiology, etc...).
3. Seek solutions that lower tuition costs. Can we envision certificates and degrees that would be more widely accessible at a 10th of their current cost?
4. Develop rich graduate-level experiences at a distance, including the more elusive community, cultural, and professional development experiences that happen with TA/RAs in resident programs. We have good models for designing and delivering high quality undergraduate and graduate courses online, but we have not yet pushed the limits on how to create effective learning communities among our online students.
5. Design gateway experiences that highlight the value of our discipline to those for whom it is currently invisible. MOOCs are clearly one way of attacking this problem – can we think of other ways beyond MOOCs?