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University online writing tutorial is a first in the CSU system

Fresno State joins the worldwide movement toward cutting-edge MOOC (massive open online courses) delivery of free online information with a new, first-of-its-kind Self-Paced Online Tutorial

(SPOT), which allows students to hone their writing skills. The Fresno State effort has already drawn praise from the head of a national association focused on improving university writing.

Similar to a MOOC, SPOT is the first such attempt at open online instruction in the California State University system and may be among the first in the nation that provides a self-paced tutorial on writing to help meet university requirements. The delivery platform was developed on campus by the Technology Innovations for Learning and Teaching team.

"Our faculty created an innovative program that expands access for Fresno State students and others," said Provost William Covino. "A student can take up to six months to move through the writing modules and prepare an e-portfolio to satisfy the Upper Division Writing Requirement."

"We built a program that uses cutting-edge technology and a nationally acclaimed faculty writing mentor, Professor Asao B. Inoue, to give students a way to work at their own pace," said Covino.

"If this pilot is successful, SPOT will help to reduce the long waiting lists of students who have not yet demonstrated the writing skills necessary for graduation. It will help students become more proficient writers in their college careers and beyond," he said. The tutorial is also attractive to individuals who want to improve their English composition skills for personal or professional, rather than academic, reasons.

Duane Roen, president of the national Council of Writing Program Administrators, praised Fresno State's innovation.

"SPOT represents the best kind of innovation because it uses digital technologies wisely and because it is based on well-established theory, research and practice," he said. "By drawing on highly

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regarded work such as “The Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing,” SPOT stands as a model for other post-secondary institutions.”

SPOT will help students to develop a range of skills and knowledge that writers need to be successful in the academic, professional, civic and personal arenas of life, Roen said.

MOOCs are designed for open access on the Web for any interested students. The concept is sweeping the nation and world. MOOCs are similar to college or university courses but open to anyone interested without charge. MOOCs typically do not offer college credits.

At Fresno State, SPOT is managed through the Division of Continuing and Global Education. The pilot program has drawn interest from learners around the world. A cohort of 20 participants was just admitted; 10 more will be added next month; and 10 more in April.

Inoue is an English professor, a Provost’s Award winner and head of the university’s Writing Across the Curriculum initiative. In SPOT, he will work with students to develop individual goals and monitor their progress.

Students will engage in various reading, reflective, feedback and drafting practices, some done with Inoue and some with fellow SPOT students. All activities are done at the student’s own pace and online.

Inoue and the student will determine when a student is ready to either submit the portfolio for upper division writing exam evaluation or better equipped to take a writing course to fulfill the graduation requirement.

Covino said the nine-month pilot will be continuously monitored for effectiveness. Since upper division writing proficiency is a CSU system requirement, Fresno State’s SPOT could be considered for use by any of the 23 CSU campuses.

Inoue will share the development and progress of the SPOT at two national conferences this spring.

By [Shirley Armbruster](#) | February 20th, 2013 | Categories: [PRESS RELEASES](#) | Tags: [Academics](#), [CSU](#) | [1 Comment](#)

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