OER Degrees:
Critical Conversations for Successful Planning and Implementation

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Thurs, April 26, 11:20 am
OER/Z Degrees

Complete pathway of courses converted by faculty to use OER instead of commercial textbooks
California’s Zero-Textbook-Cost Degree

**Goals:** Support colleges in the development of complete degree pathways that eliminate textbooks to increase affordability and success.

**Activities:**
- Leadership summits, training workshops
- Monthly project webinars
- Discipline group meetups
- Evaluation of outcomes
- Accessibility training
- Repository for sharing content
### Zero-Textbook-Cost Degrees

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- Cross-college and discipline specific collaboration
- Ability to leverage statewide technology & training
- Use of library resources
- Technical assistance by leader colleges

- Varied levels of OER experience
- Varied levels of faculty support
- Lack of career education for OER
- OER repository still in development
- One-time, limited funding 2017-2019
Northern Virginia Community College

• 2-year institution located in Virginia near Washington DC

• One of the largest and most diverse colleges in the US serving 75,000 students at six campus locations and online

• One of the first institutions to develop an OER degree pathway

• Many successes and challenges along the way
NOVA Success

- 40+ NOVA courses using free digital/OER with zero textbook costs to students
- Two full OER-based Associate Degree programs currently online (General Studies and Social Science)
- Expanding OER degree pathway in Liberal Arts with additional online and hybrid/campus courses through support from ATD grant
- Sharing content with colleagues and collaborating with peers, institutions and partners worldwide
- Have saved NOVA students over $3 million since 2013
NOVA Challenges

- **Academic Reorganization**
  - Shift from a “cafeteria college” to guided pathways
  - Liberal Arts courses being trimmed; focus on workforce & STEM areas
  - Curriculum being aligned for seamless transfer to partner university
- **Policy Change not allowing faculty stipends**
- **Freeze in developing new courses during curriculum reorganization**
  - Flat enrollment led to hiring freeze that is just now being lifted
- **Rise in low-cost alternatives to OER**
  - Increase in publishers/platform providers marketing directly to faculty
  - Bookstore piloting FirstDay program to compete with OER
- **Faculty uncertainty during period of change cause for pause**
• 68 programs of study,
  • 38 2-year degrees, 2 Bachelor degrees
• Two College District, 4 locations, 2 eLearning structures
• Serves 20,000 students (total headcount)
• 1 OER Degree Associate of Arts Direct Transfer
What is a Zed Cred?

A degree pathway with **zero textbook costs** to students, achieved through:
- Open educational resources (such as open textbooks)
- Institutionally licensed resources (such as library databases)

**Why is this important?**
- Significant cost savings to students (~$1000 per academic year per student)
- Increases in enrolment, persistence, and performance (e.g., Hilton et al., 2016)
- Ability to plan and support high-impact OER development & adoption
- Collaborations across institutions
- A first for Canada
What do you think are the key factors for launching a successful OER degree at your institution/system?
What metrics are important to you for OER Degree evidence of impact?
What challenges do you see/foresee to in developing OER degrees at your institution?
How do you sustain and adapt the development of OER degrees?
Thank you!

Questions?

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The first college degree featuring all OER materials was launched in 2013 at Tidewater Community College in the U.S. state of Virginia and named the “Z-degree” because of the zero textbook costs. Students enrolled in the “business administration Z-degree” could save 25% of the cost of earning a degree with this new program. In the last four years, it is estimated that the number of colleges and universities in the U.S. and Canada developing OER degrees has grown to over 65. For many of these institutional efforts, the access and affordability benefits of open education are the motivator for the investment of staff time and money. However, beyond developing courses using OER instead of commercially published textbooks, colleges must organize an infrastructure featuring professional development to create awareness and engagement for faculty, staff, and students; IT support; sustainability planning and policies, and articulation relationships to support all constituents in teaching and learning with OER.

This panel of college leaders will identify critical conversations in the planning process that lead to successful OER degree implementations. Rather than focusing on best practices, this panel will share lessons learned about the challenges of devising a plan to integrate OER degree pathways into institutional practices. Emphasis will focus on the five key stakeholders and how to both support and leverage their OER needs: faculty, staff, institutions, students, and external partners. Audience members will be encouraged to ask questions to guide the panel discussion.

Administrators: Quill, Preston, Una
Faculty Perspective: Rajiv
Random Thoughts :-)

Roles: Faculty, Librarians/ID, Administrators, Students, Community Builder.

Applied, practical approach -- how to launch?

How does a Z-course get made? Idea to completion …

Too much input/too many rules on second OER degrees

Benefits bringing project to success (engaged conversations between faculty)

Challenge: Leveraging institutional resources to bring about change (library resources).

Institutional Transformation to bring about OER degrees …

Accessibility, Hard copies, Student Advisement,