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HUDSON VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Incentivizing OER Education and Adoption to Accelerate Expansion

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The State University of New York's Hudson Valley Community College (HVCC) serves about 11,000 undergraduate students. HVCC began its Open Education Resources (OER) initiative in summer 2017 when it received initial OER grant funding from the SUNY system.[1] Before the grant, HVCC had four courses that used OER materials; in fall 2018 they offered about 25 courses with OER sections. Some courses have multiple OER sections taught by different faculty, so approximately 40 faculty were utilizing OER in fall 2018.

Student savings and success are the College's primary motivation for using OER. Although OER is not directly connected to the College's strategic plan, the current plan has expired and so presents an opportunity to include OER in the College's new strategic priorities and goals. The College recently welcomed a new President who could be an ally in the initiative given that he authored an OER textbook early in his career. If OER is shown to impact enrollment and retention, it is expected to generate increased visibility among College administrators.

Approach and Vision

HVCC's OER initiative is led by the Director of Marvin Library with support from Library staff. The initiative also receives informal support from select department chairs and faculty that are interested in OER and encourage expansion among their colleagues.

HVCC kicked off its OER initiative with an afternoon workshop offered in February, 2018 which included about 100 attendees. The workshop featured a guest faculty member as well as three HVCC OER pioneers that used open materials prior to the SUNY system initiative. The workshop also featured representatives from academic affairs, the bookstore, and the financial aid office expressing support for OER and sharing ways they can assist (e.g., offering print copies of OER textbooks at the bookstore that can be purchased with financial aid funds). The workshop was intentionally designed and presented as a collaborative effort alongside these other areas of the College, rather than as a Library-only initiative.

HVCC incentivized rapid OER course conversions by requiring faculty to adopt only existing OER written by others instead of creating new OER. Most faculty adopted OER textbooks, primarily from OpenStax; a few used existing courses from Lumen Learning or Open Oregon. During the 2019-20 proposal cycle, custom creation of OER may be considered.

Sustainability is a concern with this Library-led initiative. Oversight of the initiative—including faculty education and support, proposal reviews, and administrative oversight of the process—requires a significant time commitment from the Library, which it considers unsustainable. Ideally, the Library would like this to shift into Academic Affairs and have departments take ownership of OER. Instead of hiring an OER Champion, they envision OER as another pedagogy available within the departments. Under this approach, stipends would eventually end and faculty would be advised the current financial incentive will only be available for a limited time.

Sharing OER successes is expected to bolster sustainability within departments, but a communication plan has not been developed. The College also does not plan to advertise OER to students, to avoid showing preference for OER courses.

[1] The information included in this case study was drawn from a team interview with 4 members of SUNY Hudson Valley Community College's OER Sustainability Plan project team on August 29, 2018, OER documents provided by the team, and information from the HVCC website.

OER Support, Resources and Impacts

As noted above, most of the support for HVCC's OER initiative is provided by the Library. The Library maintains an extensive website with information on OER resources and licensing. The site also includes links to research on OER impacts; presentations, videos and case studies from other colleges; contacts to help faculty connect with other OER champions on campus, and information on OER-related processes. For example, the OER website provides direct links to open textbooks currently in use at HVCC, along with the course number and email address of the faculty member(s) using each textbook so other faculty can easily connect with their colleagues. The website also provides clear instructions on how to work with the bookstore to sell printed copies of OER textbooks, including recommendations on the number of copies to order and the most economical print format determined by the bookstore and print shop.

HVCC's Library also has assigned liaisons to each academic department, and while this reflects a broader organizational strategy, it also provides faculty with a first line resource to help identify OER materials. The Library also maintains a good partnership with the College's Center for Effective Teaching (CET), which offered an OER workshop in advance of the submission deadline for the first round of proposals.

The College offers instructional design (ID) assistance; however, most faculty haven't needed these services because they adopted open textbooks. If more faculty begin to use Lumen Learning courses, requests for ID services may increase as faculty upload courses into the learning management system. SUNY OER services is another resource that the Library intends to direct faculty towards if they need assistance creating OER instead of adopting it.

HVCC has developed several infrastructure-related resources around OER procedures and supports. The proposal intention form encourages faculty to request different types of support in advance of submitting a formal proposal; an assessment rubric helps evaluate whether the proposal meets SUNY's OER requirements, and a memorandum of understanding outlines the terms of agreement for receiving a stipend. HVCC also began incorporating OER into its Library job descriptions when appropriate; a recent opening for an Online Media Specialist Technical Assistant indicated a preference for candidates familiar with OER.

Systems to identify OER courses appeared more advanced in the bookstore (operated by the Faculty Student Association) than at the College. The College experienced difficulty flagging OER courses in its data systems. It is exploring software available from SUNY Open to help establish an OER indicator tag in its data system; OER courses are manually identified by department staff. The bookstore lists OER textbooks in its data system and has worked out a process with the College print shop to offer a few copies on the bookshelf at a 15-20% markup. Although there is concern about the impact of OER on the bookstore, the bookstore is supportive of the initiative and has worked with the print shop to identify the most economical way to offer print texts to students.

Looking ahead, there is uncertainty about the impact of funding on continued OER growth. It's unclear whether growth will continue without funding for stipends, but the long-term vision for integrating OER into the departments supports this model. HVCC hasn't had any conversations about implementing an OER fee, which would require approval from the Board of Trustees.

Exemplary Practice: Incentivizing Education and Adoption

HVCC developed a two-stage financial incentive to recruit faculty, seeking first to educate faculty about OER before encouraging them to convert their course materials. SUNY grant funding was used to provide $100 stipends to 56 faculty attending the February, 2018 workshop. The comments collected from faculty at the end of the workshop indicated about half of respondents were initially unaware of the quantity of OER resources available and where they are located. Other faculty commented they hadn't realized some HVCC faculty were already using OER, and several were surprised by the potential impacts on student savings and student retention.

At the end of the workshop, faculty could elect to propose an OER course adoption or decide not to proceed. Faculty with successful proposals and course conversions would receive an additional $400 stipend once the course was completed and approved. Thirty-two faculty indicated they intended to develop a proposal. Among the 24 faculty that decided not to proceed, most indicated either they did not have time to develop the proposal or did not believe there were satisfactory OER materials in their subject area.

Faculty who decided to proceed could request additional support directly on the proposal intention form completed at the end of the workshop. Faculty could indicate whether they wanted support from: their department's Library liaison; SUNY OER Services; continuing education training events on OER, or professional development-related emails on OER. Seven faculty received support for conference attendance and all subsequently proposed OER adoption. Librarians also conducted more than a dozen meetings with faculty to search for OER in their subject areas. Faculty were strongly encouraged to meet with a member of the OER Proposal Review Committee prior to the submission deadline to ensure their materials met the SUNY OER course requirements (51% OER course materials and offered as OER for three years).

The OER Proposal Review Committee received 32 completed proposals that identified the OER course materials faculty planned to adopt and included revised versions of their course outlines reflecting the new OER textbook or materials. The proposed course changes were reviewed by the three-person Committee which included the Library director, a Library-based copyright officer, and an online media specialist. If the technical requirements were met, the proposal was forwarded to the department chair for review and approval. The Chief Academic Officer had the final sign off and all 32 proposals were approved.

Lessons Learned: The education and proposal process rapidly expanded HVCC's OER offerings. Without the stipend, HVCC's OER Director estimates that the College might have added one or two new OER courses. Although the stipend alone may have encouraged faculty to adopt OER, the workshop clearly inspired more faculty to consider OER. Nearly all faculty that submitted comments after the workshop indicated they would either continue to survey available OER resources and/or begin adoption. The current process will be repeated in the second year of the grant. However, it's unclear whether the process will be repeated in subsequent years because the pool of interested faculty may be depleted.

Looking Ahead: Sustainability Planning

HVCC has already developed some of the processes and supports that lead to sustainability. As HVCC continues to build on its initial OER successes, its priorities should include developing the infrastructure and culture necessary to sustain the effort. In the proposed sustainability framework, priority areas for HVCC are highlighted in blue and initial recommendations are provided below.

Infrastructure

» Expand the circle of OER champions beyond the Library; consider establishing an OER committee that includes OER faculty and representatives from CET, the bookstore, and ID to share the workload.

» Use the OER committee to develop a plan for embedding OER in the departments.

» Finalize the addition of an OER course identification tag so OER courses are easily tracked and students can identify OER courses in the course catalogue.

» Add CET's OER workshop to the list of available workshops and consider offering it at regular intervals.

Resources

» Determine the resources that will be required—including reallocated staff time from the Library and other support units—to continue OER's growth and establish it in Academic Affairs.

» Since most course sections at the College utilize the same book, explore how similar efficiencies can be introduced around OER (e.g., by adopting/developing materials used across all OER sections instead of developing multiple OER sections of a course).

Culture

» Connect with administrators developing the College's new strategic plan and discuss how OER can help meet the College's objectives and be incorporated into the plan.

» Develop success metrics that can be used to share OER's impact on students and the institution. Collect current textbook costs on the proposal form (or request from the bookstore) to calculate the savings to students. Connect with IR to measure how OER might impact student success (grades and retention).

» Reconsider the decision not to advertise OER courses to students; improving awareness can increase student savings and also build support to help grow the initiative.

» Develop a communication strategy to share OER's success: provide active outreach to faculty to share the depth of OER resources available and the colleagues utilizing these resources (e.g., Committee members present at department or other campus meetings); develop materials (e.g., blogs, emails, newsletter submissions) to share OER's successes with administrators.

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