

OPEN@WRLC FACULTY COURSE TRANSFORMATION PROGRAM

PILOT CYCLE II and FINAL REPORT

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Executive Summary

The Open@WRLC Faculty Course Transformation (FCT) pilot program demonstrates that a strategically supported, consortium based OER initiative can produce significant financial return, measurable student impact, and meaningful cross institutional collaboration. Across two pilot cycles, the program validated both the demand for textbook affordability and the willingness of faculty to engage in structured OER adoption. At the same time, it exposed critical structural and governance vulnerabilities that must be addressed to ensure long term sustainability.

Pilot Cycle I impacted 743 students and generated \$122,869.00 in textbook savings. Pilot Cycle II expanded both scale and institutional engagement, serving 1,009 students and generating \$169,878.36 in textbook savings based on original material costs totaling \$2,382.55. Together, the two cycles produced \$292,747.36 in direct student savings. Importantly, the projected ratio of student savings to program expenditures improved from 1.98 in the original five year projection to 2.38 under the reduced Adopt only model, increasing further as Cycle II scaled. Even with reduced infrastructure and limited administrative support, the program delivered a strong and improving return on investment.

Beyond financial outcomes, the pilots confirmed several strategic realities. Faculty across disciplines are prepared to adopt OER when provided structured support, clear expectations, and cohort based engagement. Cross consortial collaboration strengthens innovation, distributes expertise, and advances equity across institutions. Most critically, administrative infrastructure is foundational. The program's primary vulnerability was not participation, impact, or demand. It was structural underinvestment in staffing, governance, and sustained operational support.

The documented savings also underrepresent the program's full impact. Courses from both pilot cycles continue to be taught using OER in subsequent semesters, extending savings beyond the original award periods. Participating faculty have also expanded adoption to additional sections and new courses within their departments, creating organic proliferation that is not captured in current reporting totals. With sustained operationalization, this continued expansion could be systematically tracked, measured, and amplified.

The pilots provide clear strategic direction. If operationalized with dedicated administrative leadership, formalized institutional accountability, continued marketing and required training, and preserved cross consortial collaboration, the Open@WRLC FCT Program is positioned to scale responsibly and substantially increase educational equity across WRLC institutions. The foundation has been tested. The outcomes are proven. The next phase depends not on whether the model works, but on whether it is structurally supported to grow.

Targeted Program Enhancements Following Pilot Cycle I

Building on lessons learned during the first pilot year, TAWG implemented several updates to better prepare cohorts and strengthen program workflows.

In year one, applicants who were unable to attend the informational webinars, which covered expectations, timelines, deliverables, and a brief overview of OER, were required to meet individually with their TAWG representative. Beginning in year two, webinar attendance became mandatory. This change significantly improved participants' understanding of the program's goals, clarified awardee responsibilities, distinguished OER from licensed e-resources, and ultimately increased the overall quality of applications.

TAWG also added a question to the application regarding prior OER experience. While the program continued to welcome OER novices, this addition helped identify instructors with established OER practices. These connections strengthened knowledge-sharing and supported the program's collaborative goals. The application review period was extended to a full month, allowing for a more deliberate review process and time to request clarification from applicants when necessary.

To further support community building, a critical element of OER sustainability, the program moved away from a fully asynchronous, self-guided professional development model. Two essential training sessions, Creative Commons Licensing and Digital Accessibility, became mandatory. This change ensured that awardees received foundational preparation for their final projects while also creating structured opportunities for cohort interaction.

Additional Program Updates

- **[FCT Cohort Page](#)**

The FCT Cohort Page highlights all program participants and documents their motivations for exploring OER, course experiences, student feedback, final projects, and adopted textbooks. The page serves as both an archival record of awardee work and a resource for consortium members. It is intended to inspire additional instructors to explore OER and pursue cross-WRLC collaboration.

- **Open@WRLC Faculty Course Transformation Forum**

To strengthen community connections, TAWG hosted two FCT forums that included awardees from both Pilot I and Pilot II. Led by program awardees, the forums celebrated key milestones, including the launch of the FCT Cohort Page, conference and campus presentations by participants, and the introduction of law and graduate-level courses into the program. Expansion into professional courses was especially significant given their traditionally high textbook costs and the perception that OER primarily serves introductory-level courses.

A central goal of the forums was to build cross-consortial relationships by providing space for participants to meet and share their work. Each awardee presented on their OER-transformed course, addressing:

- Successes, challenges, and unexpected outcomes
 - Student responses and classroom impact
 - Plans for sustainability
 - Advice for future OER adopters
- **OER Commons**
Public dissemination of OER-transformed course materials was integral to the program's original mission. Although the initial plan to launch a dedicated WRLC OER Commons microsite through ISKME's publishing platform was not realized, WRLC established an Open@WRLC group account to house transformed course materials.

All program materials are licensed under CC BY, the most permissive Creative Commons license. This licensing allows works to be translated, adapted, and freely redistributed, including through platforms such as WikiEdu.org, thereby significantly expanding access beyond traditional commercial resources.

- **Letters of Recognition**
To formally recognize and document contributions, Letters of Recognition were provided to both TAWG members and all awardees. These letters acknowledge their participation in the program and serve as documentation for professional portfolios.
- **Student PIRGs**
The WRLC project administrator invited a director from Student PIRGs to explore potential collaboration opportunities aimed at increasing student engagement across partner institutions. One concept discussed was leveraging Student PIRGs established campus networks, professional staff support, and organizing infrastructure to assist with a coordinated marketing campaign. Through collaboration with student government associations at each campus, this approach has the potential to extend the reach and effectiveness of textbook affordability messaging beyond what the libraries' were able to achieve independently. Textbook affordability efforts at peer consortia have similarly benefited from sustained, boots-on-the-ground student engagement.

Although TAWG members ultimately did not pursue a formal partnership with Student PIRGs at that time, the opportunity remains viable. Should the program be reconsidered for operationalization in the future, exploring collaboration with a structured student advocacy organization such as Student PIRGs is strongly recommended as a strategy to

galvanize the student body, strengthen outreach efforts, and build durable campus-wide momentum around affordability initiatives.

- **Cross-Consortial Collaboration and Community Building**

The program strengthened collaboration across WRLC institutions in several ways:

- TAWG representatives served as institutional OER ambassadors
- Faculty across institutions shared implementation strategies during FCT forums
- The FCT Cohort Page created a shared archival and promotional space
- Workshops and review stipends built an entry pipeline for new OER adopters

Pilot Cycle II refinements further strengthened cohort interaction by requiring:

- Attendance at informational webinars
- Mandatory Creative Commons Licensing training
- Mandatory Digital Accessibility training

These structural improvements improved applicant preparedness, project quality, and community cohesion.

- **Expansion Beyond Introductory Courses**

The pilot intentionally supported:

- Graduate-level courses
- Professional programs (including law)
- Specialized and STEM courses
- High-cost and niche subject areas

This directly challenged the misconception that OER is primarily for large introductory courses. Demonstrating that OER adoption is viable and impactful across disciplines, including specialized and professional programs.

High-impact examples included:

- Law courses replacing expensive casebooks
- Graduate Statistical Methods courses
- School of Dentistry Introductory Pharmaceutical course
- STEM open-source textbook development using PreTeXt

Major Lessons Learned

- **Administrative Labor Is Substantial and Non-Negotiable**

A dedicated coordinator position is critical to the long term sustainability of the program. Informational interviews conducted during the planning phase consistently underscored the scope of administrative workload, including the cautionary advice, “Whatever support you think you’re going to need, double it.” The subsequent decision to eliminate a dedicated coordinator, publishing infrastructure, and formalized administrative staffing shifted substantial operational responsibility to WRLC staff and TAWG representatives, increasing workload demands and limiting the program’s capacity for structured growth and oversight. With an estimated workload of 15 to 20 hours per week on average, administrative demands included but were not limited to:

- Application management and evaluation
- Program curriculum
- OER education and reference assistance for TAWG members and awardees
- Faculty communication and progress tracking
- Fund disbursement oversight
- Accessibility and licensing compliance review
- Website and portal updates
- Marketing and outreach

- **Working Group Structure Limits Accountability**

TAWG functions as a working group rather than a formal committee, and this governance structure has direct implications for operational stability. Uneven institutional engagement created disparities in faculty support and distributed the administrative burden inconsistently across partners. Because participation is voluntary and representatives are not required to attend meetings, some institutions periodically lack active representation. When engagement lapsed, responsibilities frequently defaulted to WRLC staff, further concentrating workload and limiting consistent cross-institutional coordination.

- **Uneven Institutional Participation Creates Operational Risk**

Several institutions experienced participation and administrative gaps that affected overall program consistency. Some had no applicants in either pilot year, while others stopped sending representatives even as their faculty continued participating in the

program. In addition, delays in fund disbursement processing created further complications, and at the time of this report, some awardees have not yet received their stipends. These issues resulted in communication breakdowns, increased administrative burden on WRLC, and equity concerns across participating institutions. If the program is to continue, institutional commitment must be formalized and consistently enforced to ensure accountability and stability.

- **Mandatory Training Improves Quality**

Pilot Cycle II refinements demonstrated that structured, required engagement produces stronger program outcomes than optional participation. Implementing a mandatory orientation improved the overall quality of applications, while required training in Creative Commons licensing and Digital Accessibility ensured compliance and strengthened the integrity of course materials. In addition, structured cohort interaction enhanced peer learning, fostered collaboration, and contributed to a more cohesive and effective

Strong Faculty and Student Response

Faculty and student response to the initiative was overwhelmingly positive, reinforcing that OER serves not only as a financial intervention but also as a tool for strengthening faculty-student relationships and advancing equity. Faculty feedback highlighted the flexibility to customize materials, strong alignment with equity and DEI priorities, and increased interest in adopting OER in additional courses.

Student survey data, provided by one awardee, further underscored the need for affordable materials, with only 34 percent reporting that they could comfortably afford textbooks and 25 percent indicating they could not afford them at all. Notably, 90 percent of students reported feeling more understood and connected to professors who used OER, demonstrating the broader relational and academic impact of the program.

Recommendations for Future Operationalization

If the Open@WRLC Faculty Course Transformation program is revived, the following structural recommendations are critical:

- Fund a dedicated program administrator
- Formalize TAWG as a committee to ensure increased accountability, consistent institutional representation and protect fiduciary oversight integrity
 - Maintain the Adopt tier while introducing scalable award models
 - Consider variable stipend levels based on scope of course transformation for Adopt tier

- Preserve the Open Textbook Library review stipend (provided via membership in the Open Education Network) as an effective recruitment tool
- Protect infrastructure and documentation; the program now has the following resources, these assets must be maintained to avoid time-consuming reconstruction
 - A functional website and portal
 - Established workflows
 - Training materials
 - Evaluation rubrics
 - Marketing assets
- Prioritize Cross-Consortial Cohort Engagement
 - Continue mandatory orientation sessions
 - Require accessibility and licensing training
 - Preserve FCT forums.
 - Maintain the cohort page as an archival and recruitment tool

Pilot Cycle II Textbook Savings Statistics

	Instructor	OER Transformed Course	OER Implementation		No. of Students	Original Course Material Cost	Textbook Savings
			F24	S25			
AU	David Jacobs	PHIL 296 AI and the Future of Work	F24	S25	34	\$70.00	\$2,380.00
CU	Cybele Arnaud	FREN 101 Elementary French		S25	34	\$150.00	\$5,100.00
	Rebecca Kiriazes	HSEV 101 Environmental Science and Sustainability ENGR201, Engineering Mechanics		S25	17	\$269.00	\$4,573.00
	Gunnar Lucko	CEE 241 Introduction to Construction Engineering and Management	F24 F25		45	\$120.95	\$4,838.00
GT							
GM	Daniel Ferguson	ECED 401/501 Developmental Pathways of Diverse Learners, Birth-Adolescence	F24		51	\$299.99	\$15,299.49
GW	Alexa Alice Joubin	3440W Shakespeare on Film 3441W Shakespeare, Race and Gender 2800W Introduction to Critical Theory 6130 AI and the Humanities	F24		41	\$70.94	\$2,908.54
	Donald Ritzenhein	COMM 1040 Public Communication	F23 F24	S24 S25	486	\$169.00	\$82,134.00
	Yoshie Nakamura	HOL 6706 Current Issues in Organizational Leadership: Leader as Coach	F24		40	\$85.00	\$3,400.00
HU	Matthew Bruckner (HU Law)	LAW 615 Contracts	F24		66	\$375.00	\$24,750
	Bisrat Hailemeskel (HU College of Pharmacy)	83602-306 Drug Informatics	F24	S25	43	\$85.50	\$3,676.5
	Theresa Hollaway	RASC 312 Environmental and Radiation Therapy	F24		11	\$122.98	\$1,352.78
	Eliseo Jacob	PORT 003 Portuguese III PORT 004 Portuguese IV	F24		20	\$129.00	\$2,580.00
	Tiffany Williams-Brewer (HU Law)	Professional Responsibility	F24	S25	70	\$115.00	\$8,050.00
UDC	Jasmine Yarish	HIST 101 US History to 1865 HIST 102 US History since 1865	F24	S25	40	\$183.24	\$7,329.60
	John Martin	12111 AETC Intro History of Architecture	F24		11	\$136.95	\$1,506.45
TOTAL					1009	\$2,382.55	\$169,878.36