



# FAIRMONT STATE UNIVERSITY™

Office of Sponsored Programs

February 19, 2026



## **REMINDER: Falcon Mini-Grant applications are due March 31, 2026!**

Faculty and Staff: Don't forget that FY27 Falcon Mini-Grant applications are due **March 31, 2026**. This is an internal grant program available to make your projects that advance the mission of Fairmont State possible.

Click the buttons below for more information:

[FY27 RFP](#)

The RFP includes information on eligible and ineligible funding requests, how to organize your proposal, and what projects are most likely to be funded.

[FY27 Application](#)

The application form must be completed alongside your proposal and asks for further information about your project.

# SPECIAL FEATURE

## Open Educational Resources: Promoting Accessibility and Knowledge Attainment at Fairmont State University

Within higher education, the issue of student access is a valid concern for educators and administrators alike. If students are able to attend post-secondary schooling but cannot access the learning associated with that education, then higher education is failing its students. Various barriers exist that hinder student access but one that is especially prevalent in West Virginia is financial limitations. The cost of college beyond tuition, including program fees, course-specific materials, and even textbooks have many students struggling to continue their coursework.

To begin addressing some of those problems, the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (WVHEPC) promotes the use of Open Educational Resources (OER) throughout higher education to provide free student access to course learning, mitigating any potential financial burdens traditional resources might cause. To learn more about OER and how you could receive funding to implement it in your own classroom, continue reading this month's Special Feature.

### **What is OER?**

Open Educational Resources (OER) are defined by the Hewlett Foundation as "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."

OER can include a variety of openly accessible resources, including textbooks, assignments, handouts, tests, quizzes, audiovisual resources, photos, illustrations, entire courses, lesson plans, and anything else that helps an instructor teach.

To be considered OER, a resource should:

- Be free to access, meaning you do not need to navigate a paywall or create an account to view a material's content in full
- Include a license statement or icon from the Creative Commons
- Allow for the revision, remix, and redistribution of the material

Since 2021, OER materials have saved West Virginia students nearly \$10 million and every public college and university within the state now offers courses with no cost or low-cost options (WVHEPC). This truly benefits both students and faculty alike, as students can pursue collegiate education at a lower cost and faculty can educate their students by adapting existing resources and potentially expanding their own knowledge of their subject area.

### **What are available funding opportunities related to OER in West Virginia?**

Various funding opportunities exist, including those for project-based and programmatic OER usage within the classroom setting as well as research focused on OER usage. In particular, WVHEPC and the West Virginia Community and Technical College System (WVCTCS) regularly sponsor a grant opportunity that supports faculty seeking to create or adopt OER for use in a college course.

Additional OER grants from WVHEPC and WVCTCS include BRIDGE OER, a grant program focused on empowering faculty to create OER resources in specific disciplines where OER materials are scarce, and Destination OER, a grant program tailored to promote the integration of OER within dual enrollment courses. In previous cycles, the BRIDGE OER program has focused on areas of study including engineering, communications and media, computer science, and criminal justice.

Though the funding amounts vary for these OER grants, they are all geared toward promoting the usage of OER materials through higher education in West Virginia.

To research the impact of OER, the Open Education Group, through sponsorship from the Hewlett Foundation, hosts the Open Education Research Fellows. This program provides support for early career researchers to conduct studies in open education through a fellowship. Sixteen faculty members received fellowships for the 2025-2026 academic year.

### **What do the professors who have used OER have to say about it?**

Many professors at Fairmont State have used OER, for both grant-funded and non-grant-funded projects, to strengthen their instruction. The Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) reached out to some of the professors involved with recent OER projects to get their perspectives on these initiatives. Here is what they had to say:

- Maria Agee, Assistant Professor of Instructional Design & Technology, discussed the benefits of various OER grants: "The OER General Grant allowed me to begin this important work at Fairmont State, and now the OER Bridge Grant and the Open Learning WV Travel Grant are helping me expand and deepen that impact. Together, they have enabled me to create accessible, high-quality learning materials that serve both my students today and those who will come after them. It is incredibly rewarding to know that no student in my courses has to choose between buying textbooks and paying for other necessities."
- M.E. Yancosek Gamble, Associate Professor of Business, stated, "Using Open Educational Resources across all of my class has strengthened my teaching. OER provides flexible, current materials while eliminating textbook costs for students, which supports both learning outcomes and affordability."
- Andrea Haney, Associate Professor of Community Health, explained, "Using OER has allowed me to eliminate textbook costs for students while also increasing the relevance and flexibility of course materials. Because public health is a rapidly evolving field, OER enables me to update content to reflect current research, policies, and community health issues, and real-world case studies that directly connect to students' future careers. From a teaching perspective, OER has supported more engaging learning experiences. Students can access

materials directly from their Blackboard modules, which helps reduce barriers related to cost and access. OER also allows me to modify readings and assignments to align with course objectives, accreditation competencies, and the specific needs of our student population in the Community and Public Health major."

- James Long, Assistant Professor of Computer Science, shared, "OER resources are nice for the students and professor alike. The professor gets to know the students have the right materials for the course, while the student saves some money. Moreover, the process for OER grants is quick and simple. The application is short, the timeline is reasonable, and submitting the deliverables is far from a hassle."
- Billy Stone, Assistant Professor of Marketing & Management Studies, defined the benefit of OER within his program: "Through the OER grant, I redesigned a Marketing Management simulation that I now conduct across four in-class sessions at no cost to students. Publisher-provided simulation software for marketing courses often exceeds \$100 per student, so developing an internally delivered alternative significantly reduced financial burden while preserving the experiential component of the course. The revised structure keeps the learning objectives intact, strengthens the team-based decision-making, and ensures every student has immediate access from day one."

As OSP continues to stay attuned to the growing opportunities related to OER, we will keep our weekly newsletter updated with any opportunities we hear of that may interest anyone working with open educational resources at Fairmont State University.

#### References

Fairmont State University Library. (2025). AI for OER discovery: OER definitions and related information. <https://library.fairmontstate.edu/c.php?g=1468175&p=10924564>

Open Education Group. (2026). Open education research fellows. <https://openedgroup.org/fellows/>

West Virginia Library Commission. Open educational resources (OER): Home. *OER LibGuide*, <https://wvlguides.org/c.php?g=1008168&p=7304137>

WVHEPC. (2026). Open Learning WV. *West Virginia's Climb*, <https://wvclimb.com/open-learning-wv/>

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#### **SPECIAL NOTE:**

Any grant application, proposal, or request for external funding must be reviewed and approved **prior to submission** through an internal process managed by the Office of Sponsored Programs. Please *visit our website* for more information and to access the required forms which facilitate the internal review and approval process.



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