

The OpenCourseWare Story: New England Roots, Global Reach

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In April, representatives of more than 200 universities from around the world gathered in Dalian, China, to move forward their efforts to create a global body of freely accessible course materials spanning both cultures and disciplines. These institutions have committed to freely and openly sharing on the Web the core teaching materials — including syllabi, lecture notes, assignments and exams — from the courses they offer to their enrolled students. Through the OpenCourseWare

consortium, universities from Japan, Spain, Korea, France, Turkey, Vietnam, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, the United States — plus dozens from China — have already published the materials from over 6,200 courses. In a world of increasingly restrictive intellectual property laws and intensifying competition to provide for-profit Web services, this movement stands in stark contrast to prevailing trends. The story of this OpenCourseWare movement illustrates how novel

thinking and a commitment to addressing global challenges can produce remarkable results.

MIT OpenCourseWare

The OpenCourseWare movement has its roots in New England. The concept emerged in 2000 at Massachusetts Institute of Technology where then-President Charles Vest charged a faculty committee with answering two questions: “How is the Internet going to change education?” and “What should MIT do about it?”

A Culture of Shared Knowledge

Developing a Strategy for Low-Cost Textbook Alternatives

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The open educational resources (OER) movement encourages the creation and sharing of free, open-licensed, high-quality learning content for community college courses to replace publishers’ costly copyrighted textbooks. Open textbooks are freely available, under an unrestricted license such as Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 to download from Website repositories to share, modify, redistribute, or print.

The Community College Consortium for Open Educational Resources (CCCOER) is a joint effort established in 2007 by the Foothill-De Anza Community College District, the League for Innovation in the Community College and dozens of other community colleges and university partners to develop and use OER in community college courses. In March 2008 the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation awarded \$530,000 to Foothill-De Anza Community College District in Los Altos Hills, California and the CCCOER to plan and pilot the Community College Open Textbook Project for one year. Partners involved with the project include: Connexions at Rice University, Monterey Institute for Technology and Education, Institute for the Study of Knowledge Management in Education, University of California Office of the President, Flat World Knowledge, and California State University’s Digital Marketplace.

The primary goal is to identify, create and/or repurpose existing OER as open textbooks and make

them available for use by community college students and faculty.

CCCOER conducted a survey of 1,203 faculty from 12 community college districts and 28 colleges across the country about their attitudes and practices with regard to open educational resources. The findings indicate a large gap between those interested in using and willing to use OER in their classes (91 percent) and those already using OER (34 percent). In order to address this gap, the CCCOER is offering training and support. For example, a self-paced introduction to open educational resources tutorial is available at the Connexions Website.

A wealth of unpublished learning materials languish in the relative obscurity of isolated college campuses and faculty offices. The CCCOER hopes to provide a means for faculty to share their knowledge via an open textbook portal Website to be launched in the fall. The CCCOER Website (cccoer.wordpress.com) provides resources about open textbooks, training, membership, and campus advocacy. Community colleges are invited to join the 60 plus colleges that are already CCCOER members in support of the use of open textbooks.

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