Higher education faces quagmire with distance education

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Regional

Higher education faces quandary with distance education

By Dr. Aldemaro Romero Jr.

Letters from Academia

The debates over the advantages and disadvantages of online education heated up recently after news broke that Arizona State University (ASU) will be offering its incoming students the option of a traditional freshman year – or that is completely online.

In an announcement made last April, ASU officials said that the university would be offering a set of eight courses aimed at fulfilling the general education requirements in the freshman year in the form of MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses). The courses will be offered in conjunction with EDX, a non-profit initiative created in 2012 by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University, aimed at providing postsecondary coursework online for free.

ASU faculty will teach the courses. In order to have the credits count, a college credit at ASU students will have to pass a final exam and pay a fee of no more than $100 per credit.

The educational debate is a topic that is garnering a lot of discussion.

The partnership between EDX and ASU has an option that deals with the debate over whether this approach benefits the future of higher education in the virtual and artificial. Both proponents and opponents of online education have their respective cases, even though much is inconclusive. However, that does not mean there are no hard numbers we can look at in determining whether such an approach is a good one.

Despite the recent hype, distance education has not been a new concept. In fact, it is just another way of delivering education, depending on the content and the audience. Distance education has been around since 1728 when Caleb Phillips, a Dr. Aldemaro Romero Jr. is a retired professor from the University of California and a writer. His recent book is "Letters from Academia: Reflections on the Importance of Education." He can be contacted through his website at: http://www.lettersfromacademia.com. His email is raldr@cs.berkeley.edu.

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On Thursday, 2000 people turned out for a screening of "Field of Dreams," which was held at the Wildey Theatre in Edwardsville. The event was part of the Friends of the Wildey's art series, "Movie Monday" and benefited the Wildey Theatre.

The movie is about former Chicago White Sox pitcher Ray Kinsella, who had a dream as a child of a baseball field in the middle of Iowa and a voice that told him to "go build it." The movie then follows Kinsella as he builds the stadium and attracts players both from the past and present. The film ends with Kinsella playing baseball against a "ghost" of his childhood baseball hero, Babe Ruth.

According to the Center of Budget and Policy Priorities, a think tank that analyzes the impact of federal and state budget policies, the state that has reduced its appropriations to higher education the most is Ohio. According to a 2013 study by the Center of Budget and Policy Priorities, a think tank that analyzes the impact of federal and state budget policies, the state that has reduced its appropriations to higher education the most is Ohio.

The question is one we need to ask the political leadership and policy decisions based on what is best for the students. Are we living under the illusion that we can actually have a prosperous nation without educated people?

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