

# Strategic Plan – Initiative Work Plan FY2015

Initiative Name Creating More Affordable Education: Open Educational Resources (Pilot)

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Goal # 5 Initiative # 3

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**Thesis Statement** Indiana State University's faculty are being recruited to convert their traditional text-book dependent classes to using free open educational resources (OERs). Free textbooks and other learning materials will reduce ISU students' financial burden. Using open source learning materials will also enable all students in the class to obtain a copy of the assigned text leading to an increased retention and graduation rates.

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## **1. Introduction/Background – What?**

Student textbook costs have risen over the course of the past 20 years. In 2009, a study done by Student Public Research Interest Group found wholesale college textbook prices had risen more than four times the rate of inflation between the years of 1990-2009.<sup>1</sup> According to the College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, a student will expect to pay \$1200 for books and school supplies during the 2012-2013 school year.<sup>2</sup> Indiana State University estimates that students will spend \$800-\$1200 in books and supplies during the 2014-2015 school year.<sup>3</sup>

Another emerging trend is the increase in sales of eBooks and eTextbooks, which are gaining a foothold in the traditional print marketplace. As students become more comfortable reading texts in digital format, the demand for eTexts will increase. eTextbooks have some advantages over print texts: they are more portable, have increased searching capability, and some even offer enhanced content like video and audio. However, eTextbooks as they are currently being produced are not addressing the issue of textbook cost. The student cannot recoup the cost of purchasing an eTextbook by reselling it, and oftentimes the student only purchases access to the text for a semester. If the student is only purchasing temporary access to the book it not accessible offline, and sometimes the student is restricted to a specific device in order to access the book.

On the other end of the education materials spectrum, open education resources (OER), including open source textbooks, are teaching materials free for educators to use, adapt, and reuse in their classroom. Many OERs are licensed with Creative Commons, a copyright system that allows the creator to retain their copyright status, but also allows others to copy, distribute, edit, remix, and build upon their work. OERs can include lesson plans, worksheets, syllabi, and even full textbooks.

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<sup>1</sup> New Laws, Free Books and Textbook Rentals Could Help Curb Rising Costs This Fall. Student PIRGs. Press Release August 26, 2012. <http://www.studentpirgs.org/news/new-laws-free-books-and-textbook-rentals-could-help-curb-rising-costs-fall> Accessed 2013-02-01

<sup>2</sup> Average Estimated Undergraduate Budgets, 2012-2013. College Board Advocacy and Policy Center. <http://trends.collegeboard.org/college-pricing/figures-tables/average-estimated-undergraduate-budgets-2012-13>. Accessed 2013-02-01

<sup>3</sup> Undergraduate Tuition and Fees Fall 2014-Spring 2015. Indiana State University. <http://www.indstate.edu/tuition/fall2014-2015-undergraduate/index.htm>. Accessed 2014-05-19.

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While the OER movement started to gain traction in the late 1990s and early 2000, it has exploded in popularity in the past two years.

OER eTextbooks specifically address all of the issues that arise with publisher-produced eTextbooks: the text is available for free, the text is usually available in a variety of formats so that it can be viewed on multiple platforms, and the text is available for offline use. Students can even choose to print the entire OER textbook if they so choose, or only print portions of the textbook.

The availability of open source education resources has grown in the past two years. Projects like Rice University's OpenStax College and Connexions provide access to free or very low-cost educational content available under Creative Commons Attribution license. These textbooks have been written, edited and reviewed by academics across the nation. Therefore, the barrier of entry for using open source texts has substantially lowered for those instructors who seek a complete text to use in their classroom. Students often give the "excuse" of cost of the text as a reason for not purchasing a textbook. If the textbook were free or low cost, then the student's reasoning behind not acquiring the text is no longer valid.

In FY14, this initiative's ongoing pilot project began testing the effectiveness of using OERs in the classroom. Initial results indicate that in most circumstances, both students and faculty benefit from using OERs. Students benefit by saving money and having access to materials at the beginning of the semester. Faculty benefit by constructing custom content for their classes that specifically address their learning outcomes for the course.

### **2. Proposal/Purpose/Justification – Why?**

The Report of the Textbooks and Supplies Subcommittee of the Affordability Taskforce was released in early 2012.<sup>4</sup> Using public domain or open access materials was amongst the cost saving avenues explored in the Report. While the subcommittee did not create guidelines for piloting such a project, this initiative was created to address it.

The Report identified that some faculty on campus were already using and creating OERs in their classroom successfully, but that in many cases it, "added to their own workflow."<sup>5</sup> A steering committee was formed to support a pilot program that encourages faculty to use OERs in the classroom. To incentivize faculty to take the time to find OER materials to replace the traditional textbook, \$3000 is offered to any faculty member that elects to participate in the program.

In order to track students' perceptions of the materials, the steering committee created a survey to distribute to the students enrolled in the participating faculty's class twice a semester – once at the beginning of the term and once at the end of the term. Each survey gauges the students' opinions on textbooks in general, digital readings in general, and their thoughts on the use of the specific classroom materials used during the term.

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<sup>4</sup> Report of the Textbooks and Supplies Subcommittee of the Affordability Taskforce.

<http://www.indstate.edu/affordability/documents/affordabilitybooksfinalreport.pdf>. Accessed 2014.05.19.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 11.

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The steering committee also initially restricted enrollment in the pilot program to faculty teaching undergraduate courses that were either approved for Foundational Studies requirements or were required courses for a student's major. The committee felt that this population of undergraduates would benefit the most from reducing the cost of textbooks; simultaneously having the greatest impact on overall cost savings, based on these larger class's enrollment numbers.

### **3. Discussion of Past Years Results – Benchmark Successes?**

During FY2014's pilot, 14 faculty members participated in re-designing their classes using OERs; the goal was 5. In those classes, a total number of 666 students were enrolled, and they saved over \$84,000. Both of these numbers fell short of the proposed goals of 1000 students and \$100,000 saved.

During the course of the year, we also held four recruitment workshops, created a clearing house website that directs interested faculty toward OER materials, and talked to various groups around campus about the program.

During the course of the year, we had varying reactions from both faculty and students. In the Fall2013 and Spring2014 survey sets (answered by 419 students, a 63% response rate), 49% of the responding students reported that the format of the learning materials either helped them or somewhat helped them learn the course material better. 37% of them reported that format of the materials had no effect on their performance at all. Only 11% of the students felt that the format of the materials hurt or somewhat hurt their performance.

Faculty (in general) also liked the experience, although some faculty did report some negative attitudes expressed by their students, specifically the lack of a print-option. The student surveys also reflect this attitude, with some students indicating they would like to have the option to purchase a print copy of the learning materials. When asked how the materials could be improved in future years, 33 students (about 8%) responded that they would have preferred to do the readings in some form of print. On the other hand, 57 students (about 14%) said that they materials were fine the way they were and 15 students reported that they enjoyed the digital format specifically. Other comments students made in the survey were that the readings could be better integrated into the courses' learning outcomes; the scanned documents were sometimes illegible; larger files sometimes did not load quickly enough; and that they were poorly organized in Blackboard, so that sometimes it was difficult to tell what readings to do for each assignment.

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## 4. Work Plan, Next Fiscal Year – Action Steps – Process – How?

Starting in Spring 2015, in order to address some of the concerns that occurred during the initial phase of the pilot project, faculty wishing to participate in the program will be required to take a self-led course that will lead them through the steps of choosing and evaluating appropriate materials, aligning them with their courses learning objectives, copyright and fair use concerns, and effectively organizing the resources in the LMS (Blackboard). By completing the prerequisite course, participating faculty will have constructed a complete class curriculum using OERs, ready to be used with students during the next semester.

1. Currently, we are working with Instructional Design and the Faculty Center for Teaching Excellence to develop the 11 week prerequisite course “Teaching with OERs.” The course will be completed prior to the start of Fall 2015 and ready for faculty participants.
2. Start recruitment of new faculty for Spring & Summer 2015 during Summer and early Fall 2014. Host workshops, and develop print/electronic flyer for distribution to all faculty.
3. During Fall 2014, work with faculty who are already participating to distribute surveys and troubleshoot any issues as they occur.
4. Assess students that attended OER classes in AY 2013-14 for retention.
5. Evaluate content of self-led OER course in early Spring 2015 and make any needed adjustments for recruitment efforts for Fall 2015 and beyond.

Recurring tasks:

- Recruitment is effectively ongoing, but will be concentrated in the time periods before October 15 and March 15 (due dates for textbooks orders for the bookstore) for each semester.
- Each student in participating courses receives a pre-survey and a post-survey during the course of the semester.
- Faculty are asked to informally evaluate their experience at the end of the semester.

## 5. Reporting and Deliverable Schedule – When?

- August 14, 2014 – Survey results and reporting numbers finalized for Summer 2014
- August 20, 2014 – self-led “Teaching with OERs” course completed.
- Week of September 1, 2014 – collect names, emails and 991s of students in participating classes

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- August 20 – October 10, 2015 – recruit faculty for Spring/Summer 2015. This includes hosting two introductory workshops: one in late August and one in early September.
- During Fall 2014 – distribute pre- and post- surveys to students (dates TBD)
- December 8 - December 13, 2014 – Collect feedback from participating faculty
- December 14, 2014 – January 13, 2015 – Evaluate “Teaching with OERs” and make changes if needed.
- December 14, 2014 – January 13, 2015 – Survey results and reporting numbers finalized for Fall 2014
- January 14-March 10, 2015 – recruit faculty for Fall 2015 and beyond.
- Week of Jan 19, 2015 – collect names, emails and 991s of students in participating classes
- During Spring 2015 – distribute pre- and post- surveys to students (dates TBD)
- May 4 – 8, 2015 – collect feedback from faculty
- May 5-May 31, 2015 – Survey results and reporting numbers finalized for Spring 2015

### **6. Budget – How Much, a General Discussion of Funds Use?**

The majority of the requested funds will be used to award stipends to faculty who successfully incorporate OERs into their courses. For each course that is converted, faculty receive a \$3000 stipend.

An additional \$20,000 has been budgeted for departments who choose to convert all sections of a large undergraduate Foundational Studies course.

\$1000 is budgeted to purchase permanent licenses to specific eBooks requested by participating faculty to support their course activities. The eBooks will be licensed and housed in the library’s permanent digital collections.

\$500 is budgeted to provide light refreshments during the face to face recruitment workshops.

### **7. Stakeholders and Management Plan – Who?**

Students – saving money on textbooks so school is more affordable, enabling students to obtain required texts. Having texts will increase grades, and thus increase retention and graduation rates.

Administrators – helps answer mandate by State of Indiana to make higher education more affordable for students.

Faculty – adopting free or low cost open source texts helps students’ academic achievement.

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## **8. Outcome Assessment & Future Testing**

- Monitor student responses to pre- and post- surveys. Address issues as they arise.
- Monitor faculty evaluations for satisfaction and areas to improve.
- Continue to revise self-led Blackboard course as needed.
- Collect 991 numbers of students in participating classrooms to track retention and graduation rates.

## **9. Line Item Budget Discussion that tracks Budget Templates ...**

Labor Costs (Line 5 - \$36,000): every faculty member who agrees to convert a course to using OERs receives a \$3000 stipend. We already have 6 courses that have committed to use OERs for the Fall 2014 semester. We predict that we will have at least that many convert for Spring/Summer 2015. The total is for 12 courses converted.

Operational (Line 40a - \$1000): For some classes, additional materials are needed. The library can purchase multiple user licenses for certain eBooks at the request of faculty member to use in the course. The eBook becomes a part of ISU Library's permanent eBook collection, available for the course's use. Additionally, the eBooks is available for anyone else in the university.

Operational (Line 41a - \$500): Providing light refreshments during the face to face recruitment meetings will provide additional incentive for interested faculty to attend as well as create a more comfortable atmosphere for those in attendance.

Operational (Line 43a - \$20,000): We tentatively have one large multi-section undergraduate Foundational Studies course in the process of converting to using OERs for Fall 2014. We hope to find one other large multi-section course to convert for the Spring 2015 semester. Each department who agrees to go through the process receives a \$10,000 grant to be used for travel or other departmental needs.