



COLORADO

Department of
Higher Education

Come for the price, stay for the quality.

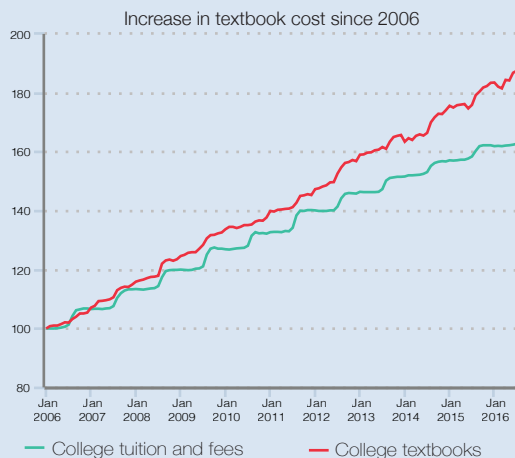
Photo by Nathan Anderson on Unsplash

What are Open Educational Resources?

The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation has defined open educational resources as: “teaching, learning, and research resources that reside in the public domain or have been released under an intellectual property license that permits their free use and re-purposing by others. Open educational resources include full courses, course materials, modules, textbooks, streaming videos, tests, software, and any other tools, materials, or techniques used to support access to knowledge.”¹

The Need for OER

Textbook costs have risen even faster than increases in tuition and fees, which means that a majority of students (nearly 66% in a recent study) forego purchasing a textbook.²



Although faculty have little influence over setting tuition and fees, one way they can help lower the cost of attendance for their students is by choosing, adapting, curating, and creating open educational resources.

What Colorado can do

The OER Council recommends a \$2.8m investment over 3 years to increase awareness, adoption, and creation of open educational resources to benefit Colorado students and their parents. Based on experiences in other states, Colorado can expect substantial student savings, a potential decrease in time-to-degree, and increased academic success for low-income students.

The Benefits of OER

Students enroll in more credits

Studies have shown that students in OER courses enroll in higher number of credits, even in the semester after an OER course, which can speed their time to graduation.⁴



Low-income students benefit

By allowing low-income students the same first-of-day access to learning materials as their peers, OER lower barriers to their academic success.



Faculty realize freedom to innovate

Without copyright barriers, faculty are free to correct errors in OER and to keep their content and approach very current.



Student learning gains hold steady, at much lower cost to them

Research shows students perform no worse when learning with OER compared to commercial offerings.



States see an excellent return on investment

States with programs that support OER adoption have had four-fold or larger returns on investment in individual years in the form of student savings. Courses switched to OER tend to stay that way, allowing savings to continue to accrue.



Colorado's statewide Open Educational Resources Council was charged by the Colorado Legislature and the Governor through SB 17 - 258 to develop recommendations for an OER initiative serving public higher education in the state of Colorado. The OER Council, which comprised representatives from 10 public institutions, the CDHE, and the State Librarian, worked with national OER experts on a statewide survey and conducted other research into OER benefits and existing institutional OER projects and support. The full report is available at:
https://higher.ed.colorado.gov/Publications/Reports/legislative/OER/OER_Nov2017.pdf

The OER Council recommends launching and funding a Colorado OER Initiative (COER) with a \$2.8m investment over three years to increase the awareness, adoption, and creation of open education resources across the state. Doing so will benefit students across the state and their parents. Based on experiences in other states, Colorado can expect substantial student savings, approximately \$1.8m after the first year of OER grants and an additional \$5.6m in the second and \$10m in the third year due to the compounding nature of the savings. Additionally, Colorado could potentially see a decrease in time-to-degree, as well as increased academic success for low-income students.

The Colorado Open Educational Resources Initiative (COER) has the following goals:

1. Scale the use of OER through targeted grant funding, including:

- **Institutional grants** to campuses for establishing an OER task force, setting their own OER priorities and disbursing grants.
- **Individual or small- group grants** for faculty and staff, especially at institutions without an institutional grant or OER initiative, to support OER creation, adoption, and promotion.

2. Ensure knowledge-sharing, professional development and community-building and sustaining opportunities such as:

- Regular **virtual meetings** of selected OER interest groups
- An **annual OER conference** of and for stakeholders from around the state, with keynotes and workshops on specific practical issues.

3. Establish enabling structure and staffing at the state level with:

- A standing **State OER Council** to guide statewide policy, oversee grant programs, and act as conference organizing committee, among other duties.
- A **full-time staff member in the Colorado Department of Higher Education** to support the above activities and to maintain information resources such as websites and collateral materials.
- An **annual report** to the Legislature describing COER activities and reporting on various metrics of success.

Questions?

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The following institutions were represented on the OER Council:



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¹ <https://www.hewlett.org/strategy/open-educational-resources/>

² <https://campustechnology.com/articles/2016/08/24/report-students-shun-new-textbooks-to-reduce-education-expenses.aspx>

³ <https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2016/college-tuition-and-fees-increase-63-percent-since-january-2006.htm>

⁴ <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs12528-015-9101-x>