



Idaho State University

A black and white photograph of a classroom. In the foreground, a student with glasses and a mustache is looking at a piece of paper. In the background, other students are seated at desks with laptops, some looking at their screens. A laptop in the foreground has 'PREDATOR' written on it.

Strategies To Increase Access and Affordability of Instructional Materials

2022 - 2023 Annual Update

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During the Spring of 2022, Idaho State University developed an Access and Affordability plan offering eight strategies to enhance the use of Open Educational Resources (OER) and low cost materials by Idaho State University instructors. These strategies were built on programs, resources, and incentives, which were currently in place or intended to be launched during the Spring 2022 semester and the 2022-2023 academic year. The eight recommendations primarily target faculty support and cost minimization of instructional materials. ISU's numerous accomplishments for the 2022-2023 academic year are provided below.

1. Continue to Support Existing OER and Low Cost Resources and Incentives

ISU continued to offer two annual university-wide professional development opportunities related to OER and low cost materials; ISU's Open Education Week and the Program for Instructional Effectiveness (PIE) OER Workshops.

ISU has celebrated Open Education Week annually since 2021. Our most recent celebration was offered in March 2023. The numerous Open Education Week events are organized and facilitated by the Open and Affordable Educational Resources (OAER) Committee within the ISU University Libraries. This committee is made up of both librarians and instructional designers. The 2023 week's educational programming consisted of virtual presentations provided by recent Textbook Hero Honorees, and additional educational presentations about discovering OER, using H5P interactive learning software, and OER "basics." The event had over 100 in-person registrants. Videos are available on the [ISU Open Education Week Events Playlist](#).

This year's Open Education Week Keynote Address was provided by Dr. David Wiley. Dr. David Wiley is the Chief Academic Officer of Lumen Learning, the President of the Association for Educational Communications and Technology, and an Education Fellow at Creative Commons. Dr. Wiley has been crucial in the OER movement. He coined the term 'open content' in 1998, and wrote and published the Open Content license for educational resources - a forerunner to Creative Commons licenses. His work helped establish the essential legal framework and licenses that constitute the foundation of the movement today. In recent years he has worked with leaders in higher education to institutionalize OER, in order for more and more students to benefit. Dr. Wiley's Keynote address was an inspiring tribute to the OER work that continues to help ensure educational access and opportunity across our region, nation, and world.

During the Fall of 2022, ISU's Program for Instructional Effectiveness (PIE) sponsored a workshop on finding OER materials for ISU faculty. Spencer Jardine, Associate Professor,

and Library Coordinator of Instruction, delivered the workshop, [Strategies for Finding OER Materials](#), on October 12, 2022 via Zoom and in person.

Among the topics discussed in the workshop were the variety of types of OER materials, and the likelihood of finding duplicate OER materials--an implication of the open license associated with these materials. Discussion also included a review of characteristics and offerings of major OER publishers/collections, and basic premises upon which the concept of OER is constructed. Mr. Jardine noted that some OER creators also provide ancillary materials that include quiz questions and other learning activities that can be embedded in content management systems. Lastly, the discussion touched on the use of low-cost or otherwise affordable resources, such as library resources. The presentation and other resources may be found on the [PIE website under Resources](#).

2. Update University Class Registration System to Include Course Markings

Beginning with the Spring 2023 semester, a new course marking scheme utilizing “section attributes” within ISU’s course scheduling software system, was made available for collecting instructional material cost information. The section attribute displays instructional material costs in the university course schedule by price bands. This information can be filtered based on search criteria utilizing the following three definitions detailed in Idaho State Board of Education Policy III.U.:

- i. “Zero cost” means a total materials list price of \$0.
- ii. “Very low cost” means a total materials list price of \$1-\$30.
- iii. “Low cost” means a total materials list price of \$31-\$50.

In our first semester of implementation (Spring 2023), ISU offered 232 course sections with zero, very-low, or low-cost instructional materials. These courses served 3,694 students, with 2,196 students in the zero cost materials sections, 878 students in the very-low cost materials section, and 620 students in the low-cost material sections. The decreased instructional material costs provided a total of \$330,681 in cost savings for students during Spring 2023.

In order to calculate the total cost savings to students, it should first be noted that substantial variation exists in the average cost of college textbooks, with estimates indicating that average textbook costs range between [\\$80 - \\$150 per textbook](#). There is also significant variation in average textbook costs by discipline. To provide conservative estimates, we follow the cost-savings approach utilized by the Open Oregon Educational Resources, by assuming an average of \$100/textbook. The average cost of the OER textbook materials for each section was calculated based on the mean average of the cost materials (i.e., \$0 for zero cost, \$15.5 for very-low cost, and \$40.50 for low-cost option). With the number of students enrolled, a cost-saving of \$219,600 is estimated for students enrolled in the zero cost option ($\$100 \times 2,196$), a cost-saving of \$74,191 is estimated for students enrolled in the very-low cost option ($[\$100 - \$15.5] \times 878$), and a cost-saving of \$36,890 is estimated for students enrolled in the low-cost option ($[\$100 - \$40.50] \times 620$).

Thus, a total of **\$330,681** is estimated as the cost-savings associated with the decreased instructional material costs for students during the Spring of 2023.

3. Promote and Support the Inclusion of OER and Affordability Work in Evaluation and Promotion Guidelines

A critical part of sustaining OER in higher education is recognizing the contributions by faculty who create and adapt such resources as part of their teaching, research, or service. As one example, the College of Education is committed to honoring OER work and is beginning conversations about how to formally recognize these contributions in the promotion and tenure process. The Provost's Office supports this approach and, while recognizing that tenure and promotion criteria are generally decided upon at the college level, the Provost is nevertheless committed to encouraging college level administrators to engage in conversation with the faculty across the institution to consider how the development and implementation of OER resources might be appropriately recognized during the annual review as well as tenure and promotion process.

4. Identify Courses With High Return on Investment

To identify high return on investment opportunities, a survey of department chairs was conducted in Spring 2022 to pinpoint high-enrollment courses within departments that may be candidates for OER use in multiple sections. In the Fall of 2023, this survey data will be utilized to target courses and departments for potential OER discussions and incentives for greater implementation. Based on numerous discussions by the OER Committee, multiple section/multiple instructor high enrollment general education courses will be the top priority for the affordability stipend awards for Fall 2023.

To provide a better understanding of OER usage across campus, comprehensive in-depth data collection and analysis (e.g., drop/fail/withdrawal rates across disaggregated populations) will occur in conjunction with the new course marking (section attributes) scheme implemented this past Spring semester. This data and analysis will be shared with faculty across campus during the coming Fall semester.

5. Address Common Misconceptions about OER with Instructors and Administrators

Two "OER Basics" training opportunities were held over calendar years 2022 and 2023. These OER Basics trainings incorporated material from the Open Education Network membership provided by the Idaho State Board of Education.

ISU's Educational Technology Services (ETS) and Instructional Technology Resource Center developed a [quick reference infographic](#) to support OER development. This "getting started" reference guide provides key information with regard to searching, creating, sharing, and getting help to support OER.

6. Encourage the Adoption of Affordability Values for Faculty and Administration

[Outcomes of OER initiatives](#), including data on student impacts, were widely shared through ISU's bi-weekly Idaho State Today newsletter and presented to university and faculty leadership during Spring 2023 to increase the profile of OER work on campus.

ISU's Eli M. Oboler libraries has continued to update and expand the "[Open Educational Resources: Start Here!](#)" website. This overarching web page provides information with regard to What is OER, Find OER: Quick Start, Search Strategy, Dig Deep, Creating and Adapting OER, Using Library Resources, ISU Textbook Heroes, and ISU Pressbook Catalog. It also includes an OER information request which connects faculty directly to library support staff.

7. Continue the Proposal-Based Program for Course Material Affordability Projects

ISU Academic Affairs has provided funding for 10 affordability stipend awards for the completion of affordability projects for each of the past two academic years (2022/2023 and 2023/2024). The proposal process takes advantage of existing proposal and monetary award processes already in place at ISU's Instructional Technology Resource Center (ITRC). According to results of a survey conducted at Idaho State University in Fall 2021, ITRC assistance with course re-design is one of the most highly requested professional development opportunities related to OER, which made the ITRC a natural choice to administer this program.

Faculty who are selected to receive stipend awards are offered instructional design services throughout their search and implementation of OER in their courses. Upon completion of their OER project and after having taught the newly designed course at least once, they then meet with an instructional designer from the ITRC to review the process of integrating, creating, modifying, or adapting OER for their courses. This includes discussing the search process for appropriate materials and the work that was required to implement them. In addition, they discuss the impact their work has on students and what they plan to do in the future to further utilize OER in their teaching practices.

To raise the profile of affordability work at ISU, successful applicants are expected to give a brief presentation at the ISU Open Education Week events to be held annually in the first week of March. Metrics will be collected to measure the success of the program, which may include data on total student cost savings, increased awareness among faculty, improved course material accessibility, and other pedagogical benefits related to OER adoption.

8. Offer Regular Professional Development Related To Course Material Affordability

As stated above, within Idaho State University Libraries, the Open and Affordable Educational Resources (OAER) Committee has established the annual ISU Open Education Week. This provides an opportunity for University Libraries, the Instructional Technology Resources Center (ITRC), and the Program for Instructional Effectiveness (PIE) to offer professional development opportunities in conjunction with this event, as well as regularly throughout the year. Moving forward, ISU will also offer 30 Minute Wednesday Webinars, focused on OER each fall.