

UNH Open Educational Resources and Open Education Practices

So, OER stands for Open Educational Resources, which are classroom materials that have been released under an open license. That can include full courses, textbooks, modules, tests, videos, images, and just about anything else that you might use in a teaching and learning environment.

From a student perspective, OER is critical to driving down the cost of higher education. For UNH students especially, we look at how much it's going to cost to go here and what our costs will be once we're in the door. Textbooks and educational resources required for classes—lab books, things like that—often get forgotten.

I think that OER is about accessibility. The materials make information more accessible for our students without the cost of textbooks. It's a way to get more information into the hands of students and to provide it in a variety of different modes as well.

Open Educational Resources and practices are really important to me because I'm into teaching as a public service and for the public good. While I really value good textbooks, I also feel that textbook companies do some things to generate more money that are not beneficial to students—and one of those is the cost. So the cost saving is tremendously important to students. Some of the other benefits for instructors are that they can customize the materials to use them however they would like in their courses, giving them the most freedom to be creative in their classrooms with how they use content.

For me, it means more flexibility in my teaching. I teach languages, and I need to be able to adapt my material to my classes, but also to current news. That's why I think OER is amazing—it really enables me to focus on students individually in my classroom.

This whole process has definitely pushed me to take more risks in the types of activities and methods that I use. It's very easy as a teacher of a large lecture to fall back on lecturing, but by prioritizing open pedagogy and trying to involve and engage students in the learning process, it's forced us to be very creative and open-minded about what we might do in class. It has allowed us to be much more flexible—not just in the material we present, but also in how we teach in the classroom. Overall, that's been a really good thing, and students respond well to that.

As I became more involved and started to learn more about not just replacing the textbook with free material, but about the true spirit of open education and open access, I was very surprised by the community—the movement of open education. I found a community that was always there to help, and to me that was one of the most rewarding and surprising things. People are ready to put their work out there and share it with others, and I realized I should be doing the same.

The advice I'd give anybody who is thinking about open education is to give yourself time—time to think about things, do research, and even just sit on it for a little while. Do it! Do it, but do it in baby steps. Baby steps are what we've always said to people. It is a lot of work, so I would say get involved. Get exposure to Open Educational Resource advocates. It was really inspiring and worthwhile to meet other people doing OER projects on campus and hear how their projects

were going. It's inspiring and eye-opening. It has definitely encouraged me to take risks and move out of my box and try things that I might not have tried before.

I would ask faculty to be really open-minded as they think about OER and to talk to some of these faculty ambassadors because they're very enthusiastic when they find the quality of the materials, the various modes they can offer these materials to students, and the kinds of interactions they can generate as a result. The fact that they can help implement best practices and be part of what's going out into the open resource community is really exciting to a lot of our faculty members. Even more importantly, the faculty who have embraced this have said it really means a lot to them to be able to directly contribute to reducing costs for our students here at the university. Taking a \$400 textbook and carving out maybe two or three chapters is not the best use of students' time or resources. Being able to take open educational resources and cut, paste, and slice exactly what students are looking for—exactly what the class is talking about—that's critically important, and people realize that's OER, and it's so helpful.