By Judy Piercey   May 24, 2018

Coursera Offers Free Certificate Courses for Faculty, Staff and Students

Campus community members can save hundreds of dollars with free access to online courses and specializations

Maybe you work as a librarian but have a passion to know more about algae. Perhaps you're a computer science major ready to gain skills in bioinformatics to help with job prospects. Or you are simply a life-long learner. Regardless of the reason, UC San Diego community members can now register for a variety of online and specialization courses on the Coursera online platform—for free.

Coursera for UC San Diego is offering students, staff and faculty free access to over 50 Coursera online courses and specializations along with the ability to obtain free certificates upon completion—a savings of up to hundreds of dollars for participants. The Coursera specializations, all taught by UC San Diego faculty, are a series of related courses designed to help students master a specific topic. Some specializations may require as few as four courses and only take a few months to finish. Those completing the course receive a certificate in that particular skill from Coursera, branded by UC San Diego.

Coursera, which partners with top universities and organizations throughout the world to provide courses online, selected UC San Diego as the first public university in the nation to offer this free program. The education-focused technology company first partnered with our campus in 2013 when MOOCs (Massive Online Open Courses) were the rage globally, and online learning was in its infancy at UC San Diego.

Online courses have since evolved at UC San Diego, with Karen Flammer now director of Digital Learning, an initiative under the Teaching + Learning Commons. With a mission of enhancing teaching and learning through the innovative use of technology, the digital learning hub collaborates with departments, faculty and instructors to design courses for online and hybrid learning, develop engaging instructional materials, and employ appropriate technology. She has also been instrumental in working with Coursera to develop this free UC San Diego offering.

"Coursera for UC San Diego is an exciting opportunity to help learners develop mastery in skill-based

The Evolution of Digital Learning at UC San Diego

A conversation with Karen Flammer

Technology, processes and online learning in general have significantly changed since UC San Diego launched the Office for Online and Technology Enhanced Education.

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subjects," said Flammer. "For example, one certificate specialization is on big data. Whether it's in economics or public health, there are increasing amounts of data that need to be processed and interpreted. The specialization doesn't require a programming background, but students gain experience with the big data tools and systems from the UC San Diego faculty teaching these courses."

Flammer said that Coursera's subscription model typically costs $50 per month. An individual skill-based training course can take anywhere from four to six weeks depending on how many hours a learner has time to put into this.

"The beauty of free access for our students, staff and faculty is that they can sign up now for specializations, but there's no hurry—they can do this on the side, they can do this on weekend and breaks, and it doesn't matter if it takes six months," she explained. "Those taking courses will have saved hundreds of dollars and will have a certificate from Coursera with UC San Diego's name on it

that they can share on their LinkedIn profile. For UC San Diego students, they can put the certificate on their resume, which in addition to a UC San Diego transcript, will help them find a job or get into graduate school."

To learn more and register for the free Coursera online and specialization courses, please visit Coursera for UC San Diego.

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