

Open Educational Resources (OER) Committee

A Faculty & Staff Initiative

Submitted to	Chair, Dean & Provost
Prepared by	Faculty & Staff Working Group
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Purpose	Conversation Starter & Formal Interest Statement

Overview

We propose the establishment of an Open Educational Resources (OER) University Committee at our university — a voluntary, cross-disciplinary community of faculty, staff, and students dedicated to exploring, adopting, and advancing open and affordable course materials. This proposal serves as a starting point for dialogue with academic leadership and is not a request for formal action at this time.

What Are OER?

Open Educational Resources are teaching and learning materials that are freely available for anyone to use, adapt, and redistribute. They include textbooks, course modules, lecture notes, assessments, and multimedia content released under open licenses (such as Creative Commons). OER represents a global movement embraced by institutions ranging from community colleges to flagship research universities.

The Case for an OER University Committee

Student Impact

- Students at public four-year institutions budget an average of \$1,290 for books and supplies per year, creating financial barriers that affect retention and academic performance.¹
- According to a 2023 national survey, 57% of students reported that textbook costs led them to enroll in fewer classes, and 41% said costs resulted in lower grades.²
- A multi-institutional study of over 16,000 students found statistically significant improvements in course completion and GPA for those using OER.³
- According to the WVHEPC report, the use of OER has helped students in WV save nearly 10 million dollars on textbook costs since 2021.⁴
- Among 13,000 WV students who were surveyed, nearly all of these students stated that it was easy to access OER and that OER were important to their academic success.⁵

Faculty & Instructional Benefits

- OER can be freely customized, updated, and contextualized to local course needs, unlike static commercial textbooks.
- Only 29% of faculty currently use OER despite 64% reporting familiarity with them, indicating significant untapped potential that a faculty-led interest group can help address.⁶

- An interest group creates a structured space for sharing experiences, identifying grant opportunities, and peer mentoring across disciplines.

Institutional Value

- OER aligns directly with our university's access, equity, and student success goals.
- Peer institutions with active OER programs have documented significant annual savings; one university saved nearly \$900,000 for students in a single year.⁷
- An interest group is a low-risk, no-cost first step toward positioning our institution as a regional leader in affordable education.

Proposed Structure & Activities

The committee would be informal and voluntary, with the following initial activities:

- Monthly meetings open to all faculty and staff
- Workshops and guest speakers on OER tools and licensing
- A shared repository of OER-adopted course information
- Support for faculty interested in applying for OER grants (e.g., state-level or SPARC/NEA programs)
- A newsletter or brief updates for the broader campus community

Resource Considerations

We are not requesting a budget at this stage. The committee can initially operate with existing resources: shared meeting spaces, voluntary leadership, and free digital tools. Should the committee grow, support could be considered.

Proposed Next Steps

- An initial conversation with the Chair, Dean, and Provost to gauge interest and identify institutional priorities.
- A brief survey of faculty and staff interest (if supported by leadership).
- A soft launch of the interest group in Fall 2026, beginning with an open information session.

We welcome your questions, feedback, and guidance as we explore how OER can best serve our students, faculty, and institutional mission.

References

- 1 Ma, J., Pender, M., & Oster, M. (2024). *Trends in college pricing and student aid 2024*. College Board. <https://research.collegeboard.org/media/pdf/Trends-in-College-Pricing-and-Student-Aid-2024-ADA.pdf>
- 2 Seaman, J., & Seaman, J. (2023). *National survey on student course material affordability, 2023*. Bay View Analytics. https://www.bayviewanalytics.com/reports/2023_student_course_material_affordability.pdf
- 3 Fischer, L., Hilton, J., III, Robinson, T. J., & Wiley, D. A. (2015). A multi-institutional study of the impact of open textbook adoption on the learning outcomes of post-secondary students. *Journal of Computing in Higher Education*, 27(3), 159–172. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7115070/>

- 4 West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission. (2025, November 10). West Virginia expands college affordability with \$250,000 in OER Challenge Grants. <https://lnkd.in/eKrFyjNE>
- 5 Olinger, H. (2025, November 10). WV students to save more as state expands free learning materials with \$250K grants. WVVA. <https://lnkd.in/ew38dTUy>
- 6 Seaman, J. E., & Seaman, J. (2023). *Digitally established: Educational resources in U.S. higher education, 2023*. Bay View Analytics. https://www.bayviewanalytics.com/oer_2023.html
- 7 University of Northern Iowa Libraries. (2024). *Textbook equity basics: OER & textbook equity*. University of Northern Iowa. <https://guides.lib.uni.edu/oer>