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# CAPSTONE FINAL REPORT

OPEN EDUCATION LEADERSHIP PROGRAM



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## Developing and Implementing a Departmental Award for Textbook Savings at Texas Woman's University

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# Abstract

As a smaller, public, higher education institution with extremely limited resources, the drivers for OER adoption on the TWU campus are threefold-- grass-root initiatives, strategic campus partnerships, and a large helping of librarian tenacity. Named the H.E.A.R.T. Initiative (Helping Education with Alternate Resources and Textbooks) in a nod towards the TWU motto as a “campus with a heart,” this project began with the goals of developing a departmental award for textbook savings in order to improve awareness of Open Educational Resources (OER), forming a collaboration with campus partners to develop programming and communicate with appropriate campus leaders regarding the award, and developing a marketing campaign in order to spread awareness of the award. In the span of one year, what began as an exploratory conversation transformed into a model recognized and supported at the highest level of campus administration.

## Project Overview

In furtherance of my goals as a fellow with SPARC’s Open Education Leadership Program, and in an effort to develop a campus presence in support of OER, I expanded TWU’s H.E.A.R.T. Initiative to include more concrete deliverables. My goals-- to increase the awareness of OER on campus by developing a departmental award for textbook cost savings, form campus collaborations in support of the award, and create a marketing campaign to encourage submission to the award-- were accomplished in four intertwined but discrete stages. These stages include ( 1) proposing the OER initiative, (2) engaging in critical conversations and collaborations across campus, (3) developing the departmental award for textbook cost savings, and (4) scaling OER at TWU.

## Stage 1: Proposing the OER Initiative

In the initial stages of the project, the proposed scope and approach to the TWU Libraries H.E.A.R.T. Initiative were extremely ambitious and time intensive. Patterned after a project management charter, the proposal included deliverables ranging from creating programming for Open Education Week to creating a faculty stipend to encourage transitioning to OER. After meeting with the Libraries' Executive Team, the original proposal was significantly modified to include the creation of a Departmental Award for Textbook Savings in lieu of a faculty stipend. The Library Dean committed an amount of \$5,000 to fund the award, followed by pledges of support by two campus partners.

## Stage 2: Critical Conversations and Collaborations

Next, in an effort to create a more unified presence on campus in support of OER, I sought strategic campus partnerships to help design, financially support, and promote campus programming and other incentives. As a result, the TWU Libraries, in partnership with the Center for Faculty Excellence, Office of Technology, and Teaching & Learning with Technology entered into a collaboration to support programming and incentives to spread awareness about OER and other textbook cost savings options. This partnership strengthened and magnified the campus impact of OER, resulting in a number of opportunities to speak regarding this project. The partnership served as a tool to break down campus silos and form impactful collaborations outside of the normal wheelhouse of Library initiatives, with implications beyond the realm of OER.

By far the most important and well-received conversation in support of the second stage of the project was our faculty panel. In an effort to engage more faculty members in the conversation, I invited

four instructors that I knew were using OER or other no-cost resources to panel a discussion to kick-off Open Education Week. Dubbed the Textbook Affordability Pioneers, each of the instructors represented a different way to address textbook savings at TWU-- using an OpenStax textbook, creating a grant-funded course which uses only OER, partial transition to OER, and complete transition to using only library resources. The panel was extremely well-received and our audience total approached 40, which is really noteworthy for a library-led function at TWU. Additionally, the panel discussion provided the opportunity to announce and create excitement about the forthcoming Departmental Award for Textbook Savings.

## Stage 3: Developing the Departmental Award for Textbook Cost Savings

The highlight of this OER awareness campaign is the creation of a Departmental Award for Textbook Savings, an initiative spearheaded by the TWU Libraries in collaboration with three other departments on campus. This is a wonderful example of the power of an invitation-- each department I contacted was eager to join in the initiative. It was important to have representatives from most potential stakeholders, plus those who may later be involved in support services for faculty wishing to transition to a no-cost textbook.

The purpose of the Departmental Award for Textbook Savings is threefold, and is intended to:

- (1) encourage textbook transformations and course redesigns to low or no cost textbooks and other educational resources,
- (2) provide educational opportunities for the TWU community regarding Open Educational Resources (OER) and other low-cost alternatives, and
- (3) increase awareness of campus resources and services available to support instructors transitioning to low or no cost textbooks and other resources.

Because of partner contributions, the original award morphed into two awards:

**First place:** Awarded to the department projecting the highest dollar amount of textbook savings for students due to course transformations completed during FY20.

**Second place:** Awarded to the department which shows the highest percentage of faculty participation in projected course transformations (to be completed during FY20).

The call for submissions has been released, with a deadline of May 31, 2019.

## Stage 4: Scaling OER at TWU

While the development of the Departmental Award for Textbook Savings was the showcase of the past year, the interest shown by campus administration in learning about OER was the highlight of the year. Following the call for submissions for the Departmental Award for Textbook Savings, and in response to a request from the University's Chancellor, I prepared a report with information about OER and student success metrics. Currently, one of the most important initiatives at TWU is student retention, and the report explored the possibility of offering a faculty stipend under the umbrella of retention initiatives. This report included data from large-scale studies that linked OER usage to students success metrics, a review of OER initiatives across Texas, with DFW rates attached. Of particular importance was information about the college which transitioned all general education required courses to OER. Using the information from this report, as well as later information comparing OER and Open Access, the Chancellor filmed a short video encouraging the campus community, particularly those teaching lower-level courses, to consider transitioning to OER with support from all of our campus partners.

# Evaluation

## Goal 1:

Develop an Annual Award for Departmental Textbook Savings in order to improve awareness of open education at TWU by Open Education Week in March 2019.

Project outcomes in support of this goal include:

- Departmental Award for Textbooks Savings proposal approved by TWU's Provost
- Created the Departmental Award for Textbooks Savings Guidelines:  
[https://docs.google.com/document/d/15TyMWnD18BFF4V035NFysf48yL1E\\_XhKPXu2x82vGM/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/15TyMWnD18BFF4V035NFysf48yL1E_XhKPXu2x82vGM/edit?usp=sharing)
- Created the Award submission form and narrative:
- Call for submissions opened April 23, 2019
- The Community Resource, *Collaborations and Conversations: Establishing an Open Educational Resources Initiative at a Small Public University*, provides a detailed framework on creating an OER award program at a smaller institution

Self-Evaluation:

4.0- This goal was **successfully achieved** as the Award program is **well-developed, successfully implemented** at TWU, and the resulting Community Resource gives others a **detailed framework** on how to create an OER award program at a smaller institution.

## Goal 2:

With campus collaborators, develop awareness-focused programming and communicate with appropriate campus leaders in order to encourage departments to submit an application for the Annual Award for Departmental Textbook Savings, and for administrators to support the program.

Project outcomes in support of this goal include:

- Created a partnership which grew to include four campus partners
- Engaged in monthly meetings with campus partners
- Presented re: Award before Council of Chairs and Deans (also included members of Faculty Senate)
- Developed and executed awareness focused programming, titled Textbook Affordability Pioneers, featuring faculty members teaching with OER or other no or low-cost resources
- The Community Resource, *Collaborations and Conversations: Establishing an Open Educational Resources Initiative at a Small Public University*, provides a framework for communicating with faculty, staff, and administration at smaller institutions with OER programs

Self Evaluation:

3.5- This capstone project goal was **achieved**, as the programming was **well-developed**, and administrators are convinced and enthusiastic. The resulting Community Resource gives others a **basic framework** for communications with faculty, staff, and administration at smaller institutions with OER programs.

Goal 3:

Develop a marketing campaign in order to spread awareness of the Departmental Textbook Savings Award in order to spread awareness of the pilot program.

Project Outcomes in support of this goal include:

- Developed marketing content to email to all faculty, staff, and adjunct instructors regarding Textbook Affordability Panel Discussion, during which the Award was announced
- Developed Award announcement which was emailed to all faculty and instructors, and also included in campus newsletter for faculty and staff
- Interviewed by campus marketing department regarding OER Award (unfortunately, the interview was not chosen for publication)
- Developed content for Chancellor in preparation for her video speech in support of OER at TWU

Self-Evaluation:

3.5- This capstone project goal was **achieved**, as the marketing materials were **developed** and the marketing campaign was **successfully implemented** at TWU. Outreach occurred on five different occasions, including from the Chancellor's Office. The resulting Community Resource gives others **basic templates** for marketing OER campaigns at their institutions.

## Lessons Learned

1. When SPARC says factor 3-4 hours a week for this fellowship-- don't just listen, but believe.

In the introductory documentation for the fellowship, and then again at OpenEd 2019, there was a large emphasis on the time commitment for this project and the requirement of 3-5 hours a week for reading, projects, etc. And, honestly, I completely discounted those voices-- I am a fast reader, I can multitask, I've been told I need to delegate more, etc., and was able to use these factors as a reason to discount the projected time commitment. I was so wrong. So wrong that it became a running joke for me during meetings with my unit. The time commitment is real, and was difficult for me when I began

the fellowship with a very full plate. Not to say it isn't feasible, but I misjudged when I discounted the recommendations for time allotment.

2. Sometimes compromise happens when you are out-voted.

While I have this as my second lesson learned, it is really my favorite. My project started as a library initiative, then developed into one with four campus partners-- all of whom had considerably more experience in academia and/or at TWU than I did. And, I was outvoted often, even on projects where I drafted all of the documentation and guidelines. These constant compromises created more work for me, but in the end, they were invaluable. We were able to sidestep many landmines because of the experience and forethought of my partners.

3. Don't feel guilty about "copying" other initiatives and documentation. With your campus dynamics, demands, and details you can always make the project your own.

After my first project proposal was significantly modified, I looked to my mentor's structured and longstanding initiative to help with drafting a new project in line with my given parameters. I felt like copying directly from other OER initiatives (despite some having CC permissions) was "cheating" and strived to make my project unique. However, I learned that campus dynamics, demands, and details will always subsume any template-- you will always have an opportunity to make your project unique later down the line. Don't try to recreate the wheel.

4. Are you at a smaller institution? Get ready to be the campus authority on OER. It's awesome but imposter syndrome is real.

I quickly went from the copyright librarian to the OER one-- the differences are staggering. And, so much more time intensive. I still worry when others recommend me to faculty.

5. Again, at a smaller institution? Small steps matter and make a difference. Do the best with the tools that you are given.

In the midst of my fellowship, our initiative caught the eye of TWU's upper-level administration. Being able to highlight purposeful small steps in support of such a wonderful initiative was thrilling. But, the resources available to my unit varied astronomically from those resources in support of larger institution-wide initiatives at other universities in Texas. Making the best of the tools that you are given is a struggle. I learned that I did not need to justify our status, but instead celebrate our small steps.

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