

➤ Addressing the Problem:

This is a challenging climate for higher education. Institutions are under increasing pressure to lower costs and deliver better results for their student body. At the same time, they are also being pressured to admit more low-income and disadvantaged students.

Administrative costs are increasing, there are greater technology and infrastructure needs, and that is coupled with shrinking federal and state support. As a result, the percentage of the cost burden on students has increased, leaving many with higher debt and repayment challenges.

While textbooks are certainly a smaller line item than tuition or room and board, their costs have increased at a similar rate – almost four times the rate of inflation. Prices have gotten so high that 65% of students have skipped buying a textbook, and 50% say that textbook prices have impacted which and how many courses they're able to take. The out-of-pocket expense often hits low-income students the hardest, with 30% of students reporting that they've used financial aid to buy textbooks.¹ The students that can't afford their books end up cobbling together what they need through library reserves, borrowing from friends, or less reputable sources.

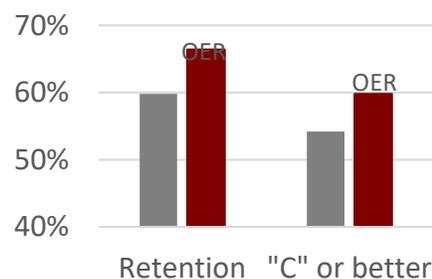


New publisher systems like inclusive access programs are an improvement over the current system, but largely perpetuate the same inequities. There is, however, a superior alternative.

➤ A path forward:

Open Educational Resources are teaching, learning and research materials that are published under an open license permitting free access, use, adaptation and redistribution by others without restriction. Open licensing is the critical lever between modern education and the collaborative culture of the Internet - leveraging technology to deliver high quality resources at low cost. Use of OER in place of traditional materials in classrooms is shown to:

Increase retention rates: Over the course of four semesters at Tidewater Community College, 66.4 percent of students using OER completed courses, compared to 59.8 percent of students using traditional textbooks. In addition, students utilizing open textbooks performed better: 59.8 percent completed with a C or better, compared to 54.2 with traditional textbooks.²



Improve student performance: A journal-published analysis of more than 16,000 students at public institutions showed that students using open materials perform as well, if not better, than their peers using traditional course materials. Other studies have yielded similar results.³

Open the door to greater pedagogy and innovation: In one survey, nine in 10 professors said OER materials are of the same quality or superior to traditional textbooks.⁴ Open licensing allows even greater flexibility for faculty wishing to customize how and what they teach.

Other Benefits:

OER are free to students: OpenStax, an open textbook publisher, reports that students have saved over \$145 million in textbook prices.⁵ Individual institutions also boast major student savings in the transition to OER: University of Maryland reports \$1.6 million in student savings, University of Oklahoma reports \$1.9 million, and Maricopa Community College reports over \$10 million, as a few examples.⁶ That lowers the overall debt burden they leave with, and it alleviates an access barrier for the lowest income students.

OER have a High Return on Investment: A comparatively small institutional investment can generate big savings for students. Affordable Learning Georgia (ALG) dispersed \$2.7 million in grant funds to the Georgia system, and saved students just under \$27 million, a return of \$10 saved for every \$1 spent.⁷ At UMass Amherst, the institution spent \$60,000 over three years and saved students almost \$1.5 million, a return of 25-to-1.⁸ These high numbers also demonstrate to a community that their institution is making a commitment to keeping college within reach.



Where to start:

- Creating an OER grant program on campus is one of the most effective ways to accelerate OER adoption and creation. OER grant programs provide financial incentives to support faculty use and development of OER, and help raise awareness of OER's advantages and availability.
- Even at institutions with OER programs and initiatives, not all students know that OER is an option. Requiring that OER be designated in course catalogues when a student registers for classes spreads awareness of OER programs, improves transparency, and allows students to be smart consumers.
- Establishing an OER faculty award can serve as an easy, low-cost way to recognize professors who convert a course to open materials. Recognizing exceptional faculty members is a way to demonstrate that campus administrators support innovation while respecting academic freedom.
- Experience has shown that just introducing faculty members to OER leads to increased use of it in the classroom. Inviting open education experts to address campus faculty is a low cost, low effort way to start the conversation about OER at your institution.

1. "Covering the Cost" *The Student PIRGs*. (2016) <https://studentpirgs.org/reports/sp/covering-cost>

2. Lane Fischer, John Hilton, David Wiley and Linda William. "Maintaining Momentum Toward Graduation: OER and the Course Throughput Rate." *IRRODL* 17.6 (2016): <http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/2686/3967>

3. Lane Fischer, John Hilton, T. Jared Robinson, and David Wiley. "A multi-institutional study of the impact of open textbook adoption on the learning outcomes of post-secondary students." *J. of Comp. in Higher Ed* 27.3 (2015): 159-72. <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12528-015-9101-x>

4. I. Elaine Allen and Jeff Seaman. *Opening the Textbook: Educational Resources in U.S. Higher Education, 2015-16*. Babson Survey Research Group, 2016, *Opening the Textbook: Educational Resources in U.S. Higher Education, 2015-16*, www.onlinelearningsurvey.com/reports/openingthetextbook2016.pdf

5. <https://openstax.org/blog/nearly-15-million-college-students-use-free-textbooks>

6. www.usmd.edu/usm/2017USMScorecard.pdf, http://www.oudaily.com/news/grants-established-by-ou-libraries-to-aid-students-professors-in/article_97cb843a-86a0-11e7-8174-d7d2366d3db4.html, <https://www.maricopa.edu/why-maricopa/maricopa-millions>

7. <https://www.affordablelearninggeorgia.org/about/reports>

8. <https://www.library.umass.edu/services/teaching-and-learning/oer/open-education-initiative/>

