

Affordable Learning Pennsylvania (ALPa) Establishing a Statewide Textbook Affordability Project for Higher Education

Project Overview

Affordable Learning Pennsylvania (ALPa) is building a community of practice among academic libraries to advance textbook affordability for our students through programs to create awareness, build expertise to lead OER initiatives, and promote best practices and collaboration in the community. As part of this effort, PALCI has joined the Open Textbook Network (OTN), enabling librarians and faculty across our region to work together to achieve affordable learning at their institutions.

Background

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, **college textbook prices increased 88% from January 2006 to July 2016**, while during the same period, college tuition increased 63%. Textbook prices are an increasingly significant addition to the already challenging cost of tuition that leaves many students in serious debt. Some colleges and universities have instituted initiatives to address the problem of high textbook costs. Evidence of interest was expressed resoundingly at PALCI's June 2017 annual meeting, which focused on textbook affordability. Member libraries strongly supported the need and urged PALCI to organize and lead a statewide project.

Project Leadership

PALCI serves as the primary partner in providing support for project activities. The project steering committee oversees and manages the major project activities along with a project/events coordinator. A series of working groups composed of librarians from participating institutions will conduct work related to specific project activities.

The project steering committee below will lead this project and establish the detailed project plan:

- Sarah Greene, *PA Commonwealth Libraries*
- Steven Bell, *Temple University*, (steven.bell@temple.edu)
- Charlotte Droll, *Bloomsburg University*, (cdroll@bloomu.edu)
- Rebecca Miller, *Pennsylvania State University*, (rkm17@psu.edu)
- Barbara Zaborowski, *Pennsylvania Highlands Community College*, (bzabor@pennhighlands.edu)
- Jill Morris, *PALCI*, (jill@palci.org)

Other Key Roles:

- **OER Specialists:** A cohort of trained, regional experts who are ready to assist the community in advocating for OER on local campuses.
- **Campus Partners:** Library designated liaisons responsible for serving as their campus' liaison to the ALPa project, and for conducting training and advocacy efforts.
- **Faculty Champions:** Faculty who have already achieved textbook affordability in their courses through the adoption of open textbooks or participation in an affordability project will be invited to serve as project champions. Working with a project team, they will develop a training program to deliver to faculty and librarians at participating institutions. The steering committee will create a working group to manage the logistics of identifying and coordinating with the faculty.
- **Working Group Participants:** Education & Training, Communication & Outreach, Evaluation & Assessment

Major Project Activities

- *September 2018 OTN Trainings: Learn to Lead Affordable Learning Initiatives on Your Campus* - Expert OTN trainers conducted two day-long workshops for librarians who will serve as peer trainers in different regions of the state using a proven “train the trainer” strategy for delivering awareness and OER adoption training.
- *2018-19 Regional Workshops & Webinar Series:* The project will facilitate workshops around the Commonwealth and virtually to build awareness of OER and how campus OER initiatives are implemented.
- OER Summit, August 9, 2019, Penn State University, State College, PA
- *Open Textbook Network (OTN) Consortium Membership*
- *Data Collection and Reporting:* An assessment group will be created to demonstrate the impact and reach of the project. A data gathering mechanism will be put in place for participating members to share data about the number of institutional adoptions of Open Educational Resources or other affordability measures, indicating disciplines, courses, cost savings to students, and the like.
- *Planning for Sustainability:* The steering committee will develop a three-year plan identifying goals and objectives for a multi-year approach to achieving project outcomes.

Project Outcomes & Assessment

The steering committee will organize an assessment working group whose responsibility will be to establish methods to measure the project outcomes listed below.

- *Increase Pennsylvania academic library participation in open and affordable course content initiatives* assessed by the number of institutions participating in training provided through Summits and regional workshops.
 - We aim to engage at least 30 institutions over the course of this grant period. We expect 40% of those engaged institutions to plan for/adopt an open educational resources initiative over the next year.
- *Save Pennsylvania college students money on textbooks*, the primary output by which we will measure the services provided is by calculating the dollar amount saved by students at each participating institution.
 - While these cost savings may not be realized during the grant period in which the project is being organized, in the next year a measure would be an average savings of \$50,000 per participant institution. Once the number of participating institutions is determined after the first year of the project, an overall plan for statewide savings will be established.
- *Increase our target audience awareness of and knowledge about Open Educational Resources*, what they are, how to find them, and how to use them to replace costly textbooks.

For more information please visit <http://www.palci.org/alpa-about> or contact Jill Morris (jill@palci.org).