Tennessee Textbook Affordability Task Force

THEC convened the Tennessee Textbook Affordability Task Force in Spring 2020 to increase equity of opportunity by decreasing textbook costs for students through strategic use of technology and partnerships. Learn more about task force objectives, membership, and efforts here.

Context and Opportunity

The coronavirus has accelerated the momentum of the Textbook Affordability Task Force, which has participation from every public university, community college, and both systems. Institutions and systems are working to:

- Capitalize on increased faculty investment in assessing and improving course materials and digital access given the transition to online and remote instruction,
- Coordinate and share faculty training and Open Educational Resources (OER), and
- Improve academic success and completion for all students by containing textbook costs, with demonstrated gains for low-income students, rural students, and students of color.

Deliverables To-Date

The Task Force Steering Committee identified five focus areas with working groups supporting each: Accessibility, Faculty Awareness and Development, Marketing and Sustainability, State Benchmarking, and Funding. Since March, the Taskforce has:

- Launched the Textbook Affordability listserv to share resources,
- Created a Textbook Affordability website as a front door for statewide initiatives,
- Benchmarked state and national practices and repository options,
- Identified leading metrics for comparison across the state, and
- Compiled effective practices and strategies for accessibility in Open Educational Resources (OER).

Current Projects and Next Steps

- Working groups are creating faculty awareness and training content including faculty-to-faculty videos, a fall OER webinar, and "train the trainer" workshops for campus teaching and learning centers.
- The Steering Committee is pursuing funding from the state and foundations for faculty development efforts, video editing, and a Tennessee OER repository.

Tennessee Repository for Open Educational Resources (OER)

For Tennessee to effectively share content and leverage the institution and system investments in content creation, the next step is a statewide repository. An ideal repository solution would (1) store OER-based course materials enabling educators across the state to search (by course/discipline), access, and import materials for use in their own courses; and (2) provide basic direction on where OER materials can be discovered through broader repositories.

The Task Force has identified the following priorities for selecting a repository:

- **Ease of Use.** Site navigability and the ability to find and efficiently import materials into multiple Learning Management Systems (Blackboard, Canvas, D2L) is important for faculty implementation.
- **Autonomy**. A Tennessee repository serves as both a front porch for Tennessee instructors and ensures full access to data.
- **Data Insight**. Ownership of data will allow departments, colleges, institutions, systems, and the state to assess course material quality, usage, and student success indicators. The data can be used to drive continuous improvement and sustainability of OER as an affordability and student success strategy.