
Kansas Board of Regents OER Action Plan:

Advancing accessibility to higher education in our state through affordable textbook solutions and innovative approaches to educating



What is OER?

Open educational resources, or OERs, are openly licensed course materials that are free to use for professors and students and can be a replacement for traditional textbooks. Not only are OER textbooks free of cost, they can also enhance the educational experience. Because they are openly licensed, OERs can be easily edited to make content more relatable and engaging for students. This also prevents students from having to regularly purchase newer and more expensive editions of textbooks every year.

Why is Textbook Affordability Important?

The cost of textbooks has risen roughly 800% since 1980 and is showing little sign of letting up. This is significantly higher than increases in the CPI, housing, and healthcare expenses. With the overall cost of higher education on the rise, students have been saddled with increasing amounts of financial strain and student debt. As a testament to just how cash strapped students are, the strain that textbook costs cause has helped create the severe food insecurity problems we see today on many college campuses. For many students, the decision to purchase a textbook can be the difference between them succeeding in a class or affording groceries for that week.

Textbook costs is an area where we as an institution can make a quick and significant impact in the reduction of costs to higher education. Making higher education more accessible via expansion of open educational resources can also improve retention for students who are financially insecure, yielding a higher average graduation and retention rate for KBOR institutions. Several other states like Colorado and Ohio have been pushing OER implementation for years and are already reaping the benefits. We can use some of their tactics as a model for how best to implement a plan for affordable textbooks here in our state.

Action Plan for OER at KBOR Institutions

1. Incorporate OER expansion and textbook affordability into KBOR Foresight 2020 strategic plan
2. Create and distribute survey on textbook affordability to all students at KBOR institutions
 - a. Will provide standardized and concrete data on textbook costs in our state
3. Create a resource page on KBOR website as a centralized portal for all OER materials

- a. All KBOR schools can then easily access and utilize OER resources from other KBOR schools
 - b. Community colleges in the area can also access these resources
 - c. Should have links to separate institution resource pages as well (for example: <https://openaccess.ku.edu/oer>)
4. Require that all KBOR institutions show which courses have ZTC's (zero cost textbooks) in their course selection process
 - a. K-State and Pitt State already have implemented this and can be used as a guide
 - b. Would essentially allow students who are struggling financially to map out a path to graduation with the absolute minimum cost for their course materials
 5. Create a statewide task force to address the cost of textbooks and share best practices between institutions for how to lower that cost
 - a. This would incorporate campus champions of OER from every school to share ideas and strategies for OER expansion
 6. Provide access to Openstax and other OER resource pages for all KBOR institutions
 - a. Will give all universities quick and easy access to OER materials for professors who want to adopt them
 7. Encourage and facilitate the adoption of a grant based incentive programs for professors to adopt, adapt, or create OER for their courses
 - a. K-State has a good grant program that can be used as a model
 - b. Would ideally like to have a centralized grant system shared between all KBOR institutions and managed by the Board of Regents
 8. Work with state legislature to receive more funding for expansion of open educational resources
 9. Advocate for elimination of sales tax from textbook purchases for students in postsecondary education in the State of Kansas
 10. Encourage Provosts from each institution to send out semiannual reports on the number of OER/ZTC courses offered at the institution
 - a. Will help track progress and highlight areas of improvement
 - b. Can easily be tracked if #4 is implemented