

MOTION: The University Academic Affairs Committee recommends the approval of guidelines on open and affordable educational resources. This motion is in response to a motion made by Steve Greenlaw.

#### RATIONALE OF ORIGINAL MOTION TO UAAC:

The mission of the University of Mary Washington is to provide a superior education that inspires and enables our students to make positive changes in the world. Diversity, inclusion, and community engagement are among the university's core values, and these have been prioritized in all campus activities and materials. Though we may think of our student body as relatively affluent, approximately thirty percent of UMW students are first-generation, and fifteen percent are eligible for Federal Pell Grants due to low family income. For several decades, the cost of higher education has increased more rapidly than the general cost of living, and textbooks have experienced faster price inflation than any other consumer good. These trends affect graduation and completion rates: the U.S. Department of Education reports that over the last decade, 2.4 million U.S. students were unable to finish a 4-year degree due to cost. According to the University of Florida's 2016 Student Textbook and Course Materials Survey, students are increasingly finding it difficult to purchase required course materials, with 66.5% of respondents admitting to forgoing the purchase of a required textbook, and 45.5% saying they had opted out of taking a specific course (or a specific major) due to the high cost of required textbooks. Research demonstrates that students who forgo purchasing textbooks are disproportionately from marginalized populations, making their academic success more difficult. High textbook costs may also contribute to the student success gap; research demonstrates that a disproportionate number of the students who forgo purchasing textbooks are from marginalized populations.

One way to address the high cost of commercial textbooks is for faculty to adopt open educational resources, including open textbooks. Open Educational Resources (OER) have been demonstrated to provide a significant cost reduction for students. Research shows that students who take courses with open textbooks have lower drop and withdrawal rates, and improved retention and degree completion. However, the benefits of OER are not limited to lower textbook costs. Openly licensed course materials give faculty and students greater agency within the learning environment, allowing customized teaching content in formats that support accessibility. Authoring and editing OER also supports the university's digital fluency curriculum, and affords students and faculty with the opportunity to engage the community through the creation of public knowledge.

In early 2018, the Virginia State Legislature passed HB 454, which states:

*The governing board of each public institution of higher education shall implement policies, procedures, and guidelines that encourage the adoption and use of low-cost and no-cost open educational resources in courses offered at such institution. Such guidelines may include provisions for low-cost commercially published materials.*

Therefore, we move that the University Academic Affairs Committee be charged to develop a response to HB454. Since the OpenUMW group has already researched these issues, it makes sense for UAAC to use OpenUMW as a resource in developing the response.

#### RESPONSE FROM UAAC:

The UAAC approved the following response to HB454 in consultation with the OpenUMW group.

## Guidelines on the Adoption of Open and Affordable Educational Resources

Many students do not obtain access to textbooks and other course materials due to cost. Access to affordable educational resources is critical to student success, and the use of Open Educational Resources (OER) makes a course more affordable while maintaining the high standard of quality that the University of Mary Washington expects of its faculty. Additionally, OER can improve teaching efficiency and effectiveness through the ability to focus, analyze, augment, and evolve course materials directly aligned to course learning outcomes.

**Faculty are encouraged to give serious consideration to adopting OER or Low-Cost Commercially Published Materials for texts and other course materials in their courses.**

The university will provide training, support, and encourage recognition of OER use, adaptation, and creation as a meaningful scholarly and professional endeavor. The UMW Libraries, along with the Division of Teaching and Learning Resources and the Teaching Center will provide training regarding finding OER; understanding intellectual property, copyright, and open licenses; adopting and adapting OER; and creating best practices for sharing and enabling discovery of OER. Courses using OER will be labeled as such in the institution's course registration system. The purpose of this is to alert students to the anticipated course material cost of the various courses available to them.<sup>1</sup>

Definitions:

**Open Educational Resources (OER)** are publicly available teaching, learning, and research resources that reside in the public domain or have been released under an intellectual property license that permits their free use and re-purposing by others. Open educational resources include full courses, course materials, modules, textbooks, streaming videos, tests, software, and any other tools, materials, or techniques used to support access to knowledge.

**OER Course** is a course using only freely available OER.

**Low-Cost Commercially Published Materials (LCCPM)** can include resources available through the university library's licensed content, including electronic books and journals. Access to these materials is generally limited to students and faculty of the institution.

This statement was developed in response to § 23.1-1308 of the Code of Virginia.

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<sup>1</sup> For guidance concerning OER course markings: <http://libguides.uta.edu/txtoolkit>;  
<http://libguides.uta.edu/TXtoolkit/examples>