The Sustainability of Open Education at Community Colleges

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Abstract

The Community College Consortium for Open Educational Resources (CCCOER, 2014) is a joint effort by individual colleges, regional and statewide consortia, the OpenCourseware Consortium, and other educational partners to promote awareness and adoption of open education policies and practices to enhance teaching and learning. CCCOER has over 200 colleges in 15 U.S. States (and one Canadian province) who meet regularly to share best practices and identify opportunities for collaboration.

Maricopa Community College District, the largest college district in the U.S. has 10 colleges in the Phoenix, AZ area. The district endorsed “the development and use of OER to support innovative and creative opportunities for all learners,” in its 5-year District-Wide Information and Instructional Technology Strategic Plan in 2011. Math faculty at three of the district colleges: Scottsdale, Paradise Valley, and Phoenix have developed open courseware for their developmental through pre-calculus curriculum in order to expand access and improve student learning. A district-supported steering committee is now guiding the Maricopa Millions project with the goal of developing OER for the 15 highest enrolled college courses in their district.

The state of California passed an open textbook legislative initiative in 2012 to make college more affordable for students. This legislation specifies the creation of an OER faculty council with representatives from the three public higher education systems in order to find and evaluate OER for the 50 highest enrolled courses. The council will decide on evaluation criteria for OER peer reviews and select faculty to perform them. The legislation required an external funder to match the state’s commitment of up to 5 million dollars in order to proceed.

U.S. Department of Labor’s Trade Assistance Adjustment Community College Career Training (TAACCCT) program is releasing 2 billion dollars over four years to support development of regional workforce curriculum and job placement services at community colleges. All curricula developed through these grants must carry a Creative Commons license allowing its wide sharing and reuse at other colleges.
In this panel presentation we discuss district-wide, state-wide, and country-wide OER funding and adoption trends in the U.S. and how they are leading to sustainable open educational policies and practices.

**Keywords**  
Community colleges, OER, TAACCCT, California Open Textbooks, Maricopa Millions

Affordability of education remains a significant barrier for students as instructional material and tuition costs have risen dramatically in the last decade. Community and technical colleges in the U.S. are increasingly advocating for open educational practices and policies to fulfill their mission of expanding access to education. Initial outreach to private foundations resulted in support for colleges to implement the faculty and staff development necessary for finding and adopting OER and also to assess the effectiveness of OER usage in the classroom.

These early pilots have shown the use of open educational resources (OER) to be effective in lowering costs while maintaining or improving student learning outcomes. As these proof-of-concept pilots have matured, policy support and funding from within the public sector has emerged. College districts, state and federal government programs, and policies have begun in earnest to support faculty and administrators who are promoting the adoption of OER to enhance teaching and learning while lowering costs through open sharing of materials. As this public funding grows and becomes part of operational budgets, sustainability and institutionalization of open policies and practices can become a reality.

This panel will present and answer questions regarding recent publicly funded case studies such as the Maricopa Millions Project, California State’s Higher Education Open Textbook legislation, and the U.S. Department of Labor’s Trade Assistance Adjustment Community College Career Training (TAACCCT) program.

**References**


Maricopa Millions (2014). Saving Students Money with OER https://www.68.maricopa.edu/oer


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