FDEV Zine (Year 3, Issue 5, May 2023)

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IN FOCUS: OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES & AFFORDABLE LEARNING SOLUTIONS

This month's Zine is dedicated to some important efforts towards course accessibility in relation to lowering the cost of course materials for students. Specifically, the contributions in the Zine offer insights into CSU's [Affordable Learning Solutions](#) (AL$) and into resources and programs specific to Chico State ([CAL$](#)). Faculty in various disciplines (Art History, Biology, Nutrition, Anthropology, and Psychology) share their experience in creating Open Educational Resources (OER) for their courses. We hope that their example will encourage you to consider OER textbooks for your students as well!

The visuals in this Zine were created (by me, again!) as I [experimented with gel printing](#), collaging, and mixed media (and to some extent with double exposure photography). Gel printing is truly about getting creative with everyday tools, textures, fabrics, and various objects and so I thought it would fit well with the idea of creating content in an affordable way.

[WATCH: Collaging with Gel Prints!](#)

Chico Affordable Learning Solutions (CAL$)

Beth Shook
[Chico Affordable Learning Solutions](#) (CAL$) assists faculty in identifying and providing students with affordable, quality educational materials. This aids in the primary goal of reduced costs and equitable access to students' course materials for successful student learning and course completion.

CAL$ offers workshops and provides one-to-one mentoring to help faculty:
- Find [zero-cost course materials (ZCCM)](#) including Open Educational Resources (OER) and Library resources,
- Adapt or create OER,
- Use open licenses and understand copyright restrictions, and
- Explore low-cost options with the Wildcat Store when ZCCM options are not available or ideal.

CAL$ has been on the Chico State campus since 2013, and went by the name Textbook Affordability Project (TAP) until 2018. We adopted the name Chico Affordable Learning Solutions to better align our campus effort with the Chancellor's Office program: [Affordable Learning](#)

Solutions (AL$). Since 2014, faculty participating in CAL$ programs have helped students save over 1.5 million dollars.

During the 2021-22 and 2022-23 academic years CAL$ has supported five major OER creation projects in Nutrition and Food Science, Psychology, Math and Statistics, Art and Art History, and Biological Sciences. We have also supported some Summer OER creation projects too! Some of these fantastic projects are highlighted below or can be found described in the faculty showcases at https://www.cool4ed.org.

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About OER
Beth Shook

Open Educational Resources (OER) are teaching, learning, and research materials that are *free* and are *openly licensed or in the public domain*. OER include a wide range of materials including books, case studies, reference materials, assessments, tutorials, slides, videos, and more.

In a February 2020 CAL$ Survey, 52% of Chico State students reported they have gone without a textbook, and 55% reported they have altered their food or housing budget to pay for books. The clear benefit is that OER are free and available to all students on the first day of class. Additionally OER permit faculty to customize and update these resources to fit their courses. OER materials allow users to engage in the five 5 R activities: reuse, retain, revise, remix, and redistribute.
To find OER faculty can search in various OER repositories - many are listed on the CAL$ website. Some popular repositories include OpenStax, BC Campus OpenEd, and MERLOT. Reach out to the CAL$ coordinator Beth Shook (bashook@csuchico.edu) if you would like any help with an OER search, and or help with revising or creating OER.

READ: Defining the "Open" in Open Content and Open Educational Resources

Affordable Learning for the CSU
Kathy Fernandes
The College of Business (COB) has been able to reduce the cost of their core course materials by negotiating with McGraw-Hill to reduce the textbook costs. Students will have access to the electronic textbook and learning materials for 4 years for less than $90. Originally the cost was over $200 for each textbook for only one semester of electronic access.

The College of Business is saving their students $250,000 in textbook costs in just one semester. Multiply that by 4 semesters, they will save Chico State students $1M for just their courses.

This is all very important for retention.

The COB had heard from students that they were dropping courses due to the textbook costs adding to their financial burden and yet students knew they needed the textbook. So affordable learning materials help to retain students so that they can afford accessing the course materials to improve their learning.

"CSU's Affordable Learning Solutions enables faculty to choose and provide more affordable, quality educational content for their students. By reducing CSU student course material expenses, more students acquire the course materials they need to succeed. Now CSU faculty and students have greater access to quality free and lower cost learning materials through a variety of AL$ programs and partnerships."

Is this possible? If just one college can reduce the costs to students by $1M, we can work together to continue this trend and retain more of our students.

We encourage faculty to negotiate with textbook publishers. Besides looking for Open Education Resources (check Beth Shook's piece in the previous page), another strategy is to find two possible textbooks from different publishers and pit the publishers against each other for better pricing. If multiple faculty offer multiple sections of the same course, pressure can also be applied that way too.

Tides continue to change for publishers and they are finding ways to reduce their costs. The pressure to reduce costs and save students money on course materials has been an initiative by the state legislature and California higher education institutions for many years, including the California State University. As a matter of fact, the 2022 California Governor's Compact created a goal for the CSU to **reduce cost of instructional materials by 50% by 2025, saving CSU students $150 million annually** compared to a 2019-20 baseline:

o 2019-2020 = $300 million
o 2020-2021 = $225 million ($75 million savings)
o 2021-2022 = $206 million ($94 million savings)
o 2022-2023 = $187 million ($113 million savings)
o 2023-2024 = $168 million ($132 million savings)
o 2024-2025 = $150 million ($150 million savings)

Look at This! OER Project

Asa Simon Mittman

I am completing a freely available, accessible, antiracist OER (Open Educational Resources) textbook for Art Appreciation courses, entitled *Look at This!* There is no comparable resource for the Art Appreciation courses taught at most two- and four-year US colleges and universities. Texts currently available are costly, and most reflect outdated, culturally chauvinistic, Eurocentric approaches. My goals are to:

- directly increase financial equity for students so that every student has equal access course materials
- directly increase ability equity for students by ensuring all elements of the project meet W3C Accessibility Guidelines
- directly increase representational equity by celebrating the vibrant diversity of the world through their visual cultures. These provide endless impetuses for consideration of the cultural categories out of which people form individual and collective identities: race, gender, sexuality, religion, nationality, language, class, ability, and age. The resource is structured thematically: 12 units each discuss ~25 works exemplifying a theme, highlighting aspects of and artistic approaches to it. This structure places all cultures on equal footing, without one serving as a dominant framework and against which all others appear as subsidiary curios.
- advance antiracism. The history of race has been fundamental to my research for 20 years, and I have worked to keep current with the expansion of Critical Race Studies (especially Premodern Critical Race Studies), as well as foundational legal works of Critical Race Theory. The resource will be openly and overtly antiracist, in line with our campus's Strategic Priorities.

I drafted the majority of the text when I was working with Pearson on what I intended to be a standard textbook, but we had very different ideas about what an Art Appreciation textbook should do. I shelved the text for a few years while I worked on other projects, but this campus-wide OER push gave me the impetus I needed to get back to work on it. I am currently updating the original text and drafting some new content, but the greatest challenge presented by an OER book about the visual arts is dealing with copyright rules and permissions fees. *Look at This!* has about 250 images, and securing rights for digital publication can cost hundreds of dollars per image. I do not have outside funding to cover such costs, nor do I wish to support what I have long considered [an abuse of copyright regulations](#) by institutions that claim rights to photographs of works of art that are, themselves, in the public domain. I therefore decided to attempt to locate [Creative Commons](#), [copyleft](#), [public domain](#), and otherwise free-to-use images.

I trained a student assistant in how to find such images, and we now have images that will work for just about every illustration in *Look at This!* In some cases, this meant finding equivalent works of art, works that accomplish the same function in regard to the arguments in the text. The main challenge that now remains is to import all the content into Pressbooks, format it clearly, and supply alt-text for accessibility purposes for all images. I plan to launch this project in time for my Fall 2023 run of *ARTH100: Art Appreciation, Multicultural Perspectives*.

OER Content for Lower Division, Non-Majors Biology Course
Becki Brunelli and Paolo Segre

Our lower division GE biology course has historically used an eTextbook with an online interactive component. While we like the materials, the costs are high for students at $85-$110 per semester. Additionally, since they are "online bundles," they are not able to be sold back as "used." One of the most significant problems we face is the inability of some students to purchase the materials due to lack of funds, which becomes an equity issue. Many students face challenges paying for their education, including students who are on Pell grants, who do not have significant familial support, who are undocumented, or who are international students, among others.

We do liberally grant extensions to students who are unable to purchase the materials on time, but nonetheless it can end up affecting their success in the course because they fall behind their peers who are able to purchase the materials right away (studies show that students who purchase materials on day one have a higher success rate in their courses). We also have had students who never catch up and earn a failing grade, or who drop out completely because they can't afford the materials, or potentially have to sacrifice food or housing budget to purchase materials. Using OER materials allows more students to participate in the course from day one, improving equity.

To create our OER materials, we are using PressBooks, an online platform that allows you to collect and integrate open-source content from various sources and present it in a cohesive manner to fit the learning needs of the students and the requirements of the course. As a foundation, we are using an OER book called "Concepts of Biology" from OpenStax, which has many chapters that are well-suited for our course, as well as exercises and assessment. **One challenge has been finding authentic, interesting, and interactive assessments to incorporate. We are researching other sources to round out these components, including LibreTexts, BCcampus, MERLOT, Khan Academy, Cool4Ed, H5P, and others.**
We have considered making the change to OER for some time, and now with support from CAL$, we have had the opportunity to really put some time and energy into it. We are excited about creating and customizing content to target our students in a way that is relevant to their lives while saving them money ($17,000 to $38,500 per semester in student funds!).

OER For High Enrollment Upper Division GE Nutrition Course
Angela Harter Alger

I created a textbook for the upper division GE pathways course NFSC 303 – Nutrition and Physical Fitness to keep student costs down and because I believed that everyone deserves to have access to information about health.
I started my OER creation journey by searching for OER commons for basic nutrition information that I could use as a foundation for my materials. I was able to find a few open licensed high-quality textbooks with basic nutrition and physiology that I could pull from. I wrote the more advanced, content specific sections myself.

The most challenging aspect was sourcing images and diagrams of metabolic processes at the level I wanted for this course. I did have some success looking in OpenStax textbooks for other disciplines and using some of those images. Another challenge was keeping track of where each image originated from and the links to properly license them in my own OER project. I used Google docs to draft my text and added licenses and authors for different images using comments to keep myself organized. I worked with a student to create images we couldn't find elsewhere using Canva. The student also created infographics for each chapter that pulled out key concepts.

In the end, I copied everything into Pressbooks for publication. It did take some time to wrap my mind around how I wanted to organize everything in Pressbooks to make a user-friendly experience for the reader. The Pressbooks training was very helpful too. Once I got an organizational system down, it was pretty quick to add all the text and images to Pressbooks. It did require a lot of attention to detail to make sure that each image had all the required links for licensure and alternative text for accessibility. I was happy with the final outcome, and I have received a lot of positive feedback from students.

READ: Nutrition and Physical Fitness

OER Textbook: Psychology of Learning
(Andrés García-Penagos)
The textbooks in my area –the psychology of learning– have remained mostly unchanged in the last few decades in terms of content and structure. They are also typically aimed at graduate students and hence tend to cover the topics in a level of technical jargon that makes them prohibitive for undergraduate students. Add to this their increasing prices, and their erratic sequencing product of efforts to rearrange the contents to justify a new edition. My OER project is (as it is still in progress) a very ambitious project, mostly as a single author: I have been writing an open access textbook that attempts to make its contents suited to undergraduate students and that updates the usual sequence of this type of courses. For the last three academic terms, my students have benefitted from eight full chapters divided into modules that are free, and fully accessible, and have provided feedback on the writing, conceptual depth, and comprehensiveness.

The full writing being almost completed, I am currently working at updating illustrations, summary boxes, and other instructional aids, before sending it for a round of reviewing and proofreading by peers in my field. It has been an exhausting, yet rewarding process that has allowed me to review and update my knowledge of the field, to think deeply about learning goals and instructional delivery, and that has hopefully made the knowledge in my field accessible and affordable for our students. Here are links to some of the material that I have developed.

READ: An Introduction to Learning and Behavior

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