



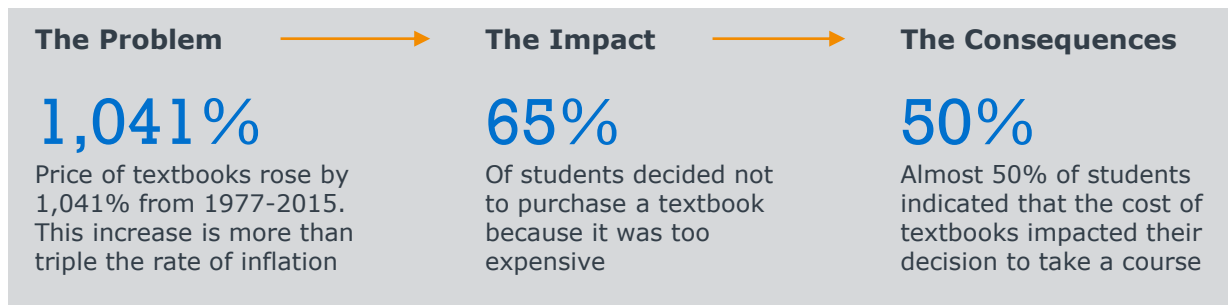
Use Open Educational Resources to Reduce Financial Barriers to Academic Success



Affordability Concerns Reach Individual Courses

Student Preferences Push Textbook Publishers to Change Business Strategy

An important component of the college affordability conversation is the rising cost of course materials. According to the College Board, the average college student should budget more than \$1,200 per year for textbooks and supplies. Similarly, an analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics data found that between 1977 and 2015 the cost of textbooks has increased by 1,041%. This rise in the price of textbooks and supporting materials has serious student success implications as students delay purchasing textbooks or even decide which course to take based on the cost of materials.



Legacy Publisher Adapts to Changing Market Reality

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“Students are demanding easier to access and more affordable higher education materials...**We've changed our business model to deliver affordable, convenient and personalized digital materials to students.** Our digital first model lowers prices for students and, over time, increases our revenues.”

John Fallon, CEO
PEARSON

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To contend with this reality, in addition to opting not to purchase books at all, students are looking to textbook rentals and secondary sellers like Amazon to meet their course needs. To adapt to these changing preferences, Pearson, one of the largest textbook publishers, recently announced a move towards a "digital-first" model. Under this new strategy, future textbook releases will be updated in digital formats rather than print editions. The average price of these e-books is expected to be \$40; this increases to \$79 to include access to all their digital learning tools. This change in strategy points to a broader shift in the college textbook market and the need for institutions to promote and facilitate the use of low-cost course materials.

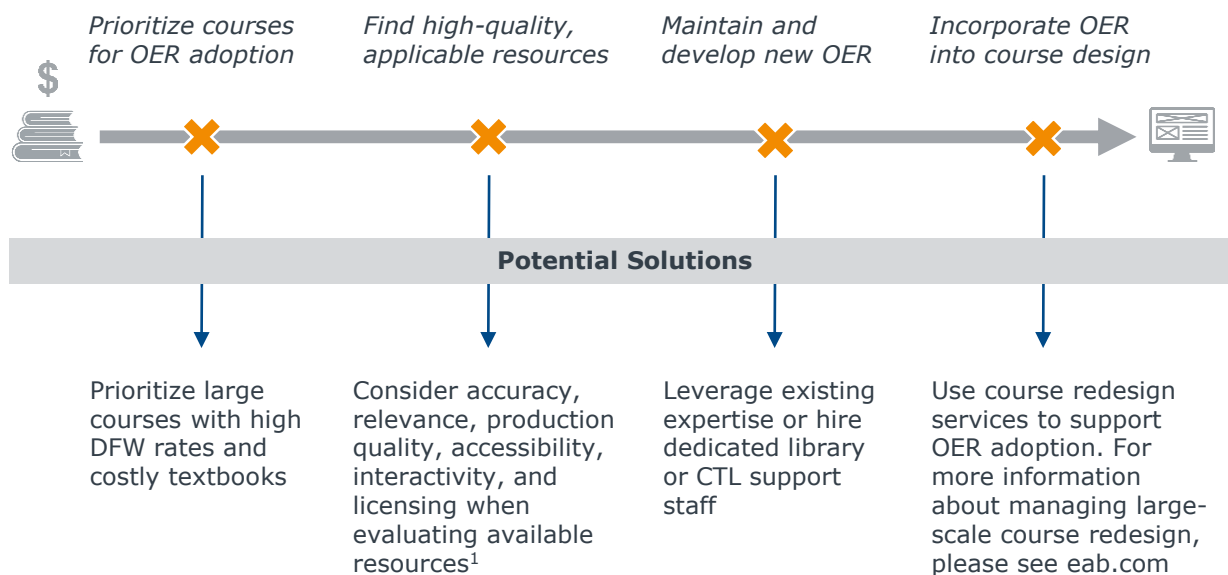
Source: Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (2014), A Study on Open Educational Resources and Their Potential for Use at Texas Colleges and Universities; Will Jarvis, "A Textbook Giant Is Going 'Digital First.' That Might Not Be Good for Affordability". *The Chronicle for Higher Education*. July 17, 2019; Tony Wan, "Pearson Signals Major Shift From Print by Making All Textbook Updates 'Digital First'", *EdSurge*, July 15, 2019; Lindsay McKenzie, "Pearson's Next Chapter", *Inside Higher Ed*, July 16, 2019; Rhea Kelly, "Pearson moves Away from Print Textbooks", *Campus Technology*, July 16, 2019; EAB interviews and analysis.

Overcoming the OER Adoption Challenge

Open Educational Resources Increase Equity, But Require Targeted Support

Replacing expensive textbooks with open educational resources (OER) is one way to solve this problem; however, barriers to wide-scale adoption persist. For example, institutions often struggle to identify which courses to prioritize for adoption support. Faculty who are interested in new course materials struggle to identify high-quality, discipline and level-specific resources. Even when high-quality, applicable resources exist, faculty often need additional support to redesign their courses to fully incorporate the new material into their teaching practice. On the other hand, those who opt to create their own material struggle with the cost of maintaining and developing OER.

Key Decision Points Create Barriers to Large-Scale OER Adoption



To overcome these hurdles, institutions often prioritize large enrollment courses with costly textbooks. Many faculty and staff use existing rubrics to check the accuracy, relevance, and accessibility of available resources before including them in their courses. Some institutions leverage the expertise in their libraries and centers for teaching and learning (CTL) or hire dedicated OER support staff to help facilitate campus-wide adoption. To fully realize the potential pedagogical benefits of OER use, faculty can work with their CTLs to redesign their courses. This can take many forms: faculty may need to redesign courses to use non-textbook materials or to create a cohesive narrative around disparate learning materials. However, the extent to which some of these challenges inhibit broader adoption often depends on the approach used, available resources, and the level of the course.

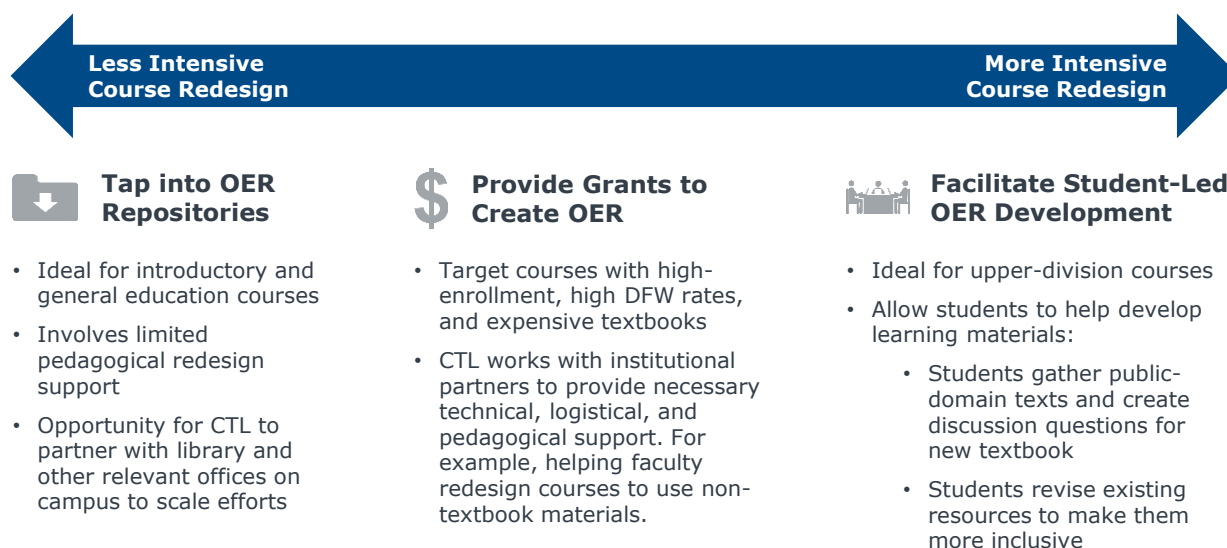
1) For more see Achieve [Rubrics for Evaluating Open Educational Resource Objects](#)

Source: Nicole Karpel and Bruce Schneider, "OER Cost Assessment Strategies", Educause, December 10, 2018; EAB interviews and analysis.

Cross-Unit Collaboration to Support the Use of OER

Potential Approaches Can Achieve Multiple Student Success Goals

There are three main ways institutions and faculty adopt OER. Often faculty browse OER repositories like Openstax and MERLOT to replace an expensive textbook with a free alternative. This approach is ideal for introductory and general education courses where there is less need for content customization and course redesign. In cases where existing OER is insufficient, some institutions use provost or system-level grant programs to incentivize faculty to create new resources. Once faculty proposals are accepted, the CTL and other relevant offices provide the necessary technical, logistical, and pedagogical support services.



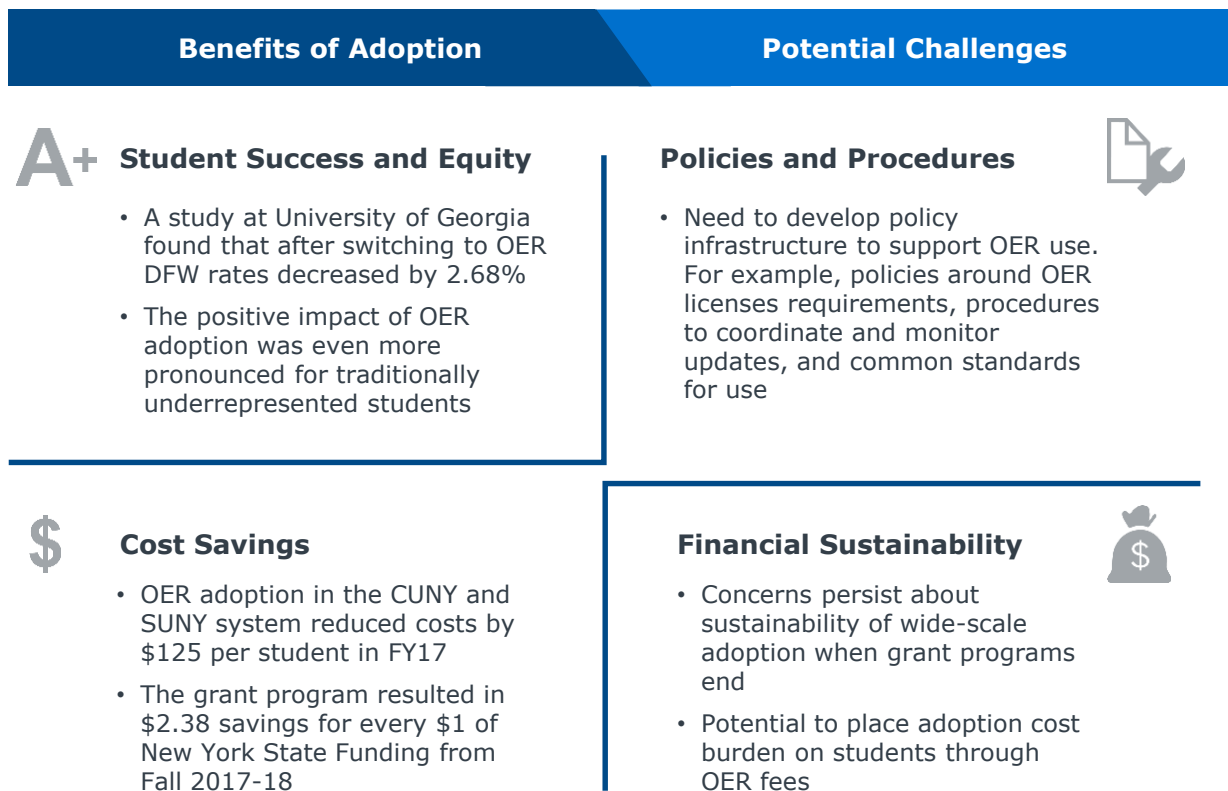
In the University System of Maryland the mini-grant program ranges from \$500 to \$2,500 depending on the intensity of the project. For example, the system offers smaller grants to facilitate the adoption or adaptation of existing OER while offering larger grants to create new OER or for faculty to develop a plan to scale OER adoption. Some instructors are also experimenting with student-led OER development, where they work with students in their course to develop learning materials. For example, a professor at Plymouth State University worked with her students to create a new open access textbook for her American Literature course. Students supported her by gathering public-domain texts, writing introductions, and creating discussion questions and assignments to accompany the text. Similarly, at the University of Edinburgh students revised existing OER in the medical education curriculum to add materials related to LGBTQ health. This approach is ideal for upper-division courses and helps faculty incorporate experiential learning opportunities into their courses.

Source: CUNY (2018), New York State Open Educational Resources Funds, CUNY year One Report; Christina Hendricks, "Students' Vital Role in OER, SUNY OER Services, SUNY; *Inside Higher Ed*, December 13, 2017; University System of Maryland, Call for Proposals: 2019 M.O.S.T. High-impact OER Mini-Grant Program; EAB interviews and analysis.

Promises and Pitfalls of OER

Large Upfront Investments Needed to Reduce Student Costs, Improve Outcomes

As institutions consider promoting the adoption of OER, it is important to delve into the impact and challenges of such efforts. Undoubtedly, OER adoption can reduce the cost of course materials for students. However, little research has been done on the student success impact of OER. One study at University of Georgia found that the use of OER was associated with a 2.68% decrease in DFW rates, 5.5% increase in the number of A grades, and a 7.73% increase in the number of A-minus grades. This effect was more pronounced for underrepresented students. The authors posit that this positive result is because with the use of OER students have access to materials on the first day of class.



Despite the potential benefits of OER use there are some challenges with widescale use. Faculty often underestimate the time needed to identify, adapt, or create new material which can disincentivize adoption. Moreover, most programs facilitating the use of OER depend on internal or external grant programs – prompting concerns about how to sustain momentum once those programs and targeted funding end. Some institutions have considered creating OER student fees to help subsidize the cost of adoption which would push the financial burden of learning materials back on students. Similarly, as institutional leaders consider how textbook usage shifts on their campus, they need to develop policies and procedures to govern the use of alternative materials and monitor necessary updates.

Source: Lindsay McKenzie, "Free Digital Textbooks vs. Purchased Commercial textbooks", *Inside Higher Ed*, July 16, 2018; New York State Open Educational Resources Funds, CUNY Year One Report, November 2018; Jean Dimeno, "Saving Students Money", *Inside Higher Ed*, June 28, 2017; Jeffrey R. Young, "Free Textbooks Are Not Always Free: New Study Analyzes OER's Costs to Colleges", *EdSurge*, Oct 18, 2018; Griffiths, R., Gardner, S., Lundh, P., Shear, L., Ball, A., Mislevy, J., Wang, S., Desrochers, D., Staisloff, R. (2018). Participant Experiences and Financial Impacts: Findings from Year 2 of Achieving the Dream's OER Degree Initiative. Menlo Park, CA: SRI International.



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