Kansas Board of Regents Open Educational Resources (OER) Steering Committee Action Plan

Advancing higher education through affordable course materials

What is OER?

Open educational resources (OER) "are teaching, learning and research materials in any medium – digital or otherwise – that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits no-cost access, use, adaptation and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions[1]**."** That is, OER include built in permission to retain, reuse, revise, remix, and redistribute the material[2].

Why is OER and Textbook Affordability Important?

Since 1967, the cost of educational books and supplies (which is primarily textbook costs) has increased over 2000% compared to less than 800% increase in the overall consumer price index.[3, 4] The Consumer Price Index reports that the cost of college course textbooks increased 88 percent from 2006 to 2016, compared to an increase of 21 percent for all items[5]. Because of their high cost, many students forgo the purchase of textbooks due to limited funds, putting them at a disadvantage. In 2019, the Kansas Board of Regents Student Advisory Committee conducted a survey to demonstrate the burden of textbook costs on students at Regent Institutions. They found that 48 percent of 6,474 Regent Institutions' students indicated they did not purchase or rent a required textbook in the spring semester. Seventeen percent said they did not purchase or rent three or more required textbooks[6]. With open/alternative educational resources, all students get equal and immediate access to educational materials.

The cost of textbooks is having a deeper impact on college students though. A 2018 survey of 1,651 former and current students found that "Thirty percent of survey respondents said they had forgone a trip home to see family, 43 percent said they skipped meals, 31 percent registered for fewer classes, and 69 percent worked a job during the school year -- all to save money for books[7]."

There is also evidence that student success is positively impacted by replacing textbooks with OER. Improving student success is another key area of emphasis. In a recent large analysis, there was a significant 29 percent decrease in the risk of college students withdrawing from open textbook courses (78.593 students) compared to commercial textbook comparison courses (100,012 students)[8]. Learning outcomes were equal between the courses. Students in the University of Georgia system (21,822 students), OER course students' final GPA was significantly higher, and DFW rates (students earning a grade of D, F, or withdrawing from a course) were decreased, compared to non-OER courses. Further, they found that the OER course student improvements in GPA and DFW rates were greater among Pell recipient, part-time, and non-white students that had lower rates of student success[9]. Content tailored to a course by the instructor is a contributor to student success. After financial savings and easy access, customization was the third most cited benefit by K-State students[10]. Several other states like Colorado, Georgia, Oregon, and New York have been pushing OER implementation for years

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and are already reaping the benefits. We can use some of their tactics as a model for how best to implement a plan for affordable textbooks here in our state.

System OER Action Plan

- Implement and sustain the system Open Textbook Network Membership.

- Incorporate OER expansion and textbook affordability into KBOR strategic planning.

- Work toward system institution course marking for zero or low cost course material in their course selection process.

- Encourage and support the adoption of grant-based incentive programs at each institution to adopt, adapt, and/or create OER and other free or low cost course materials.

- Engage state government officials and pursue state funding to support the adoption, adaption, and/or creation of open educational resources and/or initiatives.

- Seek out funding available from outside entities to fund the centralized grant system.

- Host and maintain a page on the KBOR website for the steering committee to communicate its activity and link to applicable resources.

- Collect data on textbook affordability/OER from students and faculty at system institutions.

- Plan a state/system-wide showcase, conference and/or participate in a regional conference.

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