

Statement from the CARLI Open Educational Resources Committee

Members of the CARLI Open Educational Resources Committee are asking that Open Educational Resources (OER) be considered a focal point of discussions within the [College Course Materials Affordability and Equitable Access Collaborative Study Act and Task Force](#) (CCM Task Force.)

We believe that statewide support for the creation and adoption of OER is a crucial component of affordability in Illinois, and we understand this to be an achievable and sustainable solution to course material costs in higher education. We want to ensure that this task force is informed about both OER and its benefits, but also the concepts (e.g., inclusive access) that publishers use to promise equitable access, but often mask practices that disenfranchise students.

There is much work being done across Illinois to create and share OER. These materials are openly licensed and made available to both students and faculty teaching related courses. They can be adopted, distributed to students, and tailored to meet their individual needs due to open licensing. Materials are free to students in a digital format and can be printed out for a fraction of the cost of a published textbook. Open licensing also means that students have permanent access to these texts and other materials in perpetuity. Research from a recent article on the impact of OER in the *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* indicates that moving from commercial textbooks to OER can improve grades, as well as decrease drop, failure, and withdrawal rates for students, with disproportionately positive effects on Pell eligible students.

OER are often created via institutional grant opportunities and are subjected to peer review and other quality assurance processes. That is to say, faculty are creating high quality materials for their students through these grant funded programs that are freely available to students at their institutions and institutions of any other faculty using the resource. They also allow for opportunities for innovative and flexible pedagogy. Students can participate in the creation and updating of these materials as part of their course work, offering opportunities to both see themselves within their field and the long-term impacts of their work. It also provides opportunities for students to have research and publishing experience for their portfolios upon graduation.

It would be naïve to believe that publishers will not be a part of the future of college course materials. We understand that commercial providers will be participants in these conversations and will make contributions to course material affordability efforts. We assert, however, that commercial providers' practices have made course materials inaccessible to

many students, and consequently necessitated the creation of the task force, whose purpose it is to address the sustainability and equitability of course material costs.

For example, commercial providers' programs like inclusive access promise day one access to course materials, which solves one problem: the delay in students acquiring their course materials. However, these programs often provide time-limited licensed access to a digital text or suite of materials which have their access removed at the end of the semester, and sometimes before. Should students need to refer to materials later in their academic careers or retake a course, they will need to purchase the materials again at full cost. While these materials typically have their prices reduced in exchange for the guaranteed purchase, they can often still be expensive for students, remove options for seeking out materials at a lower cost, and remove the student's ability to decide whether to purchase. Ultimately, the decision for course materials must be pedagogically appropriate for the instructor, students, and institution.

The CARLI OER Committee members acknowledge that the provision of materials for college students encompasses not providing solely OER to students, i.e., that commercially published textbooks will continue to be part of the larger context. Our goal is to ensure that the Governor, the Illinois General Assembly, and ISAC are presented with a complete understanding of options, are aware of the extraordinary efforts already in motion to bring free-to-use, free-to-adapt OER to students across the state and consider OER as an investment-worthy piece of the solution toward equitable access to course materials.