OER DEGREE PATHWAY

BUSINESS PLAN

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The LEAP-OER-Degree work group set forth to establish an Associate of Arts degree pathway that relies on Open Educational Resources (OERs) rather than traditional for-profit textbooks. The overarching goal of this project is to reduce student financial barriers, thereby increasing student access. Studies have shown that OERs can be more cutting edge, engaging, and adaptable to student needs than traditional textbooks. In turn, these factors have been shown to lower student withdrawal rates, improve grades, and shorten the time needed to graduate with an Associates degree. Additionally, OERs give faculty the opportunity to customize their course materials specifically for the needs of our students.

The LEAP-OER-Degree work group developed and conducted an original faculty survey to better understand current faculty perspectives regarding OERs. The results of this survey showed that over 88% of faculty respondents were interested in using OERs, even though only 16% of respondents said they were currently using OERs in place of traditional textbooks. At the same time, annual student survey data revealed that 75% of COC students feel the cost of textbooks and supplies are the number one barrier to reaching their educational goals. Furthermore, about 42% of our students are influenced in their course selections by current textbook costs, and the majority of the students would prefer to use free/low-cost textbook alternatives such as OERs in their classes. Thus, College of the Canyons is primed to pilot an OER-based degree pathway, with support from students, faculty, and administrators.

The LEAP-OER-Degree work group conducted a budget analysis and determined that the cost to develop the OER pathway is estimated at $74,000 over two years. The primary expense in the budget is faculty compensation for their time adopting OER in place of current commercial textbooks ($3,000 per course). For this investment ($74,000), it is estimated students will collectively save over $250,000 every year in each degree pathway created. This estimate is based off of current textbook costs for the minimum number of courses needed to receive an AA Degree in Liberal Studies with a focus in Social and Behavioral Sciences. Piloting OERs in this sequence is the best use of resources, as it has overlapping requirements with a multitude of majors, allowing for a variety of students to benefit from the OER classes.
(even if they are not earning this specific degree). This pathway also utilizes OER courses already in use in the social sciences, particularly within the Sociology department. Once created, the OER-based degree pathway will continue to save students money for years to come, with relatively little maintenance costs.

To offset the start-up costs, the OER-Degree work group investigated grant opportunities for this project in collaboration with the COC grants office. Potential funding sources are discussed in detail within the full project plan; however, it should be noted the LEAP-OER Degree work group already wrote and submitted an ASG grant in the amount $10,500, presented on May 14, 2015.

The OER degree pathway is a tremendous opportunity for College of the Canyons to embrace its mission of innovation. When successfully implemented, it will save our students hundreds of thousands of dollars in preventable costs, and make COC the first California Community College with an OER-based degree. We ask for your consideration and support for this important student-focused project.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Open Educational Resources (OERs) Associate of Arts project was established to reduce financial barriers for students at College of the Canyons. This is accomplished by leveraging quality peer-reviewed OERs in lieu of traditional commercial textbooks within an established Associate of Arts degree pathway. This project empowers faculty to choose and/or create customizable course materials that better match the needs and learning styles of our students. In doing so, this project increases access to quality higher education, supports greater faculty control of teaching and learning materials, and enhances the real world value of our degrees.
INTRODUCTION

The use of Open Educational Resources (OERs) is a revolutionary approach to address increasing financial barriers for students attending College of the Canyons. This project plan outlines how quality peer-reviewed OERs can be adopted in lieu of traditional commercial textbooks along an entire Associate of Arts degree pathway. OERs are arguably the best mechanism to stem the rising costs of higher education and to keep COC at the forefront of educational advancement. Furthermore, OERs have the potential to improve student success rates and engagement, while giving faculty the freedom to customize content specifically for the needs of our students. By implementing this project plan, we can increase access to the quality educational programs at College of the Canyons and become the first California Community College to offer a fully OER-based degree.

A working definition of Open Educational Resources (OERs):

*From OER Commons:

*Open Educational Resources are teaching and learning materials that you may freely use and reuse, without charge. That means they have been authored or created by an individual or organization that chooses to retain few, if any, ownership rights. For some of these resources, that means you can download the resource and share it with colleagues and students. For others, it may be that you can download a resource, edit it in some way, and then re-post it as a remixed work. Open Educational Resources often have a Creative Commons or GNU license that state specifically how the material may be used, reused, adapted, and shared.*

OERs Operational Definition:

Although the OER-LEAP-Degree Work group supports the open exchange of all educational resources, in the context of textbook replacement at College of the Canyons, OERs are operationally defined as no-cost, peer-reviewed and validated materials. The use of OERs in-place of traditional textbooks is contingent upon a review process that assures the materials surpass the curricular demands of a course and align with the expected student learning outcomes.

The following sections outline the potential and feasibility of an OER-based degree at College of the Canyons.
PROJECT FOUNDATIONS

Environmental Scan
When developing an Open Education Resources (OERs) degree pathway, it is essential to examine the approaches of other OER-based programs. By identifying, and then building upon the successes of other programs, the LEAP-OER-Degree work group hopes the College of the Canyons model will become the standard for the future.

History
The Open Educational Resources movement was sparked in 2002 by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Open-Courseware-Project, which innovated the way quality course content could be freely shared online. The Open-Courseware-Project took traditional MIT course content and placed it online for all to share and learn from. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) adopted and standardized the term “Open Educational Resources” following the success of the Open-Courseware project. Though the MIT Open-Courseware-Project did not offer credit courses or yield degrees for its users, it did demonstrate a proof of concept. Quality educational materials could now be widely distributed outside of the publishing mainstream at little to no cost to the users.

MIT’s model was quickly replicated and expanded upon by other prominent institutions. Today, students and teachers can benefit from a countless variety of OERs, including free and open source textbook repositories (e.g. openstaxcnx.org, openstaxcollege.org, merlot.org, saylor.org/books, opne.umn.edu, theorganeggrove.org, collegeopentextbooks.org, ck12.org, and opensuny.org).

OER-Based Programs
Though MIT innovated the way educational content was shared, it would take ten more years before OERs would be used exclusively in place of traditional textbooks for the purposes of earning an accredited degree. One of the first institutions to offer such an OER-based degree was Tidewater Community College (TCC) in Chesapeake, VA. In 2013, TCC grabbed headlines and awards when they started offering a “Z-Degree” (Zero Textbook Cost Program). Tidewater established their new program for Business majors,
and today offer more than twenty-three OER courses and over forty OER-based sections. The popularity of this program has steadily increased, with over 900 students expected to enroll in the spring of 2015 alone.

After implementing their “Z-Degree,” TCC cut the cost of earning a Business AA degree by 20-30%, but beyond this, they began to see some unintended program benefits (see the Z-degree outcome charts, courtesy of TCC, retrieved April, 4, 2015). Of note, there was a significant increase in the percentage of students completing courses with a “C” or better, and a significant decrease in withdrawal rates in “Z-Degree” classes. During the Fall of 2013, the “Z-Degree” had an aggregated retention rate of 90.4% with over 88% of Tidewater’s OER students rating their Z-Degree courses above average when compared to courses requiring the purchase of a traditional for-profit textbook.

The success of the OER-based degree at TCC can be attributed in part to their infrastructure design and planning. For example, TCC provides a 6-module online professional development course called “Pathway to OER” that helps their faculty effectively adapt open-licensed educational resources (OERs) for use in the classroom. College of the Canyons OER-based degree will benefit from a similar strategy of providing supportive faculty training modules. Fortunately, COC is known for its robust Professional Development department that already offers training opportunities for COC employees year-round. For faculty, the OER trainings at COC could additionally be part of the FLEX program at COC.
A potential training sequence might include:

**Part 1**: What is OER? An introduction
**Part 2**: Learning about Licensing
**Part 3**: Identifying OER Peer-Reviewed Sources
**Part 4**: Selecting Materials that Align with SLOs
**Part 5**: Adapting and/or Developing OER Materials, with Consideration for 508 (disability-accessibility) Compliance

While TCC pioneered Zero-textbook degree programs, there are several other programs of note that offer either a full or partial degree in an OER-format. For example, Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) began offering an online Open Educational Resources Associates degree in General Studies and Social Sciences. Unlike TCC, NOVA’s degree focuses on a Liberal Education pathway instead of Business. In doing so, NOVA is able to reach a broader range of students, with multiple major requirements dipping into the Liberal Education pathway.

Though the OER-LEAP-Degree work group has no intention of creating an online-only pathway, something can be said about how the online learning format lends itself well to using OERs. This factor should be considered in future iterations of the OER degree pathway plan at COC. The online factor aside, a Liberal Arts pathway, similar to the one offered at NOVA, is the practical degree pathway to establish and pilot at COC. Like NOVA, the majority of COC students take classes within a Liberal Arts degree sequences, at least for parts of their degree requirements. These factors make a Liberal Arts pathway plan the most versatile and far-reaching of the available pathway-degree options.

OER-based degrees have not only shown their potential to improve student success across several indicators, but they have also made a significant impact on students’ financial well-being. This is particularly important, considering Americans have over one trillion in student loan debt, with textbooks accounting for up to 40% of overall community college cost. By investigating student savings from outside OER-based pathways projects, we can begin to comprehend the financial impact this project could have on COC students and the community.
Comparable OER Savings
The overall student savings from OER programs around the country is astounding. In Arizona’s Maricopa Community College District, the “Maricopa Millions OER Project” currently offers OER-based courses across ten college campuses. This program has saved students an estimated $3,458,000 since 2013 and over $1,050,000 in the spring of 2015 alone. At Kansas State University, an open/alternative textbook initiative has generated over $1.1 million dollars in savings, an average saving of $138 per student, per course. Tacoma Community College invested in fulltime OER staff specifically charged with promoting and advancing OER-use on their campuses. This strategy saw huge returns, and since its launch in 2012, the OER project has reached more than 10,000 students at Tacoma Community College and generated more than $1.1 million dollars in student savings.

Research conducted by the Babson Group (2012), showed that approximately half of all US institutions use OERs in at least one course and over 65% of Chief Academic Officers believe that OERs can save their institutions money. However, even with the growing OER trend at institutions of higher education, College of the Canyons has a huge opportunity to capitalize on its low tuition fees and quality degrees to offer students an even better deal than its competitors.

At COC, tuition is currently set at $46 a unit, compared to other OER-degree pathway programs (e.g. $128.50 per unit at TCC, and $149.65 per unit at NOVA), the potential for savings as a function of overall student cost is much greater. In other words, we can offer an unbeatable price for students in our OER-pathway. In fact, by offering an OER-based degree at College of the Canyons, it is possible that COC could have one of the most cost-effective Community College degree pathways in the country.

Political Environment
Open Educational Resources have been a hot topic in the political arena. In addition to having President Obama’s endorsement, California Senate Bill 1052 was approved by Governor Jerry Brown in September 2012. This bill provides for the development of low-cost digital textbooks for 50 lower division courses across the state’s public postsecondary education. SB-1052 also established the California Open Education Resources Council, which is comprised of nine members: three from UC System, three from CSU, and three from the
Community College System. The Council is tasked with developing a list of fifty strategically selected lower division courses in the public postsecondary segments for which high-quality, affordable, digital open source textbooks and related materials should be developed or acquired. From spring 2014 to fall 2014, CA-OERC identified more than 150 appropriate OER-textbooks for these 50 courses.16

While the political environment is becoming increasingly favorable to OERs, COC has the opportunity to champion the cause. We should endeavor to be ahead of the political landscape and start helping our students now.

**OER Need Assessment**

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ consumer price index data, there was an 812% rise in the cost of college textbooks between 1978 and 2013.17 This increase in textbook costs is over four times the rate of inflation, which is significantly higher than the inflation of medical services and home prices – indexes commonly known to outpace inflation rates. The impact of having drastically inflated textbook prices is discussed in a Student Public Interest Research Group (SPIRG) 2015 report entitled “Fixing the Broken Textbook Market.”18 This SPIRG report found that students who struggle to afford their textbooks are more likely to make academic choices that undermine their educational goals. That finding is based on a survey of more than 2,000 students from more than 150 different college campuses across the country. Key points from this survey include:

- 65% of students said they had decided against buying a needed textbook for one or more of their classes because it was too expensive.
- Nearly half (48%) of the respondents said that the cost of books had an impact on how many, or which classes they enrolled into.
• 94% of the students who had skipped buying a required book for a course said they were concerned that doing so would hurt their grade in that course.

According to Chulkov and VanAlstine (2013) and Reynolds (2011), prominent researchers in the field of Business Education, overpriced textbook costs have accelerated a market shift to non-traditional formats.¹⁹,²⁰ For example, E-textbooks held 3% of the college textbook marketplace in 2011, but will account for over 35% of the market share by 2016. These shifts to E-books and OERs are not simply a result of skyrocketing textbook costs. Baker-Eveleth, Miller, and Tucker of the University of Idaho, suggest that uncorrected textbook errors and obsolete information are another major factor driving the movement away from traditional textbooks.²¹ For example, Baker-Eveleth et al. discovered that, on average, it takes publishing houses three to four years to correct inaccurate information printed in wide-released textbooks. In addition, a commercial textbook decreases in value, both monetarily and educationally, every day from the moment it is printed.

Fortunately, OERs are not bound by the same fate, and can be continually adjusted and modified. While this factor may not have been as critical in the past, the speed of advancement in the “technology-information era,” necessitates that students learn from the most up-to-date and “cutting edge” materials. Through OERs, College of the Canyons can provide students with the modern tools they need to be successful and relevant at the next level.

**Internal Research**

While national studies and statistics illustrate the motivations behind the overarching OER movement, to truly understand why OERs need to play a larger role at COC, we need to investigate local student and faculty perspectives. To accomplish this, Annual Student Surveys were analyzed and an original LEAP-OER Faculty Survey was conducted in April of 2015.²²,²³

The Fall 2013 Annual Student Survey showed that 42% of our students are influenced in their course selection by current textbook costs, and over half of the participants would prefer to use free/low-cost textbook alternatives, such as OERs in their classes. These figures parallel the SPRIG report results, and demonstrate that College of the Canyons is not immune to the negative consequences of rising textbooks costs. To reiterate, almost half of our students are picking at least some of their classes based on the textbook costs.
Furthermore, 75% of COC students identified the cost of textbooks and supplies as the top barrier to their educational goals.24

When students modify their course schedules to skirt around expensive textbook classes, they can slow their time to degree completion, which in turn, results in poorer retention and graduation rates. This fact has been well documented and was recently featured in a New York Times article written by Tamar Lewin entitled “College Graduation Rates are Stagnant Even as Enrollment Rises.” This article highlights the findings of the non-profit “Complete College America” (CCA), which regularly analyzes colleges across the country to determine prohibitive factors from completing college degrees. In summarizing the CCA findings, “time is the enemy of college completion” – the longer students stay in the system taking unnecessary classes, the greater the overall cost and chances of major life events altering a student’s plan to earn a certificate or degree. Therefore, OERs have the potential to play a pivotal role in improving college completion rates, as they can directly mitigate poor student enrollment strategies associated with overpriced texts.

While student factors and support are vital to OER development at COC, the LEAP-OER-Degree work group determined that additional information was needed regarding faculty and OER usage and interest. After all, it is the faculty who must integrate OERs into their teaching if this project is going to be successful. Thus, an original faculty survey was developed to close the OER information gap at COC. The full survey results are available upon request, but highlights from this survey will be discussed below.

**LEAP-OER-Faculty Survey Results**25

Over one hundred COC faculty (52% adjunct and 48% fulltime) responded to the LEAP-OER survey. Returns revealed that over 88% of Faculty respondents were interested in using OERs, even though only 16% of faculty respondents said they were currently using OERs in place of traditional textbooks. Additionally, 64% of faculty said they would like to receive some guidance in using OERs and 80% were interested in attending an OER workshop. Therefore, the vast majority of faculty respondents were at least receptive to learning more about OERs, and both student and faculty surveys suggest there will be strong campus community support for further OER development at COC. The top reasons COC faculty members were not using OERs was particularly striking:
The majority stated they were “not familiar or aware of OERs” or simply did “not know where to access material for their courses.” These statistics align fairly well with the 2014 national college faculty results of Allen and Seaman\(^{26}\) (see national awareness chart) and emphasize the need for greater outreach and awareness of OERs at COC. The impact of these finding are considered throughout the remainder of this plan.

The faculty survey additionally revealed some encouraging signs about OER growth at the department-level, particularly in the disciplines of Math and Sociology. Faculty from these two departments had overwhelmingly positive responses about OERs. This is likely because these departments have helped pilot OER development at COC and know about their potential. For example, Sociology faculty currently use OERs at a higher rate than any other department identified in the survey (5 out of 8 faculty participants, or 63%). In a follow-up investigation, it was determined that OERs in the Sociology department alone have saved their students an estimated $75,000 in book saving over the past year (currently, there are three courses and 25 sections using OERs in Sociology alone).
PLAN DESIGN

Proposed OER Pathway Design

There are a myriad of factors to consider when selecting an OER-based degree pathway at College of the Canyons. Consideration must be made for the adaptability of course materials to OER, as well as faculty’s overall willingness to convert to OER-supported content. Nevertheless, in accordance with the mission of this project, the LEAP-OER-Degree work group set out to establish a pathway that would be applicable to the widest-range of majors and impact the highest number of students. Taking note of the success of the NOVA OER degree program (see Environmental Scan section), the AA degree-pathway in Liberal Arts & Science, with a Social and Behavioral focus was selected as a pilot pathway. Not only are Liberal Arts degrees popular at COC, but this degree pathway also satisfies the general education requirements for a wide range of additional majors. Furthermore, the social sciences track was specifically selected because it utilizes the relatively high percentage of OER courses currently being offered within the Sociology and Communication Studies departments. Ultimately, more students will have the opportunity to take OER courses from this sequence, regardless of if they intend to fulfill all of their degree requirements within the OER pathway. While this pathway will receive the initial project focus, it is the hope of the LEAP-OER-Degree work group that other majors, including those in the STEM area, will quickly develop.
The generic student educational plan (SEP) on the previous page was designed as a sample of the types of courses a student might take along this new OER-based degree pathway. This sample SEP serves as a working model, whereas in actuality, the precise pathway (or multiple pathways) will be developed over time in accordance with an establish OER steering committee and faculty participation.

**Interdepartmental Utilization and Outreach**

The successful implementation of an OER pathway at COC will be dependent upon interdepartmental support and awareness. By including multiple COC departments in the OER transition process, the LEAP-OER work group believes we can accomplish greater buy-in while gaining important insights for the developmental phases of the project. The following highlights a few examples of how departments could become involved in the OER-based degree project.

Kari Soffa, Director of Outreach and School Relations, has already expressed interest in adding OER information to her presentations, recognizing that the OER opportunity enhances the appeal of COC. Partnering with Outreach to provide OER information has the potential to reach incoming students in the following settings: College Fairs (approximately 10,000 students), high school presentations/information sessions (1,000 students), New Student Workshops (6,000 students), and supplemental presentations throughout the year at COC (2,000 students).

Even more students can be reached by utilizing the awarding winning talents of the Public Information Office (PIO). PIO will serve a critical role in letting student know about this new opportunity. As more courses convert to an OER format, and an entire OER-degree pathway becomes available, this achievement will need to be well documented for the College (“The First California Community College to Offer a Full OER-Based Degree,” is a headline we don’t want to miss).

The Distance and Accelerated Learning Department is another critical campus resource, not only because Dean James Glapa-Grossklags is an OER-LEAP mentor and directs this department, but also because they are experienced in implementing innovative technologies. For example, Mindy Albee, Distance Learning Coordinator I, described how Counseling is her most effective method of reaching students regarding the Personalized Accelerated Learning (PAL) program.
She indicated that 50% of PAL referrals come from Counselors alone. OER could build off of this programs’ established outreach groundwork.

Kelly Dapp, Interim Director of Student Development, has a wealth of practical information regarding how to reach students, and suggested including an information table about OER at the larger Student Development events such as: Club Rush (fall and spring semesters), Club Showcase (spring semester), Major Quest (fall semester), and Welcome Week (fall semester).

Beyond on-ground campaigning, the LEAP-OER-Degree work group feels strongly that application information and other data elements could be leveraged to target students that have declared majors along the OER pathway. Through email blasts and social media campaigns, students could instantly become aware of this new and exciting opportunity.

Perhaps most importantly, OER classes will become a needed new option for students with financial constraints. Thus, student services like Financial Aid, EOPS, CalWorks, ISP, and Veterans Affairs and Adult Re-entry, will play critical roles in helping to inform students about this new affordable course option. Ultimately, the OER project endeavors to create more access for our students, and must therefore work to meet the needs of special student populations at their common points of contact.

**Project Phases**

The LEAP-OER-Degree work group believes that a Liberal Arts pathway at COC could be implemented in as little as two years, at a rate of eight to ten class conversions per year. With additional staffing and funding, (beyond what is outlined in this plan), this timeline could potentially be accelerated. The feasibility of a two year plan is contingent upon utilizing OER classes already built (roughly 20-30 units of the degree), combined with courses not requiring a textbook (another 10 units of the degree), leaving only the remaining 20-30 units along the Liberal Arts & Science, Social and Behavioral AA pathway needing to be converted. Over the next two years, this project will begin to take shape and more precise time estimates can be generated. With the current information available, the following project phases are suggested:

1. Establish an on-going OER degree pathway steering committee or work group composed of administrators, faculty, staff, and students to continue the OER work beyond the conclusion of LEAP. Collaborate with, and inform,
the Educational Technology Committee about the scope of the project and timeline.

2. Leverage the LEAP-OER-Degree work group Faculty Survey to identify professors currently using (or motivated to use) OER materials in place of their traditional textbook. Also, identify all courses along the pathway that do not require a textbook.

3. Coordinate with vested parties:
   Partial Vested Party List
   James Glapa-Grossklag, Dean, Educational Technology, Learning Resources, and Distance Learning
   Anne Lowe, Curriculum Committee Faculty Co-Chair
   Leslie Carr, Director of Professional Development
   Christina Champion, Bookstore Manager
   Debbie Rio, Bookstore Committee Chair, Dean Enrollment Services
   Division
   Academic Department Chairs Along Pathway
   Jim Temple, Associate Vice President of Information Technology Services
   John Green, Director of Public Information
   Kari Soffa, Director of Outreach and School Relations
   Kelly Dapp, Interim Director of Student Development
   Garret Hopper, Counseling Department Chair
   Tom Bilbruck, Director of Financial Aid

4. Continue to revise the OER course pathway plan, starting with general education courses and moving to higher-level courses.

5. Develop training opportunities and ‘FLEX’ workshops to explain the OER-conversion process to faculty and staff, which will build upon the training already being offered by the Distance Learning Department.

6. Review and revise budget plan and projections as funding sources and staffing resources are clarified.

7. Begin building infrastructure and an OER identity on campus. This will include an OER identifier on the student registration system and in the course catalog. Dean Glapa-Grossklag has already begun this process by gaining Admission and Records and Academic Affairs’ support for an OER identifier within the MyCanyons online registration system.

8. Redesign and update the COC OER webpage to reflect the updated pathway and investigate social media opportunities.
9. Coordinate with the COC bookstore to implement a system for printed-OERs to be sold in place of traditional textbooks (for those that want/need a hard copy of the materials).

10. Allocate resources for student and faculty outreach campaigns (see the Interdepartmental Utilization and Outreach section of this plan).

11. Invite department chairs to informational sessions, and create an OER listserv.

12. Provide student workshops, tutoring, or Guided Learning Activates (GLA’s) to support students who are new to OERs and wish to learn how to better utilize them.

13. Further develop a COC-OER rubric for faculty adoption of materials. A working model has been created by the LEAP-OER-Degree Work group as follows:

**Evaluation Scale:**

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<td>3 Excellent</td>
<td>The best for that category</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Average</td>
<td>Has good qualities, but could be improved</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Poor</td>
<td>Needs work, not well organized</td>
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**Table of Contents (if available)**

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<td>2. Outlines chapter</td>
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<td>3. Arranged in logical sequence</td>
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**Credibility of Text**

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<td>2. Peer reviewed</td>
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**Content**

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<td>3. Objectives for chapter/unit</td>
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<td>4. Broad base of knowledge in content</td>
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<td>5. Content is presented in logical sequence</td>
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<td>6. Content is current</td>
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<td>7. Errors are minimal</td>
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<td>8. Reading level appropriate for course level</td>
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<td>9. Tables and Illustrations emphasize and supplement content</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Photographs provide emphasis to content</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Sensitive presentation to ethnic/cultural/racial issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Online references at conclusion of chapter or unit</td>
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<td>13. Chapter review at conclusion that highlights main points</td>
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<td>14. Bibliography has up to date references</td>
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SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths

- College of the Canyons is primed to accept an Open Educational Resources degree pathway plan, thanks in part to the foundational work of faculty, staff, and administrators who have piloted, and/or supported the creation of OER courses at COC. The success of these OER-adapted courses at COC help evidence the concept. In addition, having OER courses already in place will ease the transition to an OER degree pathway and require fewer course conversions.

- Another essential strength of the OER-Degree at COC is the amount of student enthusiasm already building for this project. This enthusiasm likely stems from the financial advantage of OERs, but might also be a result of allowing this generation of students to learn from a medium that is comfortable and familiar to them.

- Many current students rely on the well-known open educational source ‘Wikipedia’ for studying, and are unaware of the array of other open materials that are more reliable and valid for their learning and coursework. The OER-Degree will allow students to explore these materials and realize the necessity for peer-reviewed resources in higher education.

- Students are able to access course materials prior to the start of class, making them better informed when choosing their classes, as well as being able to attend the first day of class better prepared.

- Students learn from the most modern materials and sources available (instantly updateable as new knowledge comes to light). This makes our students potentially more competitive in the respective fields.

- Students do not have to worry about the cost or resale values of their textbooks. They are not wasting their time price hunting for books, or waiting in lines to get back pennies on the dollar for their investments.

- By using OERs, faculty can supplement their lectures and learning materials with content that is already available for open sharing.

- Unlike other campus projects that require substantial start-up funds, OERs are free materials that are readily accessible. This means that this is a low-cost plan (see budget section), with the main allocation of funds to be use on faculty support training, outreach and public awareness, and digital
infrastructure development (e.g. updating course websites, the course management system, and the registration system to support ever-increasing OER-based offerings).

- As demonstrated in the Environmental Scan section, an OER-degree is not only possible, but has already been proven to work at other institutions, (Northern Virginia Community College, Tidewater Community College, etc.).

**Weaknesses**

- It can be argued that some courses and majors are better suited for OER conversion than others. While the overall goal is broad OER adoption, a challenge of the OER-Degree implementation will be to create innovative solutions for those subject areas that are harder to transition. This includes the conversion of courses unique to COC, and those that simply have less ready-made OERs available for use and modification.

- The popularity of OER sections may initially place an added load on the COC registration system (e.g. students rushing to get OER sections rather than the credit equivalents with $300 textbooks). This also increases the stakes of the registration dates and time assignments, whereby the difference in priority registration can have a significant financial advantage/disadvantage.

- There are several logistical problems with the project that will need to be addressed prior to full implementation. Examples include: Who will monitor that digital OER content is in compliance with laws regarding access to materials for students with disabilities (e.g. 508 compliance)? Who will be responsible for reviewing the new content and insuring adherence to the SLO’s and curriculum standards? The goal would be to offset these pitfalls through training, content-transition stipends, content review work groups, and a steering committee. Although this project will require resources (see budgetary projections), once there is at least one foundational OER course within a subject area, it will require less and less work to transition additional sections.

- A minority of students may be uncomfortable adjusting to digital formats of their course materials. It is for this reason that the LEAP-OER-Degree work group proposes to have printed readers available for those that need/desire a hard copy. In turn, these printed texts could be sold through the bookstore to supplement lost textbook revenues.
Opportunities

- COC is on the threshold of becoming the first California Community College to offer an entire degree in an OER-format through this project. This is an amazing opportunity for COC to be an early-adopter in what is sure to be the future of community colleges and higher education learning materials.
- From COC Vision Statement: "College of the Canyons is dedicated to being a leading two-year college, recognized locally, regionally, statewide and nationally for technical advancement, institutional effectiveness, student support..." The OER-Degree pathway is an opportunity for the COC community to embrace and fulfill the Vision Statement of the College. Additionally, this pathway proposal is an opportunity for COC to embrace innovation and student support, both themes within the Mission and Philosophy of the College.
- Student access is paramount to achieving student success at our college. The OER-Degree pathway creates access by reducing the financial barriers for students to attain their educational goals. The OER degree pathway is also a tremendous opportunity for our college to improve its student success and retention rates (see TCC and NOVA outcomes from Section 1), but more importantly, it is an opportunity to serve our community and students by offering a quality degree at an even more affordable price.

Threats

- Faculty members may have established relationships with publishers that might bias their willingness to adopt to creative-commons licensed materials. This is especially true if professors receive perks from publishers, or if they sell their own course materials or textbooks to the publishers. It is often difficult to break away from established partnerships (in some departments there may even be contracts).
- While the OER degree would certainly save the students money, the College and the Barnes and Noble serviced Bookstore do generate revenue from a portion of traditional commercial textbook sales (see commentary in budget section). The LEAP-OER-Degree work group, and potentially a future OER steering committee, will need to work collaboratively with the bookstore to help ease this transition, possibly through selling printed versions of the OERs through their services. Nevertheless, textbooks account for relatively little revenue compared to merchandise and other sales.
- Certain faculty members may feel threatened by the new technology, especially if they do not feel comfortable integrating technology into their current courses. This factor must be addressed through faculty outreach, workshops, and trainings.
- It is conceivable that as publishers begin to lose ground to OERs, remaining traditional textbooks may raise in cost to further compensate for losses, even though textbooks have already risen in cost 812% since 1978.27
FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Student Costs and Potential Savings

The beauty of OERs is that, once created, they are free to use. That being said, many students will prefer a printed copy of their text. Printed OERs come in many formats, ranging from professionally bound texts (indistinguishable from their commercial publisher counterparts), to printed-at-home and stapled copies. The following analysis reviews the estimated costs of three formats for the OER-Liberal Arts pathway - fully bound texts, self-printed copies, and non-printed digital copies only.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>% of cost</th>
<th>Average Cost</th>
<th>Avg OER full bound</th>
<th>Avg OER self pring</th>
<th>Avg OER digital</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Printing</td>
<td>77.40%</td>
<td>$99.07</td>
<td>$40.00</td>
<td>$10.00</td>
<td>$0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publisher</td>
<td>10.70%</td>
<td>$13.70</td>
<td>$4.28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shipping</td>
<td>1.00%</td>
<td>$1.28</td>
<td>$1.28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bookstore overhead</td>
<td>3.70%</td>
<td>$2.24</td>
<td>$6.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College bookstore</td>
<td>3.70%</td>
<td>$2.24</td>
<td>$6.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Price</td>
<td></td>
<td>$128.00</td>
<td>$53.15</td>
<td>$10.00</td>
<td>$0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following chart depicts what an OER-based degree in Liberal Studies with a Social and Behavioral Sciences focus might cost students if the entire course sequence had OER-based options available throughout. The columns of the chart show textbook cost comparisons ranging from new commercial-based textbooks to free OER digital alternatives.

The total estimated cost for the proposed OER pathway ranges from $0 to $1,387.85, depending on the student’s preferences for digital or printed-OER texts. Even at the high end (fully-bound OER textbooks), this is roughly a third of the cost of purchasing new textbooks for the same degree pathway ($3,341.70).
To put these numbers into perspective, in 2014, students earning a Liberal Arts AA degree with a focus in Social and Behavioral science collectively spent $237,260 (assuming they all purchased the textbooks for their classes). If these same students self-printed their textbooks, they could have collectively graduated with only $18,535.99 in textbook equivalent costs. Thus, every year, COC could potentially save students roughly $218,724 from just one OER degree pathway (and that is if no outside majors take any classes within the OER pathway!).

**LEAP-OER Overall Start-Up Budget**

To implement a pilot Liberal Arts degree pathway (timeline for start-up is two years) at COC, funding will need to be secured in the following support areas:

1. A coordinating administrator will be the main liaison for faculty support, OER awareness, trainings, resources and support. This individual will need to be compensated for their time working on the project. If these duties are assigned to a position already on campus, the cost may be as little as $3,000 a year. While this amount will fund the start-up costs for up to two years of development, it is likely that a new position will need to be created in the future, dedicated to supporting the OER project. This is especially true, if the OER pathway expands beyond a single major at COC.
2. Faculty support is the largest component of this expense budget. Even though many OERs have already been created, faculty will need to be offered stipends for their time to adapt existing OERs or create their own OER materials. These development costs are estimated at $3,000 per text/course. However, once an OER course has been developed, it can be implemented across multiple class sections at no additional costs. Furthermore, once created, OER courses need relatively little maintenance, thus this is a one-time cost.

3. Faculty OER training workshops (food, supplies etc.) will likely cost $2,000 a year, and will need to be coordinated with the Professional Development department. This figure is based on the current yearly costs of workshops offered through the Distance Learning Department.

4. IT and MIS will also need to be compensated for their time working on the project. This time includes programming an OER identifier in the class schedule, as well as supporting faculty with their web links and LMS course pages (an estimated one-time $3,000 cost).

5. The remaining project costs will be incurred during the outreach campaigns ($500 per year) and miscellaneous College Assistant time (proofreading, canvassing, attending student events etc., $1,000 a year).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget Item</th>
<th>Estimated Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stipends</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty coordinator (For 2 years)</td>
<td>$6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Support ($3,000/course)</td>
<td>$60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT Support (software licenses, custom programming for OER course identification setup) (one-time)</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>College Assistant</strong> (Technical support for 2 years)</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Campus Outreach</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Workshops (Food and Supplies for year 1)</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Marketing (year 2)</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Start-Up Budget</strong></td>
<td><strong>$74,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Funding Opportunities

Open educational resource projects have sparked worldwide interest, and funding opportunities are becoming more readily available. The Hewlett Foundation, a grant-donating private foundation established by Hewlett-Packard cofounder William Redington Hewlett and his wife Flora, donates almost $8 million each year to get Open Educational Resources into mainstream use. This foundation looks to fund organizations that not only develop OER pathways, but also promote and share OERs. COC’s OER-Degree Project would be an excellent candidate to receive such a grant, because our project is more robust and innovative than past funding recipients. For example, in March of 2015, the University of Minnesota was awarded $600,000 for promoting faculty adoption of OERs, let alone creating an entire OER pathway for its students! With our total startup budget estimated at a mere $74,000 over two years, it won’t take much to fund the entirety of this plan.

This funding goal is further offset by internal grant opportunities. The LEAP-OER-Degree work group, (in collaboration with Distance Learning), wrote and submitted an ASG grant proposal for OER development in the amount of $10,500. ASG representatives have already indicated their interest in the project, and we expect to learn the outcome of the grant proposal by the end of May 2015. Furthermore, the Athletic Department has already pledged $3,000 in funding toward OER development to help their students succeed.

OER-based courses are not exclusively designed for college-aged students, as they can serve as a great opportunity for advanced high students to take affordable college classes. For this reason, another interested party is the Academy of the Canyons Middle College High School (AOC), who are a joint recipient of a $99,000 grant, specifically designed to facilitate the successful implementation of a program enabling high-school-age students to participate in college courses. The annual award specifies a variety of areas in which the monies can be spent, which includes staffing and the purchasing of instructional materials and resources. One of the goals associated with this funding source is to investigate and incorporate methods that increase student access to classes. The benchmark correlated with this goal is to reduce the overall financial impact associated with the costs of purchasing textbooks and educational resources.
According to AOC Principal Pete Getz, “Due to the high frequency in which the AOC students participate in courses at the college, dedicating a portion of the grant funding to the OER effort would be appropriate.”

The LEAP-OER-Degree work group is continuing to investigate additional funding sources and is currently working in collaboration with the grants office. Thus far, over 12 potential funding sources have been identified, including the following:

- Title Five Funding
- Upcoming U.S. Department of Education grants (OER is a focus of DOE)
- Upcoming OER federal grants
- The Eisner Foundation
- International Paper Foundation
- TJX Foundation
- RGK Foundation
- Medtronic Foundation
- Rose Hills Foundation
- Kreske Foundation

The chart below gives an estimated break down of anticipated funding sources.
CONCLUSION

This plan highlights the benefits of OERs, including the critical access they can provide for our students. It further champions interdepartmental collaboration and student and faculty engagement and creativity. The success of OER-based degrees at TCC, NOVA, and other colleges, suggest that an OER-Degree pathway will result in unprecedented benefits at College of the Canyons for a relatively small investment. It is clear that Open Educational Resources have a place at COC, but they can only be successfully implemented along an entire Associates of Arts pathway with continued administrative support. If the plan is fully implemented, the LEAP-OER-Degree work group believes that COC’s OER model will have a lasting positive impact on our students and community and become an exemplar for other CCC campuses. This is the kind of project that sets College of Canyons apart from the others. It embraces the COC spirit of innovation and determination, while striving to improve student success.

The LEAP-OER-Degree work group would like to thank the executive cabinet and Professional Development department for the opportunity to work on such an important campus project. We look forward to seeing the first OER-Liberal Arts degree graduates cross the stage in 2019!
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