

HARNESSING THE POWER

***TECHNOLOGY FOR SOCIAL GOOD
CAPITALISM FOR THE COMMON GOOD
INNOVATION FOR EDUCATION
PEOPLE FOR THE FUTURE***



OPEN EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR ALL

A CALL TO ACTION

***A Strategic Vision for Providing
Free Universal Online Educational Services
And a Plan for Getting There***

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



***YES WE CAN
AND HERE'S HOW***

VERSION 1.2

Notes

This is the Executive Summary of a plan to provide **Free, Universal, Online Educational Services**. This is a public document, so you are welcome to share it with whomever you wish. This plan is the result of conversations with thousands of people and organizations over many years, and it will continue to evolve. The most recent copy of this plan will always be available on the Stargazer Foundation Web site (www.Stargazer.org) under “Open Educational Services.”

In addition to feedback on the ideas in this plan, as well as additional ideas, we would welcome your support in this campaign – a Campaign for a Cause, not a Candidate. One of our goals is to assemble a broad cross-section of national leaders to promote the concepts in this plan, even if not all of the specific ideas. You can play an important role in spreading the word.

The purpose of this campaign is to foster a national conversation on the **quality** and the **equality** of our educational system in our technologically evolving society. The learning tools and technological infrastructure are available today to improve both teaching and learning. While there is certainly a role for government, all of us and all of our companies and organizations can play a significant role. All it takes is the will to contribute and to collaborate. Fully implemented, this plan will help address the challenge of providing a quality and an equal educational opportunity for all of our children.

Like any campaign, it needs endorsements, supporters, contributors, and volunteers. It needs people like you to promote these ideas by sending them to people and organizations you know. It needs you to recruit others. It needs your company’s help and support. Anybody, and any company, school, group, organization, or government entity, can play a role. We must all work together on this, for we have no alternative. Our children’s future is at stake.

Thanks, in advance, for joining the campaign. Your support can make a difference.

Executive Summary

President Obama has asked for more support for education and for ideas on advancing the long-term human capital strategy for our country. This plan outlines a way to address the immediate and critical need for improved public K-12 education¹ in the United States, and around the world. This plan harnesses the power of technology, capitalism, and innovation to develop a new platform for learning – a platform that utilizes existing infrastructure (technology, people, and organizations) to provide meaningful and equitable education to all teachers and learners. Effective public-private partnerships will accommodate the scale of the effort and a collaborative implementation strategy will ensure its sustainability. This plan does not address what to teach; rather, it is a plan to make teachers more effective and learners more productive. This is a plan to provide **Free Universal Online Educational Services** (called **Open Educational Services**).

This plan offers a unique approach that is informed by common priorities, fueled by imagination, and builds upon technology and services that are already available. The focused collaboration between leaders from all segments of our modern world will result in increased benefits for individual students and will energize our teaching professionals by enabling new possibilities. This is a viable solution that will engage students and teachers alike, providing immediate benefits and driving future innovations.

This plan embodies **very big ideas**, and it contemplates a **very large scale endeavor – the educational equivalent of our national commitment to put a man on the moon**. Simply stated, it proposes a **national commitment to give all teachers and students the basic online tools they need to teach and learn in the 21st Century**. It does not supplant teachers or the numerous existing endeavors in this area, but rather seeks to support, augment, aggregate, and enable them. It is not a response to the current economic crises, but it does propose ways for us all to contribute to the solution. It is not about any particular individuals or organizations. It is about ideas whose time has come.

Advances in technology have made it possible to provide online services to an ever-expanding range of people through an increasingly broad array of technical means. Young and old, rich and poor, highly or minimally educated, can now all have access to the world's knowledge and experience, information and learning, on the most egalitarian basis in human history. This trend is only going to get better.

Information and services can be delivered to a growing range of devices, from computers and cell phones to mobile and other devices that seem to have leapt from science fiction movies into our everyday lives. We've gone from the time when our voice communications (telephone) was delivered over a wire and our entertainment and news (radio and television) came over the air to such an assortment of wired and wireless delivery methods that now everything seems to be available anywhere and anytime.

The systems and services that enable this capability range from a small Web site for a preschool or a neighborhood community to global online services like Google, Yahoo, Facebook, and AOL. This is a plan to combine the technology of services like these and the market mechanisms of the private sector with public purpose and shared responsibility. This is a plan to create the nonprofit, egalitarian equivalent of the large-scale commercial online services for education and learning.

This is a plan to provide the basic information and services over this educational online service in ways that make them effectively free of charge. To be sure, there are still costs associated with purchasing a computer or a mobile device, acquiring Internet or telephone access, and developing the content to be delivered and the systems to deliver it. Yet, the **incremental costs** of delivering these benefits on a very large scale can be negligible.

¹ This plan focuses on public K-12 education, but there is nothing in this plan that inherently limits it to public or K-12 education. Some of the ideas can also be applied to areas other than education.

We have proof of this possibility today, because virtually all of the ideas, approaches, technologies, etc., discussed in this plan **already exist today**. All we have to do is to align, aggregate, combine, and/or support these activities and endeavors **at a very large scale and in new and different ways**. This is a plan to:

- Provide a **shared technological infrastructure**, benefiting millions of people, with **shared tools for teachers and teaching**, and for **learners and learning**. It is **NOT** a plan for **what** to teach or **how** it should be taught, **who** should teach, or **where** teaching should occur.
- Create an ultimately **self-sustaining endeavor**, technologically, academically, and financially, by relying upon growth in the capital markets and the **VOLUNTARY** participation and contribution of individuals and organizations.
- Create the **education and learning equivalent of the space program** by uniting and utilizing the ingenuity, creativity, and financial growth capabilities of the **private sector**, and the capacity, talent, and dedication of the **educational sector**, combined with new forms of **public/private partnerships**.

No commercial company or government agency can undertake an endeavor of this scale itself. This plan envisions an appropriately constituted nonprofit public charity as the parent entity of a large web of commercial and nonprofit entities, working together collaboratively in formal and informal ways. It envisions colleges and universities, and teachers and teaching organizations, working together to identify, organize, and aggregate already existing Web-based content into easily accessible tools and services for teachers and students. It envisions teams of people teaching the teachers on the use of this rapidly growing 21st Century resource.

This plan uses a simple, common language for two important, interrelated concepts.

- A **Technology Platform** facilitates **delivering** or **providing** information and services to users, be they consumers, students, teachers, or whomever. (Visualize the building and the shelves in a library or Amazon's computers and the system software that runs them.)
- A **Technology Portal** enables these users to **access** or **find** the information and services available on the platform. (Visualize the card catalog in the library or the search directory on Amazon's home page.)
(and)
- **Open Source** refers to making freely available, at no charge, the original programming code (called the Source code) for any software. Technically sophisticated people are the first direct beneficiaries of the Open Source code, although everyone subsequently benefits. (Visualize the Linux operating system, the Java programming language, or the Mozilla Firefox browser.)
- **Open Services** refers to making freely available, at no charge, the **results** or the **usage** of any information, software, or services, regardless of whether or not the source code for underlying software is Open Source. Users are the first direct beneficiaries of Open Services, although technically sophisticated people may have played a role in some cases. (Visualize the Wikipedia, MIT's Open Courseware, or the countless examples of freely available educational content and services already on the Web.)

There is no simple, clear boundary between **platforms** and **portals**, or between **Open Source** and **Open Services**. In each pair, the terms are often used interchangeably. Just think of the first category in each pair as being of greater interest to the technically sophisticated developers or producers, and the second category as being of greater interest to the people who use or benefit from the technology. For the purposes of this discussion, everything else is detail.

This plan has several basic components.

- The creation of a **Technology Platform** (or Platforms) to enable the delivery and utilization of **Open Educational Services**.
- The aggregation of appropriate and beneficial educational content, as decided by educators and providers, to be made available through a **Technology Portal** (or Portals) on this platform.
- The establishment of new kinds of **cost-sharing** and **cost-shifting** to cover the costs of providing these **Open Services**, and new kinds of **public/private partnerships** to make this effort sustainable.

This plan assumes that we cannot continue to rely solely upon governments, charitable donations, fees for services, or third-party payers, such as advertisers, to fund this effort. Rather, it proposes a broad and new reliance upon the

commercial marketplace, the stock market, and consumers themselves to create a new, sustainable source of funding for social good.

The technology and educational elements of this plan are **VOLUNTARY** and are separate and independent from the funding mechanisms. The government, a grant-making foundation, or a philanthropist could fund this whole plan. However, this plan also presents methods for its own sustainable funding based upon new ideas of **Capitalism for Social Good**. It outlines, for example, a plan for **Warrants in the Public Interest** (visualize stock options benefiting the rest of us) that will produce billions of dollars for socially beneficial causes, **at no cost to the contributing companies, no cost to the recipient nonprofits, and with negligible impact on the companies' existing shareholders.**

This plan enunciates expanded **Principles of Social Responsibility**:

- **Sharing the Benefits – Compassionate Capitalism**
- **Sharing the Costs – Compassionate Citizenship**

This is a plan to create new kinds of public/private partnerships to:

- Aggregate, integrate and leverage technology
- Consolidate funding and spend efficiently for the benefit of many
- Meet societal needs through non-traditional processes
- Use a “campaign” approach to spread the benefits of technology for social good



Working together, we can all share the costs and the benefits of a more effective and a more equitable educational system. While the pieces are available today, there is no way to bring them together without a national public effort. Educational excellence and technological capacity are unevenly distributed today – and that must be changed.

We must answer President Obama’s call. YES, WE CAN – AND WE WILL.