Getting Started with Open and Affordable Course Content
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A recent large-scale study at the University of Georgia found that students in courses using free course materials were significantly more successful than those using traditional course materials. The difference was even more significant for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. We’d like to make sure our students here at Georgia State have the same opportunities for academic success.

As of Spring 2018, Affordable Learning Georgia grants at Georgia State University have impacted 31,170 students and saved GSU students $5,726,776.¹

¹ Jeff Gallant, Program Manager at Affordable Learning Georgia. Email communication. (February 13, 2019).
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WHAT IS OPEN OR AFFORDABLE COURSE CONTENT?

- Open content cost $0.00
- Affordable content directly cost the student <$40.

Open content is freely available and can have a variety of use rights. Some open materials, known as open educational resources (OER), have flexible use rights including the right to adapt and redistribute. Creative Commons licenses were developed to help users easily understand use rights for open content. See “About the licenses” to learn more about Creative Commons Licenses.

Affordable content may include links to online library materials, links to free content, print materials, or online homework with a total direct cost to the student of less than $40.

The GSU course catalog indicates which courses are no-cost and low-cost through course designators.
HOW DO I EVALUATE MY COURSE CONTENT NEEDS?

Start by reviewing your syllabus/curriculum. Learning objectives may be helpful.

You might:

• Switch out a high cost textbook for a free or affordable one.

• Customize a textbook to meet your needs.

• Select content from a variety of sources for a particular assignment or for the entire course.

• Author your own course content. See Online Content and eText Creation and For Educators and Open Textbook Authors.
HOW DO I DESIGN AN EFFECTIVE COURSE OR ASSIGNMENT USING OPEN OR AFFORDABLE CONTENT?

Consider students’ needs, the goals of the course/assignment, learning objectives, and activities that support real world applications.

Also, think about how you will evaluate your student’s work.

The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) offers this type of assistance at all GSU instructional sites.
There are many options. Here are our top five suggestions:

- OpenStax
- Mason OER Metafinder
- OASIS
- GSU’s Open Education Guide
- GSU library databases (for content you can link to)

For a step-by-step process for locating open content, try the Open Textbook Adoption Worksheet.
HOW DO I KNOW WHICH RESOURCES I’M ALLOWED TO USE UNDER COPYRIGHT?

• Consult the USG Copyright Policy
• Consult the GSU Library Copyright Guide
• Get more help on copyright through GSU Legal Affairs

Ask yourself these five questions in this order:

1. Is the work protected by copyright?
2. Is there a specific exception in copyright law that covers my use?
3. Is there a license that covers my use?
4. Is my use covered by fair use?
5. Do I need permission from the copyright owner for my use?

HOW DO I ASSESS MY COURSE?

Compare evaluative measures from your new OER/affordable implementation with past semesters or other sections you may be teaching with the traditional high cost textbook. You may want to investigate quantitative measures such as grades, course completion, or course throughput rates. You may also want to investigate qualitative measures related to student or instructor experiences with using open or affordable content.

GSU’s CETL can offer assistance with assessment.
CAN I GET FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR USING OR DESIGNING OPEN OR AFFORDABLE CONTENT?

YES.

AFFORDABLE LEARNING GEORGIA
U.S. FEDERAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION GRANTS
How do I get help?

Denise Dimsdale, mdimsdale@gsu.edu, Affordable Learning Georgia Library Coordinator.

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Mary Ann Cullen, mcullen@gsu.edu, Associate Department Head, Perimeter Library Services-Alpharetta OER Advocate for Perimeter Instructional Sites.
What GSU Faculty and Students Say About Open and Affordable Content:

This class proves an expensive textbook is not essential to learning. The online activities enriched my understanding of the material far more than reading a textbook ever could.

- GSU Student

Using the e-book this semester has convinced me that replacing a traditional textbook has succeeded in engaging more of my students...

- Susan Willey

This grant has transformed our instruction by encouraging us to “think outside the box” in topic coverage and the books we used for the course.

- Scott Jacques and Andrea Allen

The book [Successful College Composition] really helped me out this semester. Everything was simple. I learned more from that one book than I have from all my English teachers. I will definitely be using it in the future.

- GSU Student

View all GSU course materials and grant reports on GALILEO Open Learning Materials