Lessons Learned: Improving Accessibility, Addressing Cost in a General Psychology Course through the Adoption of an OER Textbook

Participant Idea Exchange (PIE) #37 facilitated by Dr. Kristin Flora – Franklin College
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Summary: With college costs increasing, students and faculty alike are looking for ways to manage the expense of higher education. One practice that is increasingly garnering attention is shifting from commercial textbooks to the use of Open Educational Resources (OERs). This past semester, all General Psychology courses at Franklin College adopted an OER textbook. We chose the General Psychology course because in addition to fulfilling a requirement for psychology majors, it functions as a service course in the liberal arts curriculum and thus reached many students. However, this conversion was not without its challenges. This PIE looks to discuss the conversion process with others who are either considering adopting an OER text or have already adopted an OER text to discuss both the benefits and challenges.

Discussion Questions:

1. How prevalent is the use of OERs on your campus? Are there discipline-specific or course-level trends in the adoption of OERs?
2. How would you characterize the support (or lack of) from administration, library staff, or centers for teaching and learning do you have for adopting OERs?
3. What have you found to be the greatest benefit of using OERs? The greatest challenge or frustration?
4. What additional resources would be helpful to you when making the decision to convert from a commercial textbook to an OER text?

Brief Literature Review:

Belikov, O.M. & Bodily, R. (2016). Incentives and barriers to OER adoption: A qualitative analysis of faculty perceptions. *Open Praxis, 8*(3), 235-246.

- Top barriers for adopting an OER identified by 218 U.S. faculty were a desire for more information, lack of discoverability (lacking a repository), and confusing OER with other digital resources. Top incentives included student cost benefit, pedagogical benefits, and institutional support.

Colvard, N.B., Watson, C.E., & Park, H. (2018). The impact of open educational resources on various student success metrics. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 30*(2), 262-276.

- This study of 21,822 students found that adoption of OER improved end-of-course grades and decreased DFW rates for all students. These benefits are stronger for Pell-recipient students, part-time students, and those historically underserved by higher education.

Gurung, R.A.R. (2017). Predicting learning: Comparing an open educational resource and standard textbooks. Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Psychology, 3(3), 233-248.

- In 2 large, multisite studies, after controlling for ACT score, OER users performed worse on a standardized test compared to students using a standard textbook. While the two groups did not differ in their ratings of book helpfulness, OER users rated the book as lower quality. Across both studies, OER hard copy users performed the worst relative to OER digital and standard textbook users.

Kursun, E., Cagiltay, K. & Can, G. (2014). An investigation of faculty perspectives on barriers, incentives, and benefits of the OER movement in Turkey. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning, 15*(6), 14-32.

- Large scale survey querying 1,637 participants across 56 Turkish universities about the barriers and incentives and benefits for faculty to share their materials. While attitudes were positive overall, key barriers centered on quality and appropriate intellectual property protections were perceived as a key incentive.

Jhangiani, R.S., Dastur, F.N., LeGrand, R., & Penner, K. (2018). As good or better than commercial textbooks: Students' perceptions and outcomes from using open digital and open print textbooks. *Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, 9*(1). Retrieved from https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/cjsotl_rcacea/vol9/iss1/5

- Canadian students' (N=178) perceptions of the print version of an open introductory psychology textbook was that it was superior to the commercial textbook. Students assigned the open textbook (either digital OR print) performed no differently or better than students assigned a commercial textbook.

Other Resources:

www.oercommons.org

- OER Commons is a freely accessible online library that allows teachers and others to search and discover open educational resources and other freely available instructional materials.

http://nobaproject.com/

- Noba is an open and free online platform that provides high-quality, flexibly structured textbooks and educational materials.

http://openstaxcollege.org/books

- OpenStax is a nonprofit ed-tech initiative based at Rice University. Since 2012, OpenStax has created peer-reviewed, openly licensed textbooks, which are available in free digital formats and for a low cost in print.

http://www.merlot.org/

- The MERLOT system provides access to curated online learning and support materials and content creation tools, led by an international community of educators, learners and researchers.

http://ocw.mit.edu/courses/brain-and-cognitive-sciences/

- *"Since the field of brain and cognitive sciences is relatively young and extremely dynamic, there is no single text that encompasses the subject matter covered in most of the classes offered by the department. To educate and train future scientists, readings are from primary journal articles or research papers. This approach provides broad coverage, as well as the depth needed, so that students are exposed to cutting-edge knowledge in the various specialties of neuroscience and cognitive science. Browsing the course materials in MIT OpenCourseWare, the jewels are revealed in the detailed reading lists that provide a window on the current thinking in each subject."*

http://opl.apa.org/

- Provides access to demonstrations, experiments for students to participate in, and datasets that can be downloaded for students to analyze.

Notes & Contact Information: