

Mississippi State University  
Open Educational Resources Task Force

Report

April 15, 2024

Members:

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Charge:

- Evaluate best practices at other universities that should be considered at MSU.
- Determine impediments to enhancing online education at MSU.
- Explore how we can expand programmatic offerings at MSU.
- Consider structural changes needed in the financial model MSU uses for tuition distribution and overall support of not only online education, but the overall educational enterprise at MSU.
- Consider structural changes that could improve development and support online education.
- Address how students in Starkville, Meridian and other locations can best capitalize on courses offered through all means available.

Report: Final report submitted by Stephen Cunetto and Melody Dale.

During Spring 2023, the Committee decided to conduct a survey of the faculty to collect data on the use of OERs (Open Educational Resources) because we did not have institutional data regarding their use or adoption. The survey was designed to provide the committee with information on how many faculty are using OERs, what type of OERs they use, what are the barriers to creating/adopting OERs, etc. We hoped to identify OER champions that could assist in understanding the pros and cons of implementing OERs. The survey closed in April 2023 with 216 responses. The survey provided the committee with a list of faculty members who are using OERs currently but also that there are a lot of faculty members interested in using OERs but who have no idea how to get started. They have questions on how to find OERs, create OERs, and what constitutes an OER. The survey results can be found on the Libraries' OER guide.

[https://guides.library.msstate.edu/ld.php?content\\_id=73797871](https://guides.library.msstate.edu/ld.php?content_id=73797871)

Based on the results of the survey, the committee decided to focus on educating faculty about OERs by hosting some panel discussions with MSU faculty talking about their use of OERs. The first one was held on September 18 and included 3 faculty members (Sarah Lalk, Lauren Priddy and Bryan Jones) who talked about their use of OERs and Melody Dale (Library) shared updates we made to our OER - Research Guide (<https://guides.library.msstate.edu/c.php?g=763533&p=5475378>) Unfortunately, we did not have any teaching faculty attend. We had several who signed up but did not show. We had about 10 library faculty and a few from the committee who attended, and it ended up being a good discussion. The second was scheduled for November 14, 2023, but canceled because no faculty signed up for the event.

During the Fall 2023, Dr. Ryan invited committee members to talk with the Associate Dean's about our findings and to encourage faculty to register their use of OERs in the Barnes and Noble textbook adoption tool. Since Barnes and Noble has a means of identifying courses that utilize OERs, we wanted to make faculty aware of this and ask them to begin using this as a way of tracking their use and so that students know OERs are used in the course.

The committee also discussed hosting an ACRL (Association of College and Research Libraries) OER Roadshow designed to assist librarians and others with OER initiatives. The cost of the workshops was \$6,000. The committee did not think there would be enough interest to warrant the cost of the program. To assist with the cost, Melody Dale and Stephen Cunetto also met with representatives from other IHL libraries to see if they wanted to split the cost. Unfortunately, there was not a lot of interest in splitting the cost due to budget constraints.

Dale and Cunetto also met with the representatives from interested IHL Libraries to discuss ways we can work together to share information and resources and possibly apply for grant funding. The University of Southern Mississippi has an active OER initiative that provides funding to faculty in support of developing or adopting an OER. The other universities do not currently have OER initiatives in place. The University of Mississippi used to host an OER initiative that provided funding to all IHL institutions in support of developing/adopting OERs. The [project](#) was funded by the Hewlett Foundation but is no longer an active initiative. The librarians at the UM indicated that there has not been a push from students or the administration to establish an OER initiative, so it has not been a high priority for the library.

During the summer 2023, the IHL OER representatives discussed jointly applying for grant funding from the [U. S. Department of Education Open Textbook Pilot Program](#). After much discussion, the group realized we did not have enough data or interest to apply for a grant at this time. The grant required three institutions of higher learning to be involved in the project and demonstrated experience in developing and implementing OERs. The group did not think we met the requirements to develop a grant proposal.

Recommendation:

Below are a few recommendations based on committee conversations.

- **Recognize OER engagement in promotion and tenure.** One of the key barriers to faculty adopting OERs is the lack of recognition this work receives in P&T. The Provost could encourage P&T committees to consider the work that goes into developing OERs to make them more heavily weighted.
- **Establish a new position to support the OER initiative.** Create a new library faculty position dedicated to overseeing the OER initiative (e.g., developing the vision for the program, seeking external partners and grant funding).
- **Establish an Open Educational Resources Fund.** The OER fund could be made available as grants to faculty interested in adopting or creating OERs. (The only other institution in Mississippi currently providing this type of support is the University of Southern Mississippi. This is funded by the University Libraries and the Office of the Provost.)
- **Seek grant funding to support the development of OER services that help faculty create and adopt OERs.**
  - [U. S. Department of Education Open Textbook Pilot Program](#) provides funding for consortia.
- **Seek grant funding in support of an OER consortium of institutions including both university and community colleges.** Example project: [Iowa Private Academic Library Open Educational Resources Project](#)
- **Require all faculty who use OERs to register them in the Barnes and Noble textbook portal.**