WRLC Steering Committee | Textbook Affordability Working Group 2023- 2024 Report

Open@WRLC Faculty Course Transformation Program: Pilot Cycle I
Six awardees completed OER implementation in Fall 2023 and two instructors moved implementation to Spring 2024. With the help of TAWG representatives and campus support, submitted OER courseware is being reviewed for Creative Commons (CC) Licensing and Digital Accessibility (DA) standards. The selected OER textbooks and corresponding courseware material such as syllabi and ancillaries will be added to a repository to be featured on open@wrlc.org. As the program does not provide for a dedicated OER Commons site, TAWG is also investigating the opportunity to partner with institutions with pre-existing OER Commons sites.

Instructor feedback regarding OER transformation has been overwhelmingly positive. Two awardees decided to forgo the selected OER textbooks and, instead, author original content and create comprehensive course websites: Maternal-Infant Nursing Review and Numerical Analysis: A Compact Compendium. As anticipated, implementation has been popular with students who appreciate both the savings and immediate access to course material.

While we are still awaiting the completion of Semester Data reports from the previous Fall 2023 implementation, first reports reflect textbooks savings are producing as expected. Following the Spring 2024 implementation, TAWG will provide a complete Pilot I report in August 2024. To better inform the second year of the pilot program, TAWG was deliberate in implementing recommendations provided from the program's first cycle. Knowledge sharing and community building are significant aspects of the program that directly inform participation and sustainability. Pilot II was updated to require synchronous professional development for CC Licensing and DA best practices. As an additional update to Pilot II, awardees will now be asked to attend an end of semester review where they will discuss their work, provide demonstrations, and share their experiences.

Open@WRLC Faculty Course Transformation Program: Pilot Cycle II
The second pilot year launched on January 3, 2024 with a Call for Proposals. TAWG updated program requirements and made informational webinar attendance mandatory. If a candidate was not able to attend, they were instructed to meet with their TAWG representative before submitting their application. This decision proved successful. The number of completed proposals increased 100% from the previous year. Overall, the proposals reflected a better understanding of the program's goals with several including detailed plans for open pedagogy and at least one course that will be utilizing AI.

Proposals	AU	CU	GA	GM	GT	GW	HU	MU	UDC	Total
Submitted	3	6	0	1	0	5	10	1	4	30
Completed	2	3	0	1	0	3	7	1	3	20
Awarded	1	3	0	1	0	3	6	0	2	16

The estimated textbook savings for the 2024- 2025 academic year is $293,703.95 with a 10.89 ratio of student savings to program expenditure. This estimate is three times larger than the first pilot year and is largely informed by increased department participation. At least two universities will be implementing selected OER across all sections for a course and two instructors from Howard Law will be substituting significantly costly commercially published law books with available OER case study publications.

To address a deficit of DA support available on campuses, TAWG members, Rachel Borchardt, Brianna Chatmon and Angelique Carson participated in the ISKME and AEM's Accessibility in Open Educational Resources Academy six-week certificate program. Instruction focused on navigating the OER landscape regarding accessibility, with an emphasis on digital accessibility. The robust program provided insight into the relationship

between accessibility and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and facilitated networking and knowledge sharing opportunities. This information will be used to update program guidelines, create a DA workshop for participating instructors and review transformed OER courseware.

Open@WRLC Open Textbook Library Review Stipend Program

In 2023-24, TAWG conducted eight workshops, educating and recruiting faculty for OER implementations; 132 faculty attended. Programming is largely informed by the [Open Textbook Library's](#) $200 stipend review opportunity, offered to faculty from all nine partnering institutions. The WRLC's membership to the [Open Education Network](#), creators of the Open Textbook Library, makes the stipend review programming possible.

The Open Education Network estimates that 40% of instructors who submit a review for an OER textbook in the Open Textbook Library go on to adopt material in their course. This program has served as an incentive to inform and demystify OER for faculty. As of January 2024, 30 payments have led to 153 textbook reviews. Those faculty have gone on to adopt OER textbooks leading to a savings for students of over $190,000. The cost expenditures of the $200 textbook review stipend program has shown a return on investment of over 30:1.

At this time, WRLC funds the OEN membership and corresponding $200 review stipends; individual institutions do not contribute. WRLC will not renew the account for FY25. TAWG is requesting continued support for this program and the benefits it provides to both students and faculty and strongly recommends participation from the partnering libraries.

SC Initiative: Marketing plan for Open@WRLC Faculty Course Transformation Program

TAWG was tasked with devising and implementing a marketing plan for the program. TAWG produced two documents: a digital flier advertising the program that could be customized to campus needs and an email template that could likewise be customized to promote the program.

Seven WRLC institutions reported on their individual marketing efforts for the 2023-2024 year: AU, CU, GU, GW, HU, MU, UDC. GMU has its own similar program through VIVA. GT does not currently have a representative, but the Chair and WRLC staff representative had a productive conversation with several non-library GT stakeholders. Among other marketing efforts, campus campaigns included inclusion in campus-wide newsletter, library website promotion, co-promotion through other units on campus and social media and blog posting. If funding continues, this information will be used in upcoming years to help establish effective marketing pathways for each school, including ways TAWG efforts can continue to supplement individual schools' marketing efforts.

FY25 SC Initiative Suggestions

Lessons learned in the first year include the amount of administrative support necessary to support successful programming. As shared by fellow universities during the information-gathering stage, program maintenance and assisting instructors require a significant level of labor and follow-up. Other serious ongoing concerns include assisting instructors who no longer have a TAWG representative and TAWG's status as an interest group vs. a committee. As an interest group, participating libraries are not compelled to provide representation or ensure members' responsibilities are met.

The number of completed submissions, which doubled in comparison to the first pilot cycle, demonstrate the program's potential for growth. TAWG is deeply concerned with losing the momentum and campus interest they have garnered if the program is forced to pause at the end of the current pilot cycle. The group recommends that the program continues to be funded with the WRLC's Catalyst fund for a third year, with a budget that includes administrative assistance and OEN membership.