There is no denying the energy and attention around open learning and online educational resources right now. While the concept is not brand new, 2012 has seen a flurry of new partnerships, initiatives, and funders. With our efforts to support MITx ever-intensifying, a broader look at the evolving landscape will hopefully provide some useful context. While some of these initiatives more closely resemble OCW rather than MITx, here is a quick look at what our peer institutions and other thought leaders are doing in this space, as well as some of the foundations that help to make it all happen.

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3 Higher Ed Happenings New in the OFR Toolkit

Elite University Offerings:
Coursera
Open Yale Courses
webcast.berkeley
CMU Open Learning Initiative
Harvard University Extension School
NYU Open Education Initiative
Columbia Interactive

Aggregators and other platforms:
Khan Academy
Open Culture
Udacity
iTunesU
Peer 2 Peer University
Saylor Foundation
Annenberg Learner

Foundations making recent grants:
Gates Foundation, Broad Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Hewlett Foundation, Center for Media and Instructional Innovation.
New Foundation Alert

The Alexander Soros Foundation

In early April, Alexander Soros announced that he is establishing his own foundation to support organizations that promote social justice and human rights. Alexander Soros is the son of the founder and chairman of the Open Society Foundations, George Soros. The Alexander Soros Foundation’s grantmaking program focuses on innovative organizations in the United States, and around the world.

Initial grants have been made to the following organizations:

- National Domestic Workers Alliance
- Bend the Arc: A Jewish Partnership for Justice
- Make the Road New York
- Global Witness

For more information, please visit the Foundation’s website: www.alexandersorosfoundation.org

Funders to Watch

The Giving Pledge Edition

Twelve additional families have committed to the Giving Pledge in the month of April, bringing the total number of pledge members to 81.

- Bill and Karen Ackman/Pershing Square Foundation
- Steve Bing/Palm Fund
- Arthur M. Blank /Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation
- Edgar M. Bronfman/The Samuel Bronfman Foundation
- Glenn and Eva Dubin/G & E Dubin Family Foundation
- Red and Charline McCombs/McCombs Foundation
- Michael Moritz and Harriet Heyman/Crankstart Foundation
- Elon Musk/Musk Foundation
- John and Ginger Sall/Sall Family Foundation
- Henry and Susan Samueli/Samueli Foundation
- John A. and Susan Sobrato, John Michael Sobrato/Sobrato Family Foundation
- Ted and Vada Stanley/Stanley Family Foundation and the Stanley Medical Research Institute

(Source: Forbes.com 4/19/2012)
Foundations Changing Role of Higher Education Philanthropy

According to a recent study presented in April at the annual meeting of the American Education Research Association, mega-foundations such as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Lumina Foundation are changing the national agenda of higher education through their grantmaking priorities. The authors of the study coin the term “advocacy philanthropy,” which they use to describe the shift in foundations taking on leadership roles and using their power to influence government action and shape higher education policies. Critics claim that this trend has given foundations “outsized influence,” and consequently, hinder alternative points of view that may produce great ideas in higher education reform.
(Source: Inside Higher Ed 4/13/12)

New in the OFR Toolkit

- New and Improved Philanthropy Mapping Tool, In/Sight
- Foundation Center online, self-paced proposal writing course
- Women In Development Annual Spring Event with Joyce and Bill Cummings

Portfolio Foundations included in May issue
Gates Foundation – Lindley Huey
Hewlett Foundation – Kate Reynolds
Kellogg Foundation – Kate Reynolds
Open Society Foundations – Janet Wasserstein