Open Education Initiatives in Kansas Higher Education

Executive Summary and Report

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Executive Summary

In February 2021, the KBOR OER Steering Committee distributed a survey to all public higher education institutions in Kansas. This survey was created to gather baseline information on how open educational resources (OER) are currently being implemented across the various colleges and universities in the state.

After reviewing the responses to the survey, major findings were identified:

A majority have a policy, program, or committee to support OER. Many that do not are exploring the possibility of adding a policy, program, or committee.

7 of 7 Universities, 8 of 15 community colleges, 0 of 5 technical colleges have a policy, program or committee to support OER use. Among those who did not have one established, all but 3 of 13 indicated they are exploring the possibility of adding a policy, program, or committee to support OER.

A limited number of institutions have OER incentive/grant programs or funding to support transitioning to OER.

All Universities along with Butler County Community College and Johnson County Committee College were the institutions that reported having OER incentive/grant programs or other funding.

Time, resources, and awareness are challenges to OER adoption. Funding/support was the most common support or service indicated to overcome these barriers.

Common challenges to OER adoption reported were lack of time, resources and awareness. Funding/support was the most commonly indicated support or service to overcome these challenges.

Introduction

Open educational resources (OER) "are teaching, learning and research materials in any medium – digital or otherwise – that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits no-cost access, use, adaptation and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions[1]." That is, OER include built in permission to retain, reuse, revise, remix, and redistribute the material[2].

Since 1967, the cost of educational books and supplies (which is primarily textbook costs) has increased over 2000% compared to less than 800% increase in the overall consumer price index.[3, 4]. The Consumer Price Index reports that the cost of college course textbooks increased 88 percent from 2006 to 2016, compared to an increase of 21 percent for all items[5]. Because of their high cost, many students forgo the purchase of textbooks due to limited funds, putting them at a disadvantage. In 2019, the Kansas Board of Regents Student Advisory Committee conducted a survey to demonstrate the burden of textbook costs on students at Regent Institutions. They found that 48 percent of 6,474 regent institutions' students indicated they did not purchase or rent a required textbook in the spring semester. Seventeen percent said they did not purchase or rent three or more required textbooks[6]. With OER, all students get equal and immediate access to educational materials.

The cost of textbooks is having a deeper impact on college students though. A 2018 survey of 1,651 former and current students found that "Thirty percent of survey respondents said they had forgone a trip home to see family, 43 percent said they skipped meals, 31 percent registered for fewer classes, and 69 percent worked a job during the school year -- all to save money for books[7]."

There is also evidence that student success is positively impacted by replacing commercial textbooks and materials with OER. In a recent large analysis, there was a significant 29 percent decrease in the risk of college students withdrawing from open textbook courses (78.593 students) compared to commercial textbook comparison courses (100,012 students)[8]. Learning outcomes were equal between the courses. Students in the University of Georgia system (21,822 students), OER course students' final GPA was significantly higher, and DFW rates (students earning a grade of D, F, or withdrawing from a course) were decreased, compared to non-OER courses. Further, they found that the OER course student improvements in GPA and DFW rates were greater among Pell recipient, part-time, and non-white students that had lower rates of student success[9]. Content tailored to a course by the instructor is a contributor to student success. After financial savings and easy access, customization was the third most cited benefit by K-State students[10]. Several other states like Colorado, Georgia,

Oregon, California and New York have been pushing OER implementation for years and students in their systems are reaping the benefits.

Who we are?

To encourage OER use across public institutions in the state of Kansas, the OER Steering Committee was created in 2019 and is made up of representatives from all Kansas public higher education institutions who are interested in learning more and expanding OER use across our system.

We understand that OER are not the only answer to the problem of expensive course materials; however, we would like to increase awareness of these resources and the work being done to make them better for students and instructors in Kansas.

This survey was created to review and quantify the work being done to support OER adoption and creation across the state. We hope that in future years this data will help show the impact of OER Steering Committee sponsored programming and initiatives.

Participants

The survey was sent to the chief academic officer at each institution for them to direct it to the appropriate respondents at each institution to accurately respond to the survey questions.

Twenty-eight of the 33 public higher education institutions in Kansas completed the survey. Respondents include 16 community colleges, 4 technical colleges, and 7 Universities and the University of Kansas Medical Center. A full list of the institutions who replied to the survey can be found in Appendix B.

Results

15 of 28 of responding institutions indicated that they have a policy, program or committee to support OER use on campus. Breaking out by institution types, 7 of 7 Universities (the University of Kansas Medical Center is considered its own type of institution, and is not aggregated with the others), 8 of 15 community colleges (Bulter, Highland, Barton, Johnson, Kansas City Kansas, Seward, Pratt, and Coffeyville), 0 of 5 technical colleges have a policy, program or committee to support OER use. Among those who did not have one established, all but 3 of 13, along with the University of

Kansas Medical Center, indicated they are exploring the possibility of adding a policy, program, or committee to support OER.

Respondents ranked the role of different institutional entities played in coordinating institutional OER initiatives (Figure 1). Library and administration were the most highly ranked. Some other notable partners noted were information technology and foundation.
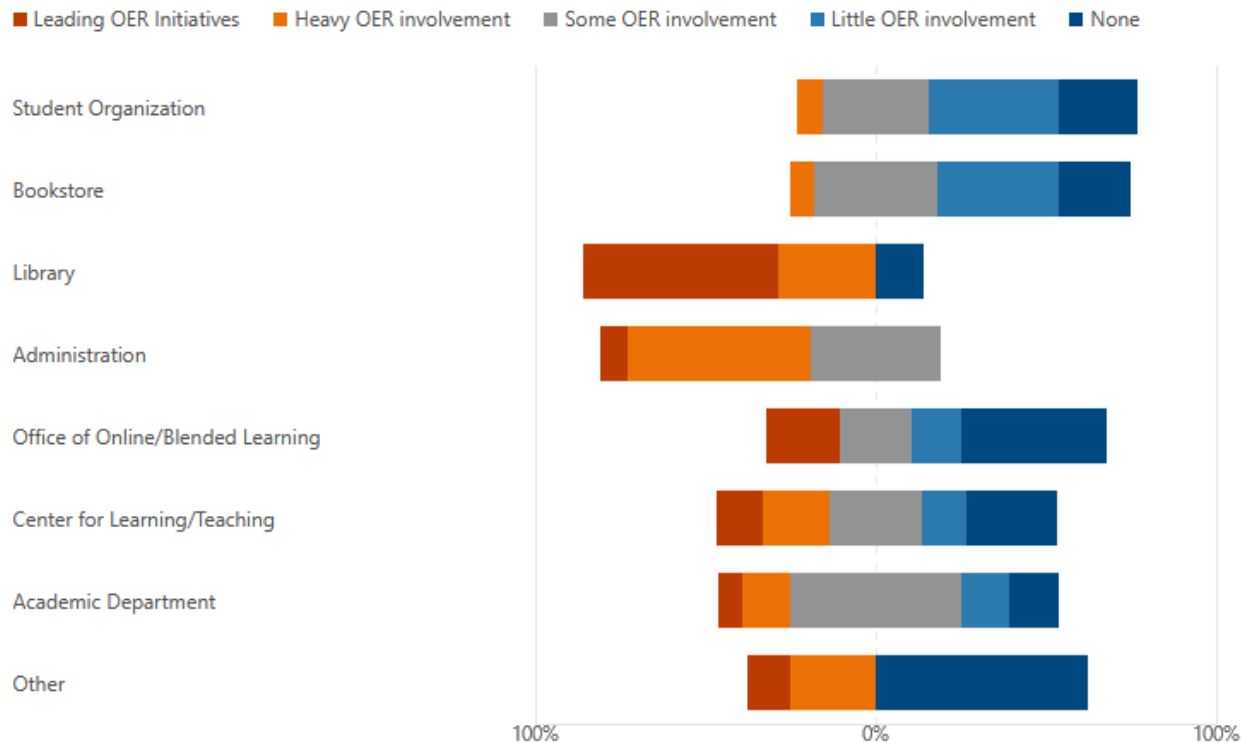

Figure 1. Reported ranking of roles institutional entities played in coordinating institutional OER initiatives

Among the practices that were reported to be in place, OER Committee/Working Group, Instructional design support and professional development were the most commonly available (Figure 2). All Universities along with Butler County Community College and Johnson County Committee College were the institutions that reported having OER incentive/grant programs or other funding.
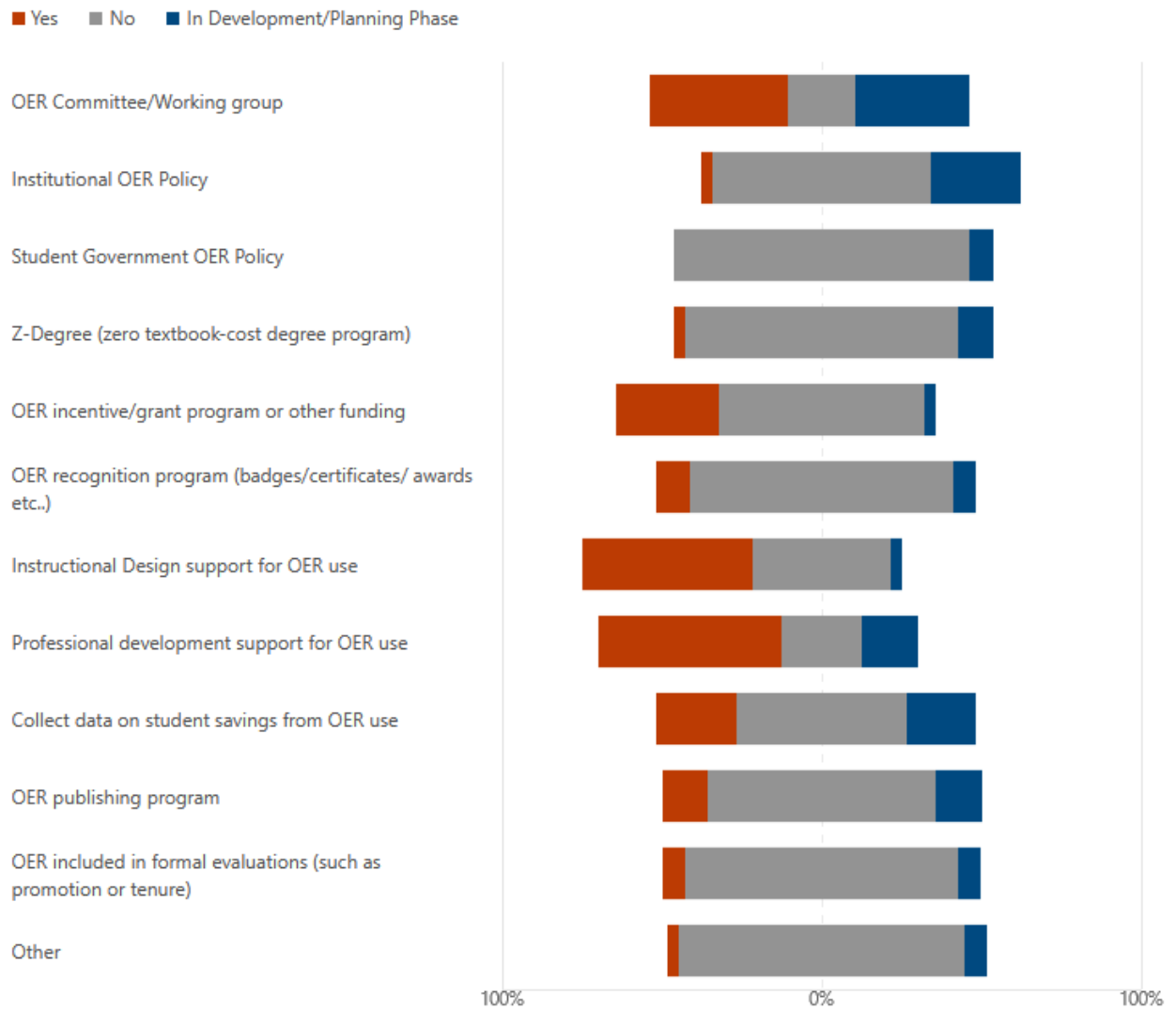
Figure 2. Reported practices currently in place to support OER

The library, bookstore and administrators were reported to be more aware of OER than students and faculty (Figure 3).
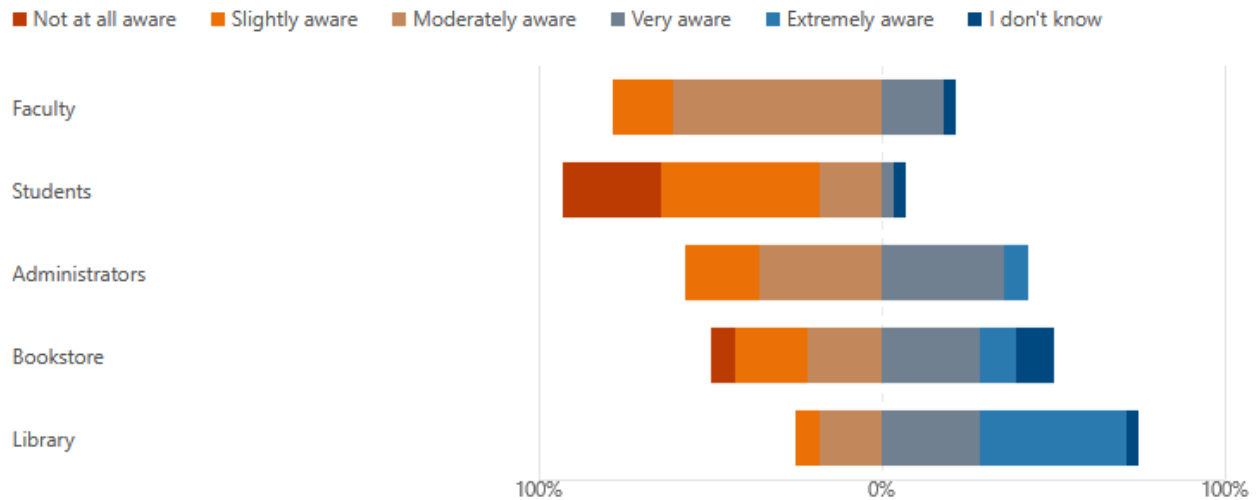
Figure 3. Reported Awareness of OER

Breaking this down by different institution types, reported faculty awareness was similar between Universities and community colleges, but slightly lower at technical colleges (Table 1). Reported student awareness was low and similar among different types of institutions. Reported administrator awareness was higher at community colleges. Reported bookstore awareness was higher at Universities than community colleges and technical colleges. Reported library awareness was higher at community colleges than technical colleges, and much higher at Universities.

Table 1. Mean OER Awareness by institution types

Institution Types	Faculty	Students	Administrators	Bookstore	Library
Universities	2.1	1.3	2.1	2.7	3.7
Community Colleges	2.1	0.9	2.5	2.1	3.1
Technical Colleges	1.6	0.8	2	1.8	2.4

Calculated by assigning scores as follows for responses: 0 - Not aware at all, 1 - Slightly aware, 2 - Moderately aware, 3- Very Aware, 4 - Extremely aware, I don't know - no score assigned.

The reported percentage of instructors at institutions that are utilizing OER as their primary course resource in at least one of their courses is relatively low, with less than 1% and 1-5% the most common responses (Figure 4).

| None | less than 1% | 1-5% | 6-10% | More than 10% | I don't know |

Number of faculty
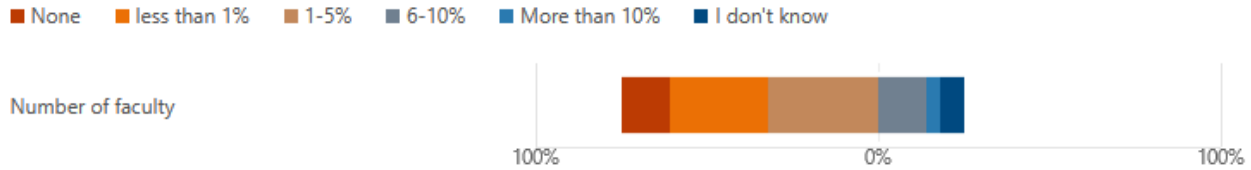
100%   0%   100%

Figure 4. Reported percentage of instructors at institutions that are utilizing OER as their primary course resource in at least one of their courses

5 out of 7 Universities have implemented OER/free/low-cost course marking, the other 2 and University of Kansas Medical Center indicate they are in-development/planning. Only Barton Community College, Butler County Community College and Johnson County Community College have implemented OER/free/low-cost course marking among community and technical colleges. Three Community Colleges (Colby, Independence, Kansas City Kansas) reported that OER/free/low-cost course marking is in development/planning.

Common challenges reported by Universities were lack of time both from faculty and those who lead initiatives. Lack of resources to support grants/awards to do this work to convert to use OERs. Faculty awareness, publisher representatives, commercial homework systems/ancillary materials were also referenced multiple times as barriers. Full reported Universities reported challenges can be found in Appendix C. Time, awareness, and willingness seem to be common barriers at community and technical colleges. Full reported challenges for community and technical colleges can be found in Appendices D and E, respectively.

Among support or services referenced, Universities most commonly reported that funding/support would help overcome challenges to OER use. Full Universities responses can be found in Appendix F. Community colleges also reported funding/support along with education/training would help with overcoming challenges to OER use. Full community colleges responses can be found in Appendix G. Technical colleges reported that education/training would help with overcoming challenges to OER use. Full technical colleges responses can be found in Appendix H.

Conclusion

These survey results will help inform our approach, activities, and strategies as we seek to continue to support the growth and development of OER throughout the system. We greatly appreciate the time taken to complete the survey and look forward to conducting similar surveys in the future to understand OER progress and changes throughout the system.

Appendix A

Works Cited

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Appendix B

List of Institutions that Participated in the Survey

1. Allen Community College
2. Barton Community College
3. Butler Community College
4. Cloud County Community College
5. Coffeyville Community College
6. Colby Community College
7. Emporia State University
8. Flint Hills Technical College
9. Fort Hays State University
10. Fort Scott Community College
11. Highland Community College
12. Hutchinson Community College
13. Independence Community College
14. Johnson County Community College
15. Kansas City Kansas Community College
16. Kansas State University
17. Labette Community College
18. Manhattan Area Technical College
19. Neosho County Community College
20. Northwest Kansas Technical College
21. Pittsburg State University
22. Pratt Community College
23. Salina Area Technical College
24. Seward County Community College
25. University of Kansas
26. University of Kansas Medical Center
27. Washburn University
28. Wichita State University

Appendix C

Universities reported challenges

- Time to convert courses, use of commercial homework systems with access fees
- We rolled out the initiative immediately before the pandemic and faculty have been scrambling to adapt their courses to remote delivery, not looking for OER sources. We anticipate greater ability to advance the initiative as things return to some kind of normal.
- Sustainable resources to fund faculty development and to invest in infrastructure.
- Incentive/compensation -The majority of faculty are aware of Open Educational Resources but lack the time to locate and/or adapt the materials to fit their course. Availability -OER options are limited for some disciplines and for upper level courses. Ancillary Materials -OERs often lack ancillary materials which dampers faculty interest. Homework Management Platforms -Few OERs offer software to help manage course work. Awareness –Most, but not all, faculty are aware of OER. Publisher Representatives –Publisher representatives make it easier to find traditional materials. OER, at our institution, is well supported but we encourage faculty to come to us. We do not reach out to individual faculty members unless they have expressed interest.
- Awareness, time, resources/funding, staff time, logistics
- Limited staffing: I feel we're doing as much as we presently can in the Libraries' with our current staffing level and competing obligations, especially during the pandemic. Doing more will require more people to do it. Limited fiscal resources: we've been very lucky with fundraising to support OER Grants and other projects, but more funding is helpful, especially if we could offer larger "scale" grants for large programs of instruction. A $1000 adoption grant just doesn't begin to address the labor of redesigning a complex program that enrolls hundreds or thousands of students per academic year. Capacity: instructors are balancing a ton right now and have limited additional capacity to think about OER, even when they're curious. Course releases for instructors to adopt/create OER would be incredibly useful, but those cost money. Lack of awareness: a growing number of instructors are aware of cost issues and their impacts, of OER as a solution, where to find OER, how to implement, etc. but we're a long way from universal awareness, and further from universal understanding. Unknown quality/efficacy: instructors very reasonably want to know if OER are of sufficient quality/efficacy. OER aren't magically high or low quality, but nor are commercial materials. This is an education/engagement issue. Communication: it's hard to get the word out in a way that instructors see it and engage with it, especially given misc. current challenges. Lack of available resources: the volume of OER is growing rapidly, but not always exactly where it may be needed (i.e. specific

content or level); this is an external problem. Evaluation: unknown how using OER might impact evaluation (annual eval, P&T, etc.)
- Ongoing faculty concerns about quality. Ongoing faculty concerns about availability within their subject area

Appendix D

Community colleges reported challenges

- The financial, professional, and cultural conversion to widespread OER adoption.
- Because community college faculty typically have heavy teaching loads, OER selection and development time is at a premium. Technical skill is often generational, so established faculty may be reluctant to adopt OER as individuals. Also commercial publishers use current terminology to market competitive subscription programs. For example, McGraw Hill's Inclusive Access is neither universally inclusive nor accessible, but it does provide digital texts at a lower cost than conventional textbooks. Faculty adopt these texts because they are on trend and and reduce prices for students, but they present disadvantages when compared to OER.
- Time
- Faculty acceptance of OER as a quality textbook option. Existing lease agreements for textbook rental
- Time
- Faculty concerns about quality and ancillary study materials and time spent incorporating OER. Number of adjuncts on campus and variances in control over course materials between departments.
- Currently our Bookstore is primarily a loaner program, meaning we don't have significant costs for students. The other barrier is simply that is unfamiliar to the faculty and so it is not on their radar for selection.
- Financial incentives for faculty adoption. Additional staff to support initiative.
- Lack of knowledge and willingness to change by faculty
- Fears about accessibility and quality of the materials
- Awareness of using OER and how to get materials. We are just starting the OER initiative on our campus by attending the OER webinars and train the trainer held on February 10th, which have been extremely helpful.
- Time, interest, and awareness hinder adoption
- Gaining interest from faculty
- Instructional materials and LMS integration
- Faculty becoming comfortable with the format.

Appendix E

Technical colleges reported challenges

- Faculty time to research the benefits of this for their program. Most technical programs would have limited resources available.
- Development of materials.
- Lack of knowledge and curriculum alignment.
- Time to Review the OER texts, Navigating OER systems
- Building faculty interest

Appendix F

Universities support or services that could help you overcome the identified challenges

- Course release time for faculty to work on converting courses, server space and technical support for implementation of open homework systems that provide auto-grading
- A fee model is currently in place; although the Task force is revisiting that model to try to make it more robust
- Funding to incentivize faculty to locate, adapt, or create their own OER textbook/course/ancillary materials. Membership to an OER organization to help increase OER adoption.
- Financial support, platform availability, training that is useful across institutions (how to use platforms etc.), logistics (automation)
- Funding to support OER, either through specific positions or other support (grants, release time, review workshops, awards, etc.). Help with communication, KBOR making support for OER clear, institutions affirming that, in a way that respects academic freedom and varying opportunity levels; signal boosting workshops and learning opportunities, facilitating cross-unit collaboration. Recommended reward structures for instructors; what incentives are most valued by instructors such that they are both empowered and attracted to use OER if/when it meets their needs?
- We are seeking to increase engagement within our campus OER grant program
- Webinars and training

Appendix G

Community colleges support or services that could help you overcome the identified challenges

- Hard data showing savings to both students and the institution; Ease of resource creation; Hard data showing improvement in retention because OER have been adopted.
- Beyond the need for individual faculty OER education, training, and support is the need to develop living and variable, but outcomes-based OER for elective statewide use in general education transfer courses. Such course materials would be foundational. They need not limit academic freedom if they are extensive, flexible, and augmentable; by definition, their status as OER would preserve academic freedom. If statewide teams created such materials, 2- and 4-year faculty and students would benefit from their content and technical development, and Kansas would have customizable, low-cost alternatives to publisher subscription programs.
- Grant to pay for the development by faculty
- Education for faculty on adoption and use.
- Demonstration of student preferences for OER. Departmental support for full curricular materials (books, PowerPoints, quizzes, etc.) as an adoption option.
- If our institution is unable to sustain the loaner program, I think that the administration would be more interested in supporting faculty incentives to adopt OER.
- Membership in to more OER libraries, Pressbook subscription for facilitate faculty textbook creation/remix. More access to staff leading OER initiatives in institutions who have been successful.
- Additional trainings for contact people and/or faculty
- More education
- A strategic initiative may help overcome challenges as well as buy in from faculty.
- continuing to make the OER workshops available for faculty
- regular periodic updates to instructor materials.
- OER presentations and reviews with faculty of the material. I've done two presentations so far this semester with a third scheduled for this afternoon. Later today, 4.21.2021, faculty will present a review of one OER covering a course that they currently teach.

Appendix H

Technical colleges support or services that could help you overcome the identified challenges

- The creation of a committee dedicated to helping faculty prepare appropriate material while keeping required learning outcomes clearly in mind. General education faculty have further obstacles to consider, primarily the focus on transfer and articulation.
- Need to be identified.
- Professional Development to help with faculty awareness of OER's in general and navigating any systems for reviewing/using OER's
- The KBOR webinars have been helpful.