Open Educational Resources and Textbook Affordability

As a first-generation student, buying textbooks was brand new to me. After a confusing and tiring process of searching websites and stores for affordable materials, I finally settled on third party sources to buy my Fall 2019 textbooks used. I am a low-income student, and while the one hundred and fifty or so dollars I spent may not seem like much, this expense on top of other college expenses was hardly manageable. In an interview session with a few fellow Hanover students, composed of mostly first year students, they agreed that the prices for many textbooks is unreasonable, complaining of price points as high as two hundred and fifty dollars for one book. Although there is the option of renting your materials, this is not the case for all books, and it is sometimes cheaper to just outright buy the book instead, with the hope of resale at the end of the semester. This process is advertised by the Hanover College Bookstore, but buyback isn't always an option, and the resale covers only a fraction of what was originally spent. In short, at the end of the textbook buying season, students are left tired and hoping for a better way.   --Andi

Let's talk about Open Educational Resources (OER).

- Open Educational Resources are available at little or no cost and include textbooks and course readings, assessment tools, lab activities, and more.
- Many of these resources are issued under Creative Commons licenses that are faculty-friendly and allow for reuse and the ability to modify and re-package their content under certain, clearly stated conditions.
- These types of materials expand the reach of educational material and guarantee that *all* learners have equal access to a more affordable education.

For more Information:

- Interested in adopting or reviewing open source materials? Contact Reiley Noe at noe@hanover.edu.
- Duggan Library's website includes an Open Educational Resources LibGuide, developed by Kelly Joyce along with Public Academic Libraries of Indiana (PALNI), Hanover College's library consortia.

Who is using OERs?

"The PALNI webinar really opened my eyes both to the challenge a sizeable fraction of our students face in just finding the money to buy textbooks and to the opportunities that using open-source material can provide. It is about more than just offering a free textbook. I also got ideas for some engaging assignments in class such as asking my students to each write a section in an on-line "Wiki" we created to provide information on energy storage technologies. Even if you are certain you want to stick with traditional textbooks, you should examine the possibilities for augmenting those textbooks with free on-line resources. Since it does not cost your students any money, there is little to lose from requiring them to read a chapter or solve some problems from an on-line textbook." - Jeff Phillips, Engineering

"Anyone who is facing an imminent textbook adoption should participate in the PALNI workshop. Before I participated in the workshop, I was not aware of just how many open source resources exist. In some cases, there are even two texts that might be useful for a particular course. I found this to be true for one of the courses I teach; so I had half of the class read one text and the other half read a second text. This allowed me to set up a model for class discussion where one group of students "taught" the material to the other group. It brought substance and diversity to our class discussions. And it taught students a valuable lesson in critical thinking— namely that there are multiple paths to the truth and several perspectives on any given subject matter. Another advantage of some open source texts is that they are modular—chapters can be taught and/or organized in any order that is desirable for the instructor. Open source texts represent another way that we can shape learning tools to fit individual learners rather than assuming that one size fits all. Being able to access texts on computers and devices brings a world of learning to our students." - Bill Bettler, Communication