



OnLine *focus*

CUOL Newsletter – January 2015

Welcome to Carleton University Online's newsletter.

**Meet the team of instructors who
opened the door to open-access
education.**



Matthew Sorley



Bruce Tsuji



Chris Motz

"'Ours the Task Eternal.' It's a fitting mantra for psychology professor Bruce Tsuji and his team, who launched the university's first open-access course in 2014 and have no plans to stop there."

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Bringing MOOCs to Carleton

Look closely at Carleton's coat of arms, and under perched ravens and a blazing phoenix, you'll see the phrase "Ours the Task Eternal".

It's a fitting mantra for psychology professor Bruce Tsuji and his team, who launched the university's first open-access course in 2014 and have no plans to stop there.

"All that open-access courses require is an Internet connection and a desire to learn. There's the potential to engage students with the discipline of psychology, but also to promote what Carleton has to offer," says Matthew Sorley, an instructor and the undergraduate chair for the Department of Psychology. "Everybody wins."

In the summer edition of the CUOL newsletter, we chatted with Tsuji just before he launched Open Access PSYC 1001, Carleton's first MOOC, which he'd initially coined GOOP (Gradually Open Online Psyc). Tsuji has long been a pioneer at Carleton when it comes to online learning, and when he reached out to his colleagues Sorley and Christopher Motz about submitting a funding application for the project at the beginning of 2014, they jumped aboard—but not without a little convincing first.

"We went along with it because he wasn't going to take no for an answer," says Sorley. "Simply, it took a village to put all of this together...so not only is Bruce the course instructor, but he's also the mayor. He was such a force of nature that I nicknamed him 'Tsunami' Tsuji. I stand by it."

"Bruce is a stone that will gather no moss," adds fellow instructor Motz.

“It’s helped him create a really rich, interactive online system.”

This system got the kick-start it needed in the spring of 2014, when they received a \$75,000 grant from the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to get PSYC 1001 and PSYC 1002 online.

“Once we received the grant, it was time to experience panic, and eventually compose ourselves and map out the courses,” says Sorley. “The collaboration was intense but very rewarding. I just like working with these guys.”

After a couple of months of preparation, the trio got down to business. They recorded the modules, provided teaching support, developed the assessments, and, as Sorley puts it, dealt with the numerous “gotchas!” and logistical surprises that emerged along the way.

While it may seem as though they built two online courses, PSYC 1001 R and PSYC 1002 R, the team actually made six: two web courses for registered Carleton students, complete with exams and course credit; two MOOC models with open access to all materials for anyone, for free; and two Flex Term models - innovative versions of the course that allow students to “bridge” from open access, pay tuition and earn a university credit whenever they want—so both the learning and the registration can take place anytime, anywhere.

“Universities are grounded in the semester system,” says Motz. “That’s really the genius of this, the idea of breaking free of this system and ‘bridging’ the course on your own time. It makes sense because of Carleton’s strong focus on meeting student needs.”

Bringing flexibility to the rigid semester system is no small feat—there’s a ton of back-office work, and it means instructors have to work year-round. But breaking the traditional schedule means that a student who’s in the military, or on several sports teams, or a single mom who works full-time, can take the course on their own terms—literally. It is, as Motz puts it, a groundbreaker.

“The value is in offering it,” he says. “It’s lovely that Carleton broke the

mold, stepped up and did it first.”

And there’s a learning curve that comes with doing it first—one of the toughest parts is getting the word out to future students.

“It would be nice if people knew about it,” Motz says with a laugh. “The intent was that this would be useful for Ontario students from outside [Carleton], or that high school kids could get a jump on their first year after graduation.”

Tsuji, Motz and Sorley also quickly found out that making the entire course accessible at once with no strict deadlines gives “on their own time” a whole new meaning. There are the chronic procrastinators, and there are the ones Motz calls “the rabbits,” those students who whiz through a semester’s worth of work in a fraction of the time.

The team has included a video module titled *Chapter 00: How to Succeed in an Online Course* in order to tackle student challenges head-on since many of their students are new to university, or haven’t even started it yet.

That’s why introductory psych was the most logical jumping-off point when it came to applying the MOOC methodology to a Carleton course—there are no prerequisites, it’s one of the most popular courses at most universities (last year alone, Carleton had 6,000 registrants), and 84 per cent of students are not psychology majors.

“The intro course is always a pleasure because there’s an opportunity to engage the students with the discipline while helping to smooth the transition to university life,” says Sorley.

In one short year, Tsuji, Motz and Sorley have brought two psychology courses to the masses, secured their first Flex Term student and earned a Carleton University Teaching Achievement Award along the way.

But it’s only the beginning.

In 2015, they hope to increase awareness of their online options, enlist

others in the department and big names in Ontario psychology to film segments on their research, and develop a series of modules designed to promote student success in online learning. They also have an open-access online textbook in the works.

“It’s important to share what we’ve learned,” says Sorley. “Change can be difficult, but everyone approached the project with an open mind and a commitment to developing a workable system. ‘We can’t do that’ have quickly become dirty words.”

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Tales from the Field - Erika Veillette

A first-time university student tests the waters with Carleton’s first open-access course.

When Bruce Tsuji, Chris Motz and Matthew Sorley teamed up to make their open access psychology course a reality, they wanted to make sure students who were test driving it still had the option to earn a university credit. So they created Flex Term PSYC 1001 - a bridge that allows students who are taking the course for free to enroll, pay tuition and earn a credit for their work.

On Dec. 19th, they accepted their very first Flex Term student, Erika

Veillette.

Veillette, 30, has been working at the Ottawa Hospital for 11 years as a clerk and secretary. She had never taken a university course before, and after doing her research, decided to test the post-secondary waters by taking PSYC 1001.

“I love psychology,” she says. “I mean I seriously love it. My husband says I analyze things a lot, and I’ve been like that as far [back] as I remember.”

Veillette reached out to the undergraduate program advisor for psychology, Joanne Sonley, with a list of questions about online courses and what they’d entail. She went in with no expectations, but was pleasantly surprised by how much she enjoyed her first university class.

“I love the videos, and the quizzes too. I found the professor down to earth and his voice isn’t annoying, which is great because I think I would have quit by now,” she says with a laugh.

Students like Veillette are exactly who Tsuji hoped to attract when he lobbied to bring open access courses to Carleton. The Flex Term lets her avoid the constraints of a semester system, giving her the flexibility to take the course on her own time. Plus, Veillette was able to dip a toe in the academic pool instead of jumping in head-first—and by the time she got a quarter of the way through, she knew this was something she could do.

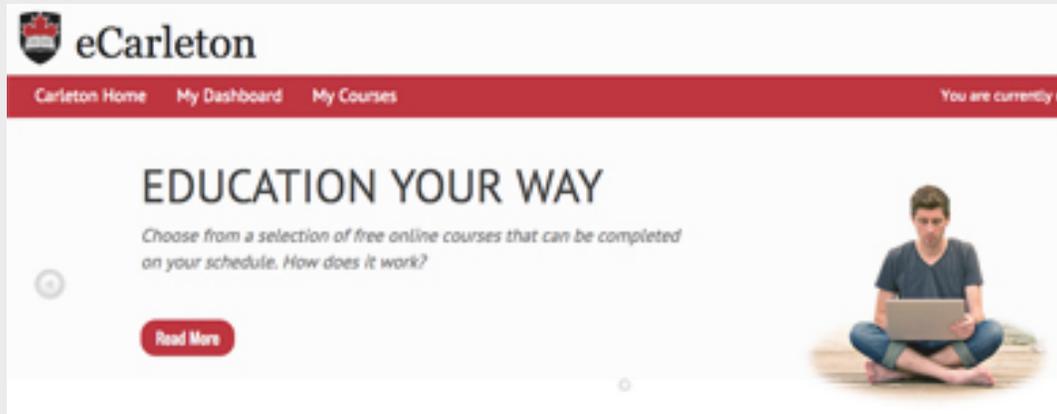
Now, Veillette has paid her tuition and enrolled as a Special Student. She plans on taking one course a semester to keep from overloading her schedule, and is anticipating enrolling in PSYC 1002 next.

“I don’t want to become a psychologist, but I’m thinking one day—years from now, since I’ll be [studying] part time—of becoming a counsellor” she says.

For now, Veillette is focusing on earning credits she can put towards a Bachelor of Psychology degree someday. The hope is that as time goes on, more and more online learners will follow in her footsteps and become Special Students at Carleton.

As for her overall impression of Tsuji, Motz and Sorley employing the MOOC methodology to courses previously reserved for paying students?

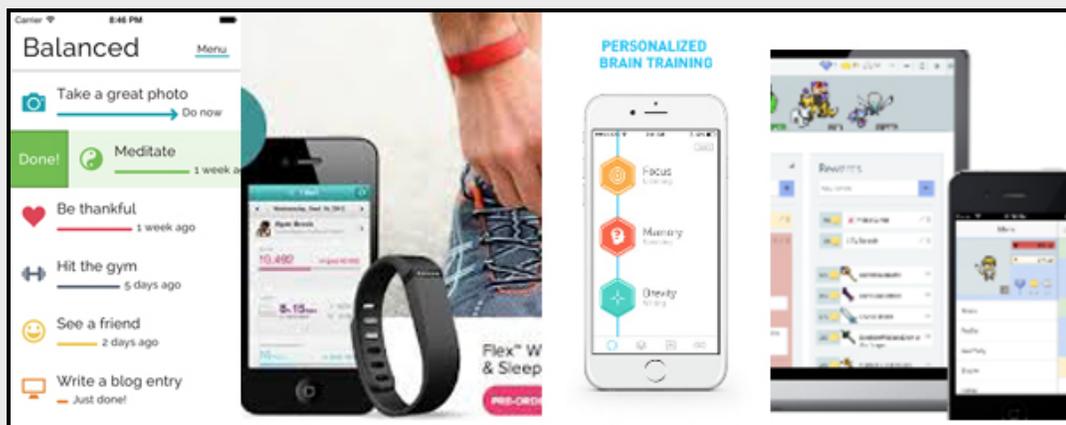
“Carleton is awesome,” says Veillette. “All schools should do this.”



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TechCorner – New Year’s Resolutions

Four apps for habit making and habit breaking.



[Balanced](#)

[FitBit Flex](#)

[Elevate](#)

[HabitRPG](#)

So you started with the best of intentions, flipping to page one of that brand-new Moleskine and crafting a challenging-yet-attainable list of resolutions for 2015. And you stuck to them... for the first few days, at

least. But by the second week of January, the carbs are calling your name and the gym is most definitely not.

Thankfully, there's an app for that (this is 2015, after all). Here's a round up of a few platforms and products that'll help you break those bad habits —and stick to the good ones.

Balanced

Plug your resolutions into the Balanced app and they become interactive, constant reminders to reach your goals. Load up your list with anything from the physical (“hit the gym”) to the social (“see a friend”) to the creative (“take a great photo”), and they become the little victories that shape your day. Plus, swiping “Done” is even more satisfying than crossing off a to-do—trust us.

Free for iPhone, iPad and iPod Touch.

FitBit Flex

Not your parents' fitness tracker. This futuristic little wristband syncs wirelessly with your phone to measure activity, track sleep, log food, set goals and map workouts. Tiny LED lights on the band act like a scoreboard to tell you how close you are to hitting daily goals, while the app gets into the nitty-gritty like calorie counts and steps taken. (Or, for those of you looking for a more stylish alternative, the Jawbone Up3 is a skinny and sleek activity tracker that looks like a bangle bracelet).

Wristband: \$99.95. App: Free for iOS, Android and Windows devices.

Elevate

If your resolutions tend to be less about physical activity and more about mental stimulation, Elevate is a “personal brain trainer” in your pocket. Improve your comprehension, focus, self-confidence, memory, spelling and 20 more skills by completing daily challenges tailored to whatever you want to hone. As one commenter put it, “I feel like I'm taking

a mental multivitamin.”

Free for iOS and Android devices.

[HabitRPG](#)

If there’s anything we’ve learned from professor Bruce Tsuji, it’s that gamification can make any activity more fun—even breaking bad habits. This app treats your life as though it’s a game, earning you points for productivity (like taking care of a to-do) and penalizing you for slipping up (like sneaking a cigarette). Stick with it and you’ll jump levels and cash in on rewards like classes and pets. Instant gratification = less procrastination.

Free for iOS and Android devices.

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