

## Myth Busting: 10 Common Misconceptions About OEI

I remember just over a year ago talking about all of the questions that we had no answers for! The beginning of the initiative was a vision that would take a huge effort to implement. It's really great to finally be in a time where we can understand and implement many clear pathways forward. It's not surprising, though, that there are still lots of questions.



We hear questions as well as many assumptions from folks in the field. So this part of my post is dedicated to debunking the myths and misconceptions my team and I hear as we travel the state. Most of the myths are about Canvas adoption and/or the OEI Course Exchange, where students will be able to register for online classes across California's community colleges.

**Myth 1:** Right now, Canvas is available to the CCCs for no cost, but the cost is going to skyrocket at the end of 2018-19.

**Actually:** The ongoing contract with Canvas will save the system over half of what it pays now for course management systems. The money we are receiving for the initiative is intended to be ongoing at the \$10 million-per-year grant. At the present time, the initiative can pay for all colleges through 2018-19, including support services. We will be requesting additional funds to keep the full-cost coverage beyond the 2018-19 academic year. If the increase is not granted, and OEI funding levels stay as they are now, the grant can pay for two-thirds of the cost of Canvas based on ongoing funding levels. So, if a college does have to pay in 2019-20, we anticipate that it will be a fraction of what it would otherwise cost. If the funding for OEI is eliminated, the colleges will have to assume the cost and they will know in advance of signing the implementation agreement what it would be. The value of selecting Canvas was Instructure's willingness to partner with us and not deal in piecemeal pricing. Our success is their success and we are a big system that brings value to Instructure by itself.

**Myth 2:** Though the OEI says that Canvas is free, that's not really true because of the local costs of supporting the system.

**Actually:** Through the funding provided by the OEI, we are able to offer Canvas truly for free to all colleges who choose to adopt it campuswide as their sole course management system. We not only provide you with the license to Canvas, but also the technical support to get it up and running, and training for IT administrators and faculty. Help-desk service is also being covered by the grant.

**Myth 3:** All online courses in California have to be aligned to the OEI Course Design Rubric.

**Actually:** Only courses that will be offered through the OEI Course Exchange must be aligned to the rubric. The OEI Course Design Rubric was developed by a statewide committee of experienced online teaching faculty, and was adapted for use by our system from a variety of design rubrics that exist nationally. It would be great if everyone adopted the rubric and measured their course designs to that standard, but it's not mandatory. The decision to make such an adoption mandatory at a college should be a local one made by the Academic Senate bodies responsible for such decisions.

**Myth 4:** Colleges must adopt Canvas to receive any resources from the OEI.

**Actually:** All colleges in the system will benefit from the resources we are building:

Everything developed by the OEI (such as the [Online Learner Readiness Tools](#) and the Course Design Rubric) must be licensed with Creative Commons and are openly accessible to everyone.

The courses that [@ONE](#) designs to train online faculty are also available to everyone.

The knowledge sharing that is happening across the state is available to everyone (and will be easier to access as the Professional Learning Network, formerly The Clearinghouse, goes live later this year).

Colleges can sign up now to obtain a campuswide license for [Canvas](#) at no cost through 2018-19.

The OEI is negotiating free access or volume discounts for services that are available to all colleges via the Foundation for CCC. For example, all colleges can already take advantage of a free [online tutoring](#) platform and steep discounts for 24/7 online tutors.

The focus on making online learning more accessible and more effective has provided resources for all colleges across the state.

**Myth 5:** The OEI Course Exchange will take all of our full-time equivalent students (FTES) enrollment funding.

**Actually:** All of the colleges that will be piloting the OEI Course Exchange will be offering classes in the Exchange as well as having students participate in the Exchange. There is an opportunity to gain FTES while providing courses to students that they need to complete their goals. We expect the student need to level out the Exchange use across colleges and the pilot will be the place to test that out. More importantly, student completion is the shared goal of our colleges and this initiative.



**Myth 6:** All Exchange courses will be open to all CCC students.

**Actually:** Only students at colleges that decide to participate in the Exchange will be able to take courses in the Exchange. And, only online courses that are aligned with the Course Design Rubric will be available in the Exchange. The colleges participating in the Exchange will be part of a consortium. There is no limit to the number of colleges that may choose to participate in the consortium after the completion of the pilot phase.

**Myth 7:** Students will be taking all their courses online from multiple schools.

**Actually:** Students will be encouraged to only take classes from the Exchange when they are missing a class or two that would allow them to complete in a timely way. A student will be limited to two exchange classes per term during the pilot. After that, the consortium will decide if there is a limit and what it should be. The Exchange will also recognize unit residency requirements for the granting of degrees and other considerations that may restrict whether a student is able to take classes in the Exchange.

**Myth 8:** All colleges that adopt Canvas must have courses in the OEI Course Exchange.

**Actually:** Any CCC may choose to adopt Canvas; participation in the OEI Exchange is optional.

**Myth 9:** All courses in the OEI Exchange must be taught in Canvas.

**Actually:** This is no myth! The answer is that they do have to be taught in the Canvas CCMS to be part of the Exchange. One reason for this requirement is that it will allow for the integrated deployment of many resources that are now being developed by the initiative, including course design review and instructional design support.

The more important reason is that we want students to participate in using a fully-resourced, single course management system (CMS) that has been designed to meet the needs of CCC students and not have to move from CMS to CMS to take courses. A CMS should be transparent, allowing for the learning to take center stage.

**Myth 10:** Students don't succeed in online courses.

**Actually:** They do—when they are prepared and the classes are well designed! Check out the [Public Policy Institute of California report](#) from earlier this year for some interesting information about online student success.

**Finally...**I'll leave those of you who have read this far with my appreciation for your continued support and participation in this initiative. I have always been impressed with the innovative nature of educators, but never more than I have been in the last year. I have witnessed the educators in our system come together around what works best for our students in a way that is certainly inspiring.

I am reminded of what one of the students who participated in the CCMS selection process said when asked what she would take away from the process: "I am surprised at how much you all care about us, the students. I knew my teachers cared about me, but I didn't know how much you all cared about us until now."

Pat