

Academia Responds to Surging Interest in Digital Assets by Offering Crypto/Blockchain Courses

By **Cameron Carpenter** - February 12, 2018



The success of cryptocurrencies depends in large part on their acceptance by established and trusted institutions, such as universities. These institutions add legitimacy to the crypto-economy and serve as a reliable source of information in a space where misconceptions run rife.

Several top universities have begun offering cross-disciplinary courses that focus on crypto/blockchain technology. Carnegie Mellon, Cornell, Duke, MIT, and the University of Maryland are all offering graduate-level courses that center around some aspect of digital assets.

David Yermack, a law and business professor at New York University, was one of the first professors to offer for-credit courses on cryptocurrency in 2014, well before the recent surge in price and interest. He told *The New York Times*,

“There was some gentle ribbing from my colleagues when I began giving talks on Bitcoin. But within a few months, I was being invited to Basel to talk with central bankers, and the joking from my colleagues stopped after that.”

This school semester, Professor Yermack had to change the location of his crypto course, due to the fact that the lecture hall he had originally booked was not large enough to fit the 225 students who had enrolled. He is currently using the largest lecture hall available at NYU.

At the University of California at Berkeley, students sat in the aisles and stood against the wall to attend a lecture entitled, “Blockchain, Cryptoeconomics and the Future of Technology, Business and Law,” taught by faculty from the business school, law school, and the engineering department.

Campbell Harvey, a business professor at Duke University, told *The New York Times*, “The students in my class are from every possible discipline. They understand that this is going to disrupt many different areas of business, and they want to be the disrupters, not the disruptees.”

These professors are responding to a massive surge of demand for accredited education in cryptocurrencies and blockchains. Neha Narula, the director of MIT’s Digital Currency Initiative, told

The New York Times that she wasn't initially planning on teaching a course this semester, but due to the volume of requests from students, she decided to offer one.

Learning opportunities abound outside the classroom as well—a course on digital currencies created by Stanford computer science professor Arvind Narayanan is now the fifth most popular class offered by Coursera, an online education platform. Students at Berkeley have started a club on their campus dedicated to hosting student-led courses on blockchain technology. A group called Blockchainers in Manchester is hosting open events designed to educate Manchester University students on cryptocurrencies and blockchain technology.

Several schools, including The King's College in New York, the University of Nicosia in Cyprus, University of Cumbria in the UK, the European School of Management and Technology in Berlin, the University of Lucerne in Switzerland, and FPT University in Vietnam currently accept cryptocurrency as a means of tuition payment.

The widespread recognition in academia of digital currencies and blockchain technology as a legitimate area of study is quite the feather in the crypto sector's cap. It shows that forward-thinking intellectuals and educators see intrinsic value and immense possibility in cryptocurrency, and counters the notion that the recent spike in interest in digital assets is symptomatic of a fad or a bubble.

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