

Six Steps to OER Success by Keirsten Eberts at Trine University

In 2019, Trine University's online college also known as TrineOnline had zero courses utilizing Open Educational Resources (OER). Over the last two years, we have incorporated OER into over 50 courses and created two Z degrees. We have been asked how we have accomplished this in such a short amount of time. We would like to share our tips for success. We hope other institutions and faculty will follow suit because in the end we are not just saving students thousands of dollars, we are also ensuring that course materials align to course learning outcomes ultimately increasing student mastery of essential course and program outcomes.

Step One: Identify the key stakeholders and form a committee

If your institution is not already using Open Educational Resources, the first step you should take is to identify key stakeholders and form an OER committee. Trine University's Vice President of Academic Affairs was the leader of the OER initiative at Trine University. In December 2018, he started by forming a committee of key stakeholders on campus to lead the OER initiative. Two years later, this committee still exists on campus and meets once per month. This committee has been important to our success. This committee looks at all OER initiatives happening on campus and can provide a holistic view of the OER success at Trine.

Step Two: Develop a rationale

After you have built administrative support and formed a committee, your next step should be to develop your institution's rationale. At Trine, our rationale was to save students money. Total savings for the Trine student body reaches nearly \$200,000 per semester, with just the current OER courses. Our second rationale was to design courses around the learning outcomes and not around textbooks. Utilizing OER encourages faculty to find course materials that help students master learning outcomes.

Step Three: Advocate for financial incentives

Incentivizing faculty to use OER has been the biggest key to our success. Without the financial incentive it would have been more difficult to build faculty buy-in. At Trine we pay faculty \$500 if they incorporate Open Educational Resources into their class. However, in order to receive the stipend, the course cannot have any student paid materials. Additionally, we encourage faculty to apply for the [\\$500 PALNI Course Redesign Grant](#).

Step Four: Train faculty and build OER into the course development process

Another important step is the training we provide to faculty. We provide ongoing OER training and did not just provide training at the beginning of our campus OER initiative. Early on, we hosted a PALSave workshop on our campus for all faculty to attend. Today we provide multiple internal training opportunities each year for all faculty on Open Educational Resources. Training is important, but it is also important to build a relationship with your campus librarian and to identify an OER champion in your department.

We found that our campus librarian is a wealth of knowledge on OER and she also has a general understanding of copyright laws. However, she services the entire university and is not dedicated to our TrineOnline department. We felt it was important for our department to identify an OER champion. Our Director of Instructional Design and Development has become our department's expert on OER. She recently completed the [Creative Commons Certification Course](#) and now serves as a resource for all faculty in our department and serves as the OER committee chair at Trine.

We also added OER to our processes. In TrineOnline we have created a course development process. A course that has gone through a full development then becomes the master course and is the course shell for all future sections. We recognize that this model is not the same at every institution, but we believe it is important to develop a process for incorporating OER into curriculum. We will share our process, but your process may look different.

We have found that faculty are initially reluctant to use OER in their courses if they have no prior experience with OER. Generally, this is not because they do not like

OER, but more because they do not understand OER or where to find resources. To help with this we have created an OER Scavenger Hunt. We require all course developers to complete this scavenger hunt as the first part of the course development process. A faculty might say they have no interest in using OER, but after going through this scavenger hunt they often find resources that are a great fit for their class and may change their mind. This has been a way to gently nudge faculty into the OER direction we want to go. However, we do not require faculty to use OER in their courses.

Scavenger Hunt Open-Ended Questions:

1. Please share the course code and name. What materials are currently used? If the course is using a textbook, how much does the textbook cost?
2. Locate at least two sites that offer OER resources that align to the course learning outcomes. Please share those sites.
3. Research to find OER materials that align to the course learning outcomes. This could include textbooks, articles, simulations, infographics, tests, software, videos, and other digital assets, all with Creative Commons Licensing. Share up to three OER resources that you found. Please include the links to the resources.
4. Based on this research, which OER resources are you going to use in the course? Why?

Another important step in our development process is the alignment of materials, activities, and assessments to the course learning outcomes. We use a course map in each of our online courses that shows the alignment between these items. Using course mapping we have been able to demonstrate the connection between OER and the learning outcomes.

We encourage faculty to use a variety of instructional materials and when locating Open Education Resources for their courses ask them to not just find one textbook and call it done. We ask them to look for OER and other materials that align with each week's title and learning outcomes. This could be two chapters from one book for week one, three chapters from a different book for week two, two articles for week three, one article and a video for week four and so on. The benefit of OER is it allows faculty to

creatively design their course in a way that is meaningful to student mastery of the course learning outcomes. Each weekly learning activity, material and assessment should align with one or more course learning outcomes.

Step Five: Recognize the importance of copyright

We found that some faculty believe that OER can be used without any limitations since they are free or that all content on the internet is free to use without obtaining permission from the author. If the resource does not have a Creative Commons License, it is generally not OER. Faculty can link to outside resources safely; however, they need to read the terms and conditions for each resource they are not paying to use. Most websites include an acceptable use policy, many organizations will explicitly state that their content cannot be linked, shared or distributed without expressed written consent. An important step in our OER implementation process was recognizing the importance of copyright and having conversations with our librarian, who is knowledgeable on copyright permissions. This is not intended to be legal advice on copyright laws, however OER and other resources must be used ethically and responsibly.

Step Six: Track the effectiveness of OER at your institution

The final step is to track the effectiveness of OER at your institution and to continue to build excitement around OER and encourage collaboration. This is an ongoing initiative at our institution. To track the effectiveness of OER, newly developed online courses go through a [course content evaluation](#) and a [course design evaluation](#). These evaluations are completed by faculty peers. The content evaluation is completed by a Subject Matter Expert (SME) and the design evaluation is complete by a faculty who has completed the Quality Matters Peer Reviewer Course (PRC). As a Quality Matters institution many of our processes have been designed around Quality Matters Rubric.

We also encourage you to ask for feedback! We frequently ask faculty and students for their feedback. Feedback has helped us with future trainings and assessing buy-in. We encourage faculty to share their experiences in implementing OER into their

courses. We also continue to explain to faculty the benefits of using OER, not only does it save students thousands of dollars each semester it allows them to have more control over their course materials. Lastly, we also mark OER courses in our registration system so students know which courses will have zero costs for books.

Conclusion

Initiating OER at your institution can feel like a big endeavor, but our final words of wisdom are to start small. Don't try to create 50 OER courses in two years. Instead start with one faculty and one course, then watch the OER initiative spread. Also, you can get to a point of faculty being OER creators, but start with them using already existing Open Educational Resource. When you are ready to start having faculty create, again start small. Create infographics, games, or other simple OER instead of asking faculty to write an entire book. The OER initiative at our institution has been successful because we are excited about saving students money and aligning materials to learning outcomes. Be excited and passionate about the transformation that can happen at your institution using OER. Your passion will be contagious and you will build buy-in.

Resources:

1. [Why OER - The Onliners Podcast](#)
2. [Free Books! Open Educational Resources and How to Use Them](#) – The Onliners Podcast
3. [OER Pre-Scavenger Hunt Review](#)
4. [Course Map Template Example](#)
5. [Copyright Spectrum](#)
6. [The Basics of Copyright Law](#)

Examples:

1. [ABCD Cognitive Model Infographic](#)
2. [Why Alternative Assessments are NICE](#)
3. [How to Make a Scavenger Hunt](#)
4. [Mini Comic](#)
5. [Virtual Escape Room](#)