Connecticut Open Educational Resources Coordinating Council 2020 Legislative Report

Revised February 1, 2021

Contents

Background

According to [Forbes](#), the cost of textbooks has risen 812% since 1978. A textbook priced at $25 in 1978 would now sell for over $200. Based on SPARC's (Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition) [calculations](#), students, on average, spend roughly $117 per course on textbooks. Across a full academic year, a full-time student can expect to spend over $1,100 on textbooks.

> According to the Connecticut Office of Higher Education's (OHE) Enrollment and Full-Time Equivalency data, over 150,000 FTEs were enrolled in Connecticut institutions in 2018. Based on the SPARC calculations and the OHE data, Connecticut students may spend **over $165 million annually on textbooks**.

In response to this financial burden, students have had to prioritize spending decisions. According to the June 2020 US PIRG (Public Interest Research Group) report, "[Fixing the Broken Textbook Market](#)":

1. 63% of student skip purchasing or renting a required textbook due to cost
2. 17% skipped purchasing an access code required to access digital/online materials
3. 90% of those students worried that foregoing those materials would negatively impact their grades
4. 25% of students worked extra hours to afford their textbooks
5. 19% of students chose classes based on the cost of materials
6. 11% of students skipped meals due to the cost of materials

Why are students facing these harsh decisions?

The [U.S. PIRG reports](#) that "three companies — Pearson, Cengage, and McGraw-Hill — control 80 percent of the college textbook market. These publishers have historically driven up prices by issuing new editions with limited changes and taking advantage of a captive market of students who cannot choose an alternative to the assigned textbook. The result is clear: the rapidly increasing cost of textbooks has students now spending over $3 billion of financial aid dollars each year on course materials."

The Open Education Alternative

Open Educational Resources (OER) are freely available online teaching and learning materials accessible to students, instructors, and self-learners, contained in digital media collections from around the world, including full courses, lectures, quizzes, classroom activities, instructional materials, and many other assets.

Not only do these resources provide no-cost options for faculty and students, but the open licensing of OER provides the ability for faculty to revise and remix the instructional content to provide a more contextualized, relevant, and representative learning experience for their students.

2016 Task Force Findings

In 2016, Special Act No. 15-18 : An Act Concerning the Use of Digital Open Source Textbooks in Higher Education created a statewide OER Task Force to not only establish Open Educational Resources pilot programs at the Connecticut State Colleges & Universities (CSCU) and the University of Connecticut (UCONN), but also to study best practices of OER programs and identify opportunities and barriers for Connecticut institutions.

In addition to UCONN and CSCU, independent institutions, such as Albertus Magnus, Fairfield, Quinnipiac, and Sacred Heart reported on their emerging OER awareness and adoption efforts.

In October 2016, a survey (based on the Babson Survey Research Group's work) was distributed state-wide to gauge faculty awareness, perception, and acceptance to adopting Open Educational Resources. The University of Connecticut provided the resources to construct, capture, and analyze the survey results. Nearly 1,000 faculty responded to the survey.

In general, the survey captured that institutions had started to explore OER and that faculty were willing to consider OER, but there were barriers. Specifically, many institutions lacked training and support for faculty interested in adoption OER; the additional time commitment and associated compensation for implementation were also reported as faculty concerns; and lastly, faculty were concerned with the lack of supplemental instructional materials that generally accompany textbooks.

The Task Force recommended that an incentive program be developed that would fund the review, adoption, and creation of supplemental OER resources in addition to continued awareness and training efforts. The Task Force also recommended the exploration of a clearinghouse or repository to house OER adopted or created.

The full report can be found on the Connecticut General Assembly website.

2019 Legislation

Public Act Number 19-117 established the Connecticut Open Educational Resources Coordinating Council. This statewide body is charged to develop a plan for Open Educational Resources to benefit college students throughout Connecticut. Connected to the recommendations from the 2016 Task Force, the Council has created an OER Grant Program that provides funding opportunities to faculty for

the review, adoption, and/or creation of supplemental OER materials along with an annual OER Summit to provide professional development opportunities for faculty and staff.

The focus of the program is on "high impact courses" where institutions see the highest enrollments and the highest textbook costs. This focus enables the state investment to have the greatest impact in lessening the cost of higher education for students.

Connecticut OER Coordinating Council

The council is made of 17 members representing faculty, staff, administrators, and students from CSCU, UCONN and independent institutions. The Connecticut Office of Higher Education provides ongoing administrative support.

Shirley Adams Provost Charter Oak State College	Kristi Newgarden Instructional Design Charter Oak State College
Zach Claybaugh OER & Digital Learning Librarian Sacred Heart University	Eileen Rhodes Director of Library Services Capital Community College
Kevin Corcoran (Chair) Executive Director, Digital Learning Connecticut State Colleges & Universities	Manohar Singh Dean of the School of Graduate and Professional Studies Southern Connecticut State University
David Ferreira Dean of Academic & Student Affairs Northwestern Connecticut Community College	Lauren Slingluff Associate Dean for UConn Library University of Connecticut
Andre Freeman Professor, Mathematics Charter Oak State College	Brian Sommers Professor, Geography Central Connecticut State University
Kate Fuller Head of Reference and Curriculum Services University of Connecticut	Alexander Sasha Teplyaev Professor, Mathematics University of Connecticut
Elizabeth Johnson Provost Post University	Danielle Wilken Provost Goodwin University

Aura Lippincott Instructional Design Western Connecticut State University	Robert Wyckoff Professor, English Housatonic Community College
Elena Ruiz 2019 Student Representative Eastern Connecticut State University	Maya Vanderberg 2020 Student Representative Eastern Connecticut State University
Emily Bjornberg Senior Consultant, Academic Affairs CT Office of Higher Education	

On September 19th, 2019, the CT OER Coordinating Council held its first convening and developed an action plan for the current academic year: 1.) data gathering of "high impact" courses across the state 2.) the development of a full-day OER Summit 3.) the design of an OER grant program.

To meet the aggressive timeline of a February 2020 summit and grant launch, the council accelerated its meeting schedule and formed working groups to primarily address the design of the summit and of the grant program.

High Impact Data Collection

To determine the focus of both the grant program and summit, the council identified the courses and the programs with the highest student enrollments statewide. This was a key first step in prioritizing areas for potential funding. Rather than base the identification of high impact areas on council decisions alone, the council reached out to all Connecticut higher education institutional Chief Executive Officers and Chief Academic Officers to request data on their top 20 highest enrolled courses and associated textbook costs. The request was issued from CT Office of Higher Education Executive Director Larson on October 30, 2019 and again on November 20, 2019.

Out of the 40 Connecticut institutions contacted, 18 institutions provided full details (enrollment and associated textbook costs), 6 institutions provided enrollment data only, and 4 institutions did not provide any data, but opted out of the grant program. 12 institutions had no response.

Highest Enrolled Disciplines Reported

Based on the 2018-2019 academic year data collected from the 25 responders, the council determined the top 20 enrolled disciplines across the participating institutions and the 284,000+ enrollments reported, in order of frequency.

1. Biology	6. Economics	11. Anatomy	16. Management
2. Algebra	7. Chemistry	12. Business	17. Literature
3. Psychology	8. History	13. Calculus	18. Communication
4. Composition	9. Statistics	14. Art	19. Marketing
5. Writing	10. Sociology	15. Accounting	20. First Year Seminar/ College Success

CT OER Grant Program

To support both the 2019 legislation and the recommendations of the 2016 Task Force, the council designed a grant structure that provided four different tracks which recognized that the goals of OER, and of the funding program, could be furthered in a variety of different ways. This also recognized the differing needs of the institutions and the disciplines involved.

The **Review Grant** category invited faculty to write an evaluation that focused on the teaching appropriateness and feasibility of adoption of the selected OER. According to the Open Education Network, more than 45% of faculty that review an OER will later adopt that same OER for their classes. These reviews will be made publicly available so that other Connecticut faculty may read and assess the OER's appropriateness for their own course.

The second category, the **Adoption Grant**, invited faculty to adopt an existing OER to replace a high-cost commercial textbook. Faculty were required to implement the OER in their course for the Fall 2020 semester and report on dollars saved/avoided by students, student performance and persistence measures, and their own observations of the OER adoption. These reports will also be made publicly available and may provide great insight to other faculty considering a similar resource or approach.

For the third category, the **Supplemental Grant**, faculty were invited to create supplemental instructional materials to address gaps in selected OER. From the 2016 Task Force report, faculty stated that the lack of supplemental material was a barrier to greater OER adoption. By creating these resources, faculty are not only addressing a need within their own courses but providing resources that may assist other faculty statewide to adopt similar OER in their given discipline.

The last category, the **Impact Grant**, provided faculty an opportunity to submit a collaborative proposal that did not fit neatly in the previous categories, but still produced a high impact. Impact Grants may include departmental-wide or program-wide adoptions, cross-institutional partnerships, or K-20 benefit.

Considerations

In designing the OER grant program, the council discussed at great length the need to provide equitable distribution of funding, whether by region, institution type, or grant category. In addition, the council wished to support and foster collaborative and innovative proposals, especially those that featured students as contributors. Diverse review teams were assembled to provide each application multiple evaluators. Additionally, evaluators were asked to declare any conflicts of interest and applications were distributed accordingly.

The council also invested significant time discussing an effective proposal scoring process and established a rigorous rubric (Appendix C) that addressed feasibility of the proposal, level of impact, and evidence of collaboration, innovation, or student involvement. Clear guidance on the grant requirements was provided during the application process.

The CT OER Grant Program was officially announced on February 24th, 2020. Connecticut higher education institutional chief academic officers and department chairs, identified during the data high impact collection process, were notified by email. An announcement was also made during the CT OER Summit held on February 28th, 2020.

CT OER Summit

To support the CT OER Grant program and address training concerns presented in the 2016 Task Force report, the council designed a full-day conference targeted to institutional department chairs and program directors. Playing key roles in the management of academic departments and programs, department chairs and program directors can support or potentially block OER adoption efforts.

The [CT OER Summit](#) was held on February 28th, 2020 at Goodwin University in East Hartford, CT and had over 140 registrants statewide, representing a variety of roles (such as department chairs, faculty, library, instructional designers) across 30 different Connecticut higher education institutions.

The event was keynoted by Mark McBride, Senior Library Strategist for the State University of New York system and featured a student panel discussing the real-life impact of high textbooks costs and the benefits of OER. In addition, a panel that featured department chairs and administrators discussed the supports that have been implemented to support broader OER adoption.

During the registration process, attendees were asked to indicate their experience with OER. 33% identified themselves as Novice; 41% as Intermediate; and 26% as Advanced. To meet the needs of a diverse audience, attendees had the option of attending one of three training opportunities during lunch:

1. An opportunity to learn about the basics of Creative Commons and open licensing

2. An opportunity to network with disciplinary colleagues from across the state
3. An opportunity to learn how to engage students in the creation and revision of open materials (i.e., open pedagogy).

Keynote Speaker Mark McBride	Student Panel	Administrator/Chair Panel

After lunch, attendees interacted with different OER providers from across the country and networked across institutional boundaries. The providers represented major OER contributors such as OpenStax, Lumen Learning, OER Commons, Merlot, and LibreText. The event concluded with the announcement of the statewide OER grant opportunity and an exploration of the grant categories and associated requirements.

CT OER Grant Program Outcomes

COVID-19 Pandemic Impact

Before discussing the response rate to the grant program and the outcomes from those proposals, we must recognize the impact that COVID-19 had on this program. Within two weeks of the CT OER Summit and the release of the Call for Proposals, Connecticut institutions began their transition from in-person instruction to a technology-delivered format. On March 30th, 2020, the council announced a revised due date for the grant program, extending the proposal deadline to May 4th, 2020.

Even with the extension, the council recognized that faculty had to prioritize their efforts to address the conversion to a remote teaching format and may not have been in a position to respond to the grant.

Submissions & Awards

In total, the CT OER Grant Program received 35 applications in its inaugural run. Out of the 35 applications, two proposals were later withdrawn by the submitters. Another proposal was removed as the proposal had been included in a program-wide submission. Only one proposal was rejected for not meeting the grant guidelines.

The table below provides a summary of the grant awards.

Awards by Category	Receiving Institutions	Disciplines
3 Reviews 3 Impacts 8 Supplementals 17 Adoptions	- Central Connecticut State University - Connecticut College - Eastern Connecticut State University - Fairfield University - Goodwin University - Housatonic Community College - Manchester Community College - Middlesex Community College - Naugatuck Valley Community College - Northwestern Connecticut Community College - Quinebaug Valley Community College - University of Saint Joseph - Western Connecticut State University	- Art - Biology - Business - Communications - Computer Science - English - Healthcare - Law - Marketing - Math - Political Science - Sociology

31 Grants Awarded = $43,800*

* 30 of 31 grants were completed. One adoption grant was not completed due to the grantee being re-assigned from the proposed course.

Results

Based on the reported data, **1,184** students across **60** different course sections have avoided over **$171,000** in textbook costs which represents an estimated **4x** return on the investment of $42,800. These savings will continue to be realized each semester that the courses are taught. Beyond savings, student performance and persistence had positive outcomes. On average, **90%** of those students completed their coursework with **79%** of those students receiving a letter grade of 'C' or better.

Students	Sections	Persistence	Performance	Avoidance	ROI
1,184	60	90%	79%	$171,162	4x

In addition to the positive impact OER adoption has had, the **Review** grantees have indicated that the evaluation of their selected OER will lead to full and/or partial adoption of those works. **Supplemental** grantees have curated and developed resources not only aiding their adoption of OER but will enable other faculty to adopt those primary and supplemental OER resources. The **Impact** grantees have reported on collaborative adoptions that span across a department and across a degree program as well as an innovative approach (Open Pedagogy) of enabling students to contribute to and create new OER that will benefit teachers and students across K-12 school districts.

Note: Cost Avoidance calculations are a combination of actual cost savings and projected cost avoidance as not all students purchase the legacy textbook or the replacement OER. Additionally, some students may opt for other textbook options such as used, rental or digital delivery.

Insights

Faculty grantees were required to collect qualitative data from the students enrolled in their OER courses as part of grant reporting requirements. The grant program did not mandate a single uniform student survey, rather faculty used survey instruments that best fit their situations and needs. Due to the diverse data collection formats, it was not possible to compare the results of the student responses in a statistical form.

In addition to collecting student survey data, faculty shared their own insights and perspectives. Although the awarded grant projects reflect diverse institutions, academic disciplines, programs and student populations, the following noteworthy themes and insights emerged from the reported qualitative faculty and student data.

Student Perspectives

- A majority of students indicated that they felt that the OER utilized was of high quality and was preferred over traditional commercial textbooks.
  - "I think what matters to me the most is that the textbook is clear and concise. That is exactly what I got with the textbook. It was extremely easy to ready and what helped out even more was that in the text there would be words in Bold print so that I can understand that it is an important topic. And I think my favorite part of this textbook was the fact that it was free it was a relief that I didn't need to spend money on a textbook."
  - "I thought the book was clear and easy to follow along. Having it online allowed me to quickly search for the chapter as well. Also not having to order, and wait for the book to

arrive allowed me to read chapters and start work during the free time in the first few weeks of the semester."

- A majority of students indicated that traditional textbook costs presented a barrier to their education.
  - o "I believe open educational textbooks/resources are essential. Students cannot keep up with rising tuition, minimum wage and the cost of 10 textbooks (they'll likely use once) while trying to work and maintain a healthy GPA."
  - o "Financially it helped a lot with my hours being cut at work, it was nice to know I had one less thing to worry about paying for."
  - o "I love the free textbook. During COVID-19 I lost my job and have been living off of unemployment. I am able to look for another job, although I am pregnant and have been very cautious and don't want to risk anything. Not having to buy or rent a text book is great. This is my first time for a class that I haven't had to spend a penny! I'm grateful for this."
- A majority of students indicated that they were unaware that the course utilized OER prior to enrolling. Many students indicated that they were also unaware of any course designation efforts such as NOLO which denotes no-cost and low-cost options within the community colleges' course catalog.
- Students did not indicate a strong preference for print over digital materials.
  - o "What I liked about the text book is if I needed to look for something specific in the book I could just do command F And search for whatever I need."
  - o "What I liked about the textbook is that it was easily attainable at anytime within reach for 24 hours a day without having to carry around a heavy textbook ."
  - o "Having it online made it easily accessible as long as I had a device on me. I could never "forget" to take my book with me, which took away some stress. Physically speaking, it was one less book to haul in my backpack, which my physical back appreciates.
- For courses where digital-only materials were utilized, some students did express concerns about having access to reliable technology and internet access.
- Some students indicated that they would continue to access the OER materials beyond the timeframe of the course.

Faculty Perspectives

- Many faculty reported increased student engagement through the use of OER.
  - o "During the fall semester the students learning outcomes have greatly improved with the use of the OER materials. The average midterm grade was an 82 which is greatly improved from the semester before. Due to the positive feedback, improved performance of students and greater ability of student to complete assignments I will continue to use OER materials."
- Some faculty reported that OER enabled day-one access and remove financial barriers to timely access to the course materials.

- o "Since I have been able to switch to this open educational resource, I have noticed student preparation and engagement increase, especially at the beginning of the semester. When I required students to purchase a textbook, I would almost always have 2-3 students who could not purchase the textbook until they had received financial aid."
- Some faculty reported that the ability to revise the openly licensed content provided greater academic freedom.
  - o "For me, there are several benefits to adopting OER. First, similar to my students, I enjoy the ability to pull the textbook up wherever as long as I have access to the internet. This aids in answering student questions quickly over email, preparing for class, and generally checking over the course material whenever I need to. Second, another benefit from using an open educational textbook is the ability to add to and adapt content as needed. Since the book is open, I am able to add in materials and resources, which allows me to teach concepts and theory beyond just this textbook. "
- Some faculty reported that students participated in the creation of OER materials for the benefit of that course and beyond.
  - o "Due to the possibility of transform this educational material, we, instructors, are more free in our pedagogies and our assignments. It helps us to promote social and cultural inclusion. We have the power to ask our students to create knowledge collectively from their own social location. It is an opportunity for the voiceless, for the underserved, for students whose experience is ignored by the main worldview to share their story. Their work can be included in the material used in future courses. This is the power of OER."
- While some faculty reported that the pandemic coupled with the shift to remote/online learning negatively impacted student performance, the grant program reported positive completion and performance numbers overall.

Challenges

In addition to the stated benefits of OER, faculty did share some challenges they faced in implementing OER. Some concerns mirrored those reported in the 2016 report: institutional supports, lack of supplemental materials, and time commitment needed.

Faculty Perspectives

- Some faculty reported that the 'packaged' OER may not meet all learning outcomes or needs resulting in the need to
  - o Revise existing OER content in order to be useful or more relatable
  - o Curate additional materials to supplement the selected OER
  - o Curate various OER materials to create an alternate resource

- Some faculty reported that there is a long-term time commitment to OER to reach full potential and scale
    - "As an instructor using OER materials, texts can be altered and augmented for the audience I am instructing. However, text preparation takes time and some modest skill. The greatest challenges, then, are locating appropriate material and texts, vetting the texts, preparing the texts for course publication (including insuring access for all users), and then reviewing those texts to gauge student reception and understanding. Adoption is messy. I discovered that this is a lengthy process and will take more than one semester to gather appropriate materials for each subject-specific course I would like to convert to NOLO and OER. I will continue to use OER, continue the process of locating materials I think will engage students, continue to vet materials, supplement learning resources, and mix and match texts and other materials to meet the pedagogical needs of my students."
- Some faculty reported that additional supports are needed to successful implement OER including:
    - Librarians, instructional designers, accessibility content experts
    - Proper training and tools

Council Perspectives

Awareness

Currently, the council's outreach efforts are dependent on institutional CEOs and CAOs to disseminate any council communications. We recognize the competing priorities that these executives face and understand that the council's messaging may not have been distributed in a timely manner to all interested faculty. While social media outlets such as Twitter and LinkedIn were utilized, the council does not have the ability to directly contact faculty statewide. Large-scale marketing is not feasible as the primary purpose of the legislative funding was for grant awards and the condensed timeframe in which the council operates. To increase awareness of future grant opportunities, the council will seek out the Governor's office to support broader communication of these opportunities as well as explore other communication channels.

COVID-19

As mentioned previously, faculty prioritized the shift to remote teaching during the grant application phase. For many faculty and students, digital delivery was new, impacting faculty ability to take on new challenges such as OER. Being digital in nature, OER could have assisted in the transition to remote teaching. The council will promote OER in support of remote teaching and learning. Additionally, as more students and faculty have been exposed to digital teaching and learning options, there is an increased opportunity for faculty to utilize OER with greater confidence.

Proposals & Reporting

Throughout the first year of the grant program and the formation of the second year, the council continually looked for areas of improvement. Noting some confusion about required grant elements, the council enhanced the grant guidelines for Year Two and will schedule informational webinars for interested applicants. In addition, the council crafted reporting guidelines and a reporting template for Year One awardees that has been enhanced for Year Two applicants. The Year Two application will require payment information to help ensure expedited payment once grant requirements have been completed. Lastly, the Year Two grant schedule was modified (launched December 7th, 2020) to allow greater time to apply, prepare, and implement.

Funding Calendar

There is a misalignment between academic calendar and fiscal calendar. Funding for the program was made available from July 1st, 2019 to June 30th, 2020. With the formation and first convening of the council occurring in September 2019, the council worked rapidly to develop a grant program for February 2020. With a February launch and May closing of the call for applications, faculty needed to utilize the summer months to implement and execute their grant proposal and teach with those OER resources during the Fall 2020 semester. For reporting purposes, faculty are required to provide not only student savings, but performance and persistence data. Those items are not available until the end of the semester - mid-December 2020. For faculty who successfully complete their grant requirements, payment cannot be issued until January 2021 at the earliest.

Because of the conflicting schedules, a request was made to the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) in June 2020 to carry forward the remaining funds (more than $90,000) to ensure faculty were compensated for the grant work that they had committed. While this request was approved, only the funds for the approved grants were moved forward ($42,800).

For future grant years, the summer months will continue to be the best time of year for faculty to take on grant work, as teaching loads during the Fall and Spring may prevent faculty from taking on the additional work. This will make the Fall semester the most appropriate time to implement their grant work and capture data on student savings and performance. The council humbly requests that funding be granted carry forward status to accommodate the academic calendar.

Reporting

As an extension of the calendar concerns stated above, the legislative reporting requirement is also problematic for the council. Currently written, the legislative report is due January 1st. Considering that most Fall schedules do not conclude until mid-December, faculty require additional time to complete grading prior to completing their grant reporting requirements. Currently, faculty are required to submit their final grant work by December 31st. Considering the volume of grants awarded and reports to be

reviewed, the council will need extended time to produce a report of value to the legislature. The council humbly asked that the legislative report deadline be extended to February 1st.

Creation Grants

Recognizing that there are vast OER resources available for General Education courses, there are major gaps in the availability of program specific OER. For high cost programs, such as Nursing, the lack of a wide range of open resources points to the need to create new OER in order to achieve cost saving benefits for these students. Adding a creation grant category will support CT faculty who wish to fill these gaps. The existing funding calendar, however, makes it difficult to support creation projects, particularly for larger scale OER creation. As the current funding cycle requires a request to OPM to carry forward funding from one fiscal year to the next, the creation of new OER generally takes longer than the three months currently allocated for the existing grant categories. Complex OER creation may take 12-18 months and may require funding to move across multiple fiscal years.

Collection/Repository

As the first year of the grant program concludes, the council requires a location to permanently store the works submitted from the grant awardees, including the written reviews of OER, adopted OER, supplemental works created, and the associated grant reports. A public display of these resources will not only assist other Connecticut faculty in their future grant proposals and potential adoptions, but also provides a national showcase for the individual faculty, institutions, and the state. This may provide an opportunity to seek philanthropic funding to augment the state grant program. The council has engaged in conversations with the Connecticut Digital Archives (CTDA) operated out of the University of Connecticut. In our first year of the CT OER Grant Program, our digital footprint within the CTDA will be small, but as the program grows, there may be a financial commitment needed for this service.

Infrastructure, Scaling, and Support

In addition for the need of infrastructure to support the housing and display of the grantee OER work and report, new tools, training, and support may be needed to assist with the creation, revision, and remixing of OER materials. While many campuses have support structures to assist with the adoption of OER materials, few have the resources to scale efforts to the creation and remixing of OER. To ensure content accessibility and proper copyright licensing, additional training and/or services beyond the annual OER Summit may be needed. Ideally, Communities of Practice would be supported through additional funding to address these ongoing training and support needs.

Budget & Expenses

The 2019 legislation allocated $100,000 to the Office of Higher Education to support the creation of a statewide OER grant program and summit. The table below details the use of those funds.

Expense Category	Amount
OER Summit Catering	$2,443.10
Keynote Speaker Travel Costs	$1,041.38
Grant Management Software	$1,500.00
Grant Awards	$43,800*
Total Expenditures	**$48,784.48**
Amount Returned to State	*$51,215.52****

*As detailed in the Funding Calendar section, a request was submitted to OPM to carry forward the funding for the grant awards to Fiscal Year 2020-2021. This request was approved on July 29, 2020.

**The unspent funds from Fiscal Year 2019-2020 that supported Year One of the CT OER Coordinating Council's efforts were not carried forward and were recaptured by OPM.

Summary

Within its first year, the CT OER Coordinating Council accomplished three significant initiatives: 1.) the statewide collection of 'high impact' course information 2.) the design and implementation of a multi-faceted, statewide grant program and 3.) the program planning and facilitation of a statewide summit.

The collection of state 'high impact' discipline data informed the structure of the grant program and the focus of the OER Summit. Concentrating on the top 20 highest enrolled course areas extended the benefits of the grant program to a larger number of Connecticut students. This approach helped the grant program realize greater cost avoidance coupled with positive student performance and persistence.

The **CT OER Summit** hosted 140 registrants across 30 different institutions. Attendees represented a variety of institutional roles and a diversity of OER experiences. The 2016 Task Force report indicated a broader awareness in Connecticut of OER than national averages and a high willingness to explore OER, however, there was limited experience with OER. In contrast, 67% of the attendees considered themselves to have intermediate or better experience with OER. This points to the need for broader

communication to increase the participation of faculty who are interested or aware of OER but have limited OER experience.

With regards to the C**T OER Grant Program**, the council was able to award 30 grants across 13 different institutions that saved 1,184 students over $171,000 in textbook costs. 90% of those students completed their coursework with 79% of those students receiving a letter grade of 'C' or better. Long-term benefits will be realized by this grant efforts as the Review grantees will adopt their selected OER, Supplemental grantees have curated and developed resources that will enable additional faculty to adopt OER, and Impact grantees have implemented department and program-wide changes that will benefit not only students within those courses and programs, but teachers and students throughout K-12 school districts.

As Year One of the CT OER Grant Program closes out, the Connecticut OER Coordinating Council is hard at work preparing for Year Two. A Call for Applicants for Year Two of the grant program was released on December 7th, 2020. In addition, a new category supporting smaller-scale OER creation was introduced along with several process enhancements (templates, guides, etc.) to provide additional direction for applicants. Lastly, a virtual OER Summit is being planned for March 1st-4th, 2021 to provide professional development opportunities statewide.

In closing, the Connecticut OER Coordinating Council has had a successful first year and anticipates a larger impact in Year Two of the CT OER Grant Program. Looking forward, the council seeks the following: to increase awareness of the CT OER Grant program through broader communication and to improve operations through process enhancements, greater institutional support for grantees, and greater alignment with academic calendars.

A Closing Faculty Perspective

"There is no discussion of going back to a publisher textbook at any point in the future. This experience has opened conversation in the Communication Department on how to move our most popular classes, Public Speaking and Introduction to Communication, to OER materials. These are General Education Core Courses where the adoption of OER materials will save thousands of dollars per semester for our students. These are also courses where existing textbooks and teaching materials exist making the adoption on a large scale possible. We are very excited to see more OER materials come into use in the Communication Department thanks to our experience with this initial adoption grant."

Appendix A: Call for Proposals

The [Connecticut Open Educational Resources Coordinating Council](#) is pleased to announce a call for applications to the [Connecticut Open Educational Resources Grant Program](#) to strategically support Connecticut higher education institutions' efforts to increase access, affordability, and achievement for students through the incorporation of open educational resources (OER). This grant program will focus on OER opportunities in "high impact" areas – courses with high enrollment and high textbook costs for which high-quality OER already exists.

The Connecticut Open Education Resources Grant Program is available to all Connecticut higher education institutional faculty and will support projects in the following categories:

1. **Review –** Evaluate an openly licensed textbook or other open content related to your course(s)/ discipline and write a review for public display. Where possible, student involvement in the review is strongly encouraged.
2. **Adoption –** Adopt an existing open textbook or open course content with little to no changes made to the content. Where possible, student involvement is strongly encouraged. This is for an individual faculty member seeking to transform their course by adopting OER materials.
3. **Supplemental –** Develop missing ancillaries for currently adopted OER such as quiz question banks, lecture slides, or lab manuals. Where possible, student involvement is strongly encouraged. This is for an individual faculty member seeking to substantively supplement their adopted OER materials.
4. **Impact –** For collaborative, larger-scale proposals not covered by the categories above that demonstrates a high impact on student success through the use of OER. Cross-institutional collaborative proposals, as well as student involvement, are strongly encouraged.

[The Call for Applications is now open!](#)

For more information, including instructions, evaluation criteria, and requirements of grantees, please visit the [Connecticut Open Educational Resources Grant Program](#) site.

Completed application forms are due by 11:59 pm April 20, 2020. The grant committee will notify applicants by May 15, 2020. Project timelines may vary but all projects must be completed by December 31, 2020. Grant awards will be to the applicant(s) and will only be issued upon Grant Report completion.

Appendix B: Grant Requirements

REQUIREMENTS OF GRANTEES

All final grant reports and associated work are due no later than December 31, 2020 and will be shared publicly via the [CT OER Council website](.).

As you complete your OER grant work, please review the requirements below for your specific category.

- Review Grants
- Adoption Grants
- Supplemental Grants
- Impact Grants

Review Grants

- Submit a grant report, due no later than 12/31/2020 that includes (but is not limited to):
  - A review of the selected OER.

    · Your evaluation of the resource should focus on teaching appropriateness and feasibility of adoption.

    · The [Open Textbook Library Rubric](.) provides excellent criteria to cover in your evaluation and written review. The review will be copy-ready and accessible for posting on the CT OER Council website.

  - A brief narrative on whether you have or plan to adopt the OER resource. If yes, please include the projected student impact on cost savings, persistence, and performance.

Adoption Grants

- Implement proposed OER within the specified course section(s) no later than Fall 2020.
- Teach the OER-enabled section(s) of the course no later than the Fall 2020 semester.
- Ensure that selected OER content meets accessibility standards.
- Report the OER adoption to local bookstore in accordance with the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) reporting requirements.
- Implement a student survey within the specified OER course section(s) to gain student perspective (see **Qualitative Analysis** section for recommendations).
- Submit a grant report, due no later than 12/31/2020 that includes (but is not limited to):

- **Summary Information**
  - Institution, Department, Course Title and Number, Number of Sections, OER Resources utilized, Legacy Commercial Textbook replaced
- **Quantitative Analysis**
  - **Student Persistence** – beginning and ending enrollment numbers with drops and withdrawals if known
  - **Student Performance** – number/percentage of students receiving C or better (or more granular if possible)
  - **Student Savings** – projected cost savings/avoidance based on the net savings using OER vs. the legacy textbook/materials cost
    - Please distinguish between savings realized during term implemented vs. long-term projected savings.

  If historical/comparison data if available for sections that have utilized higher cost commercial materials, it would help our analysis on the impact/benefit of OER.

- **Qualitative Analysis**

  - **Student Perspective** (obtained via survey of all students enrolled in OER section(s))
    - Narrative of the student experience with the OER materials, including, but not limited to:
      - Did the student purposefully choose the course based on cost? Were they aware of the textbook costs?
      - Did the student opt for digital or print versions?
      - How did the student perceive the quality of the materials?
      - Any other feedback from the students

  - **Faculty Perspective** –
    - Narrative of the faculty utilizing the OER materials, including, but not limited to:

      - What changes in student preparation or engagement did you observe?
      - What benefits did you realize from adopting OER? (Ability to revise the materials for example)
      - What challenges did you encounter when converting to or using the OER materials? Were you able to overcome them?

- Do you plan to continue or expand use of the OER in your course? Why or why not? If you plan to continue use of this OER, will you revise or supplement it?
- What lessons did you learn that you want to convey to other colleagues considering OER?

- If activities proposed in the grant application were not completed, please provide suitable justification.
- The report wi--ll be copy-ready and accessible for posting on the CT OER Council website.

Supplemental Grants

- Implement proposed supplement within the specified course section(s) no later than Fall 2020.
- Teach the OER-enabled course section(s) no later than the Fall 2020 semester.
- Openly license any new or derivative works, preferably "CC BY" if allowed.
- Ensure that Supplemental content meets accessibility standards.
- Report the OER adoption to local bookstore in accordance with the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) reporting requirements.
- Implement a student survey within the specified OER course section(s) to gain student perspective (see Qualitative Analysis section for recommendations).
- Submit a grant report, due no later than 12/31/2020 that includes (but is not limited to):
  - **Summary Information**
    - Institution, Department, Course Title and Number, Number of Sections, OER Resources utilized, Legacy Commercial Textbook replaced (if applicable), OER resources created (include steps taken to ensure accessibility)
  - **Quantitative Analysis**
    - **Student Persistence** – beginning and ending enrollment numbers with drops and withdrawals if known
    - **Student Performance** – number/percentage of students receiving C or better (or more granular if possible)
    - **Student Savings** – projected cost savings/avoidance based on the net savings using OER vs. the legacy textbook/materials cost
      - Please distinguish between savings realized during semester implemented vs. long-term projected savings.

> *If historical/comparison data if available for sections that have utilized higher cost commercial materials, it would help our analysis on the impact/benefit of OER.*

- **Qualitative Analysis**

  - **Student Perspective** (**Student Perspective** (obtained via survey of all students enrolled in OER section(s))

    - Narrative of the student experience with the OER materials

      - Did the student purposefully choose the course based on cost? Were they aware of the textbook costs?
      - Did the student opt for digital or print versions?
      - How did the student perceive the quality of the materials?
      - Any other feedback from the students

  - **Faculty Perspective**

    - Narrative of the faculty utilizing the OER materials
      - What changes in student preparation or engagement did you observe?
      - What benefits did you realize from adopting OER? (Ability to revise the materials for example)
      - What challenges did you encounter when converting to or using the OER materials? Were you able to overcome them?
      - What lessons did you learn that you want to convey to other colleagues considering OER?

- Discuss how your supplemental OER resources will be sustained (maintained, housed, etc.).
- If activities proposed in the grant application were not completed, please provide suitable justification
- The report will be copy-ready and accessible for posting on the CT OER Council website

Impact Grants

- Implement proposed work within the specified course section(s) no later than Fall 2020.
- Teach the OER-enabled section(s) of course(s) during the Fall 2020 semester
- Openly license any new or derivative works, preferably "CC BY" if allowed.
- Ensure that OER content meets accessibility standards.

- Report the OER adoption to local bookstore in accordance with the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) reporting requirements.
- Implement a student survey within the specified OER course section(s) to gain student perspective (see Qualitative Analysis section for recommendations).
- Submit a grant report, due no later than 12/31/2020 that includes (but is not limited to):
  - **Summary Information**
    - Institution, Department, Course Title and Number, Number of Sections, OER Resources utilized, Legacy Commercial Textbook replaced (if applicable), OER resources created (include steps taken to ensure accessibility)
  - **Brief Summary the Impact Grant Project**
  - **Quantitative Analysis**
    - **Student Persistence** – beginning and ending enrollment numbers with drops and withdrawals if known
    - **Student Performance** – number/percentage of students receiving C or better (or more granular if possible)
    - **Student Savings** – projected cost savings/avoidance based on the net savings using OER vs. the legacy textbook/materials cost (if applicable)
      - Please distinguish between savings realized during Fall 2020 vs. long-term projected savings.

    If historical/comparison data if available for sections that have utilized higher cost commercial materials, it would help our analysis on the impact/benefit of OER.

  - **Qualitative Analysis**

    - **Student Perspective** (obtained via survey of all students enrolled in OER section(s))

      - Narrative of the student experience with the OER materials, including, but not limited to:

        - Did the student purposefully choose the course based on cost? Were they aware of the textbook costs?
        - Did the student opt for digital or print versions?
        - How did the student perceive the quality of the materials?
        - Any other feedback from the students

    - **Faculty Perspective**

- ■ Narrative of the faculty utilizing the OER materials, including, but not limited to:

  - ○ What changes in student preparation or engagement did you observe?
  - ○ What benefits did you realize from adopting OER? (Ability to revise the materials for example)
  - ○ What challenges did you encounter when converting to or using the OER materials? Were you able to overcome them?
  - ○ Do you plan to continue or expand use of the OER in your course? Why or why not? If you plan to continue use of this OER, will you revise or supplement it?
  - ○ What lessons did you learn that you want to convey to other colleagues considering OER?

- ● Discussion of how the proposal goals were met and how they will be sustained in the future. Discuss the projected longer-term impacts of your project.
- ● If activities proposed in the grant application were not completed, please provide suitable justification
- ● The report will be copy-ready and accessible for posting on the CT OER Council website

Grant payments are contingent upon completion of the proposed activities and the submission of the grant report.

Appendix C: Rubric for Evaluation

1. Completeness of Application
   (Complete, Mostly Complete, Some Missing, Mostly Missing)
   Comments
2. High Impact
   (Highly Evident, Mostly Evident, Some Evidence, Little Evidence, No Evidence)
   Comments
3. Feasibility
   (Very Feasible, Mostly Feasible, Somewhat Feasible, Little Feasibility)
   Comments
4. Collaboration
   (Highly Evident, Mostly Evident, Some Evidence, Little Evidence, No Evidence)
   Comments
5. Student Involvement
   (Highly, Mostly, Some, Little, None)
   Comments
6. Innovation
   (Highly, Mostly, Some, Little, None)
   Comments
7. Overall Score
   Comments

Appendix D: OER Summit Agenda

February 28, 2020

8:30 am to 9:00 am - Registration & Coffee – *Main Lobby/Community Room*

9:00 am to 9:15 am - Welcome - Auditorium

- **Tim Larson, Executive Director of Connecticut's Office of Higher Education**
- **Danielle Wilken, Provost of Goodwin University**

9:15 am to 10:00 am - Keynote Address - *Auditorium*

- **Mark McBride, State University of New York, Senior Library Strategist**
- **Link to Presentation (Coming Soon!)**

10:00 to 10:15 am - Break

10:15 am to 11:00 am - Student Panel Presentation - *Auditorium*

- **Moderator: Cailyn Nagle, US PIRG, Affordable Textbooks Campaign Director**
- **Panelist: Shafina Chowdhury, University of Connecticut**
- **Panelist: Fatima Flores, Goodwin University**
- **Panelist: Maya Marmarka, University of Connecticut**
- **Panelist: Michael Rahilly, Goodwin University**
- **Panelist: Jeffrey Safo-Darko, Central Connecticut State University**

11:00 am to 11:15am - Break

11:15 am to 12:00 pm - Department Chair Panel Presentation - *Auditorium*

- **Moderator: Beth Johnson, Provost, Post University**
- **Panelist: David Ferreira, Dean of Academic & Student Affairs, Northwestern CT Community College**
- **Panelist: Phillip Fox, Director and Associate Professor of English, Goodwin University**
- **Panelist: Michael LaBarbera, Assistant Professor of Mathematics, Housatonic Community College**
- **Panelist: Jason Molitierno, Chair of Mathematics, Sacred Heart University**

12:00 pm to 1:00 pm - Lunch – *Community Room*

Attendees have a choice of three lunch-time activities:

Connecticut Open Educational Resources Coordinating Council – 2020 Legislative Report

Option 1: Discipline-Specific Table Discussions - *Community Room*

Option 2: All About OER: OER 101 - *Center for Teaching Excellence - Room 208*

- **Eileen Rhodes, Director of Library Services, Capital Community College**
- **Jillian Maynard, Reference Instruction Librarian, Central Connecticut State University**
- **Link to All About OER Presentation**

Option 3: Open Pedagogy – *Auditorium*

- **Aura Lippincott, Instructional Designer, Western Connecticut State University**
- **Kevin Corcoran, Executive Director of Digital Learning, Connecticut State Colleges & Universities**
- **Link to Open Pedagogy Presentation**

1:00 pm to 2:30 pm - OER Exploration & Networking - *Auditorium then Main Lobby*

An opportunity to engage with various OER providers and panelists.

- **LibreTexts**
- **Lumen Learning**
- **MERLOT**
- **OER Commons**
- **OpenStax**
- **Reebus Community / Pressbooks**

2:30 pm to 3:00 pm - Reconvening, Grant Opportunity Overview & Closing Remarks - *Auditorium*

- **Kevin Corcoran, Statewide OER Coordinator, Executive Director of Digital Learning, Connecticut State Colleges & Universities**

Additional Resources:

- **CT OER Summit - Event Survey**
- **CT OER Grant Application**
- **CT OER Council Website**

Appendix E: OER Summit Survey

CT OER Summit Post-Event Survey

Thank you for attending CT OER Summit. Your feedback will help us to improve future events.

1. Overall, how would you rate the event?

Excellent
Very good
Good
Fair
Poor

2. Did the event improve your understanding of Open Educational Resources?

Extremely helpful
Very helpful
Somewhat helpful
Not so helpful
Not at all helpful

3. How would you rate the presentations?

Extremely valuable
Very valuable
Somewhat valuable
Not so valuable
Not at all valuable
Please provide any comments you may have on any of the day's sessions.

4. How would you rate the exhibitors?

Extremely valuable
Very valuable
Somewhat valuable
Not so valuable
Not at all valuable
Please provide any comments you may have on any of the OER exhibitors present.
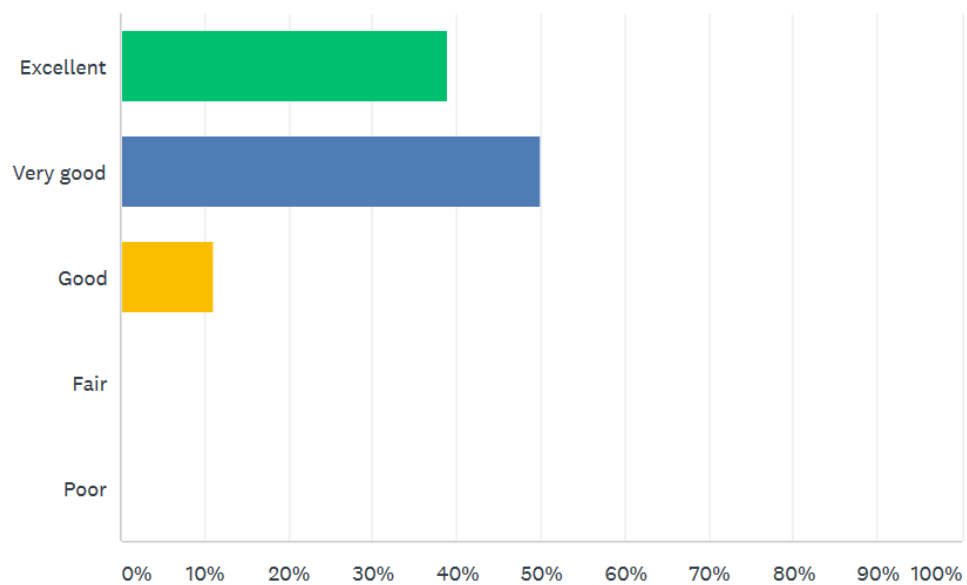
5. What did you like about the event?

6. What would have made the event better?

7. What was your biggest takeaway from the event?

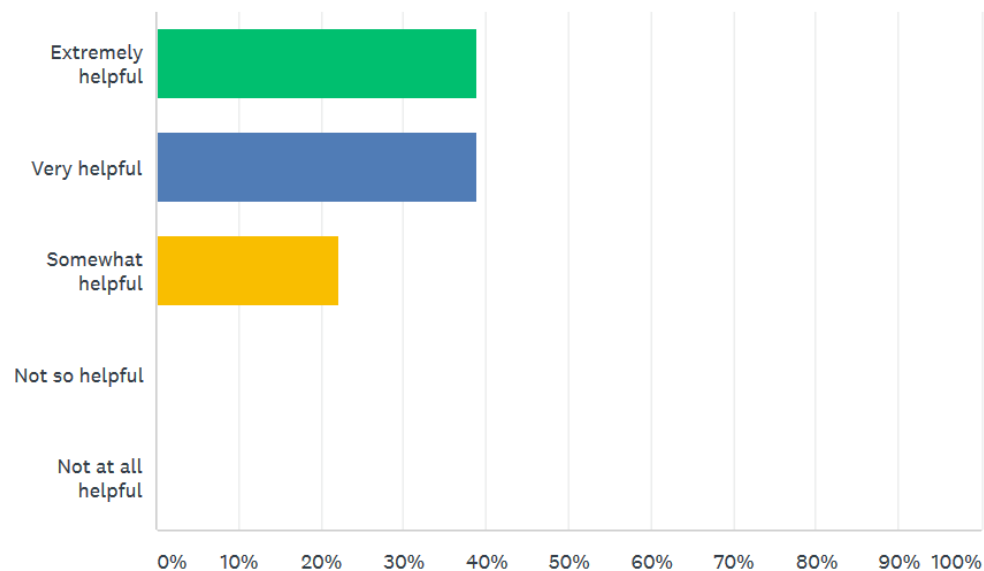**8. Was there any other information you wanted to share with the event coordinators?**

Overall, how would you rate the event?

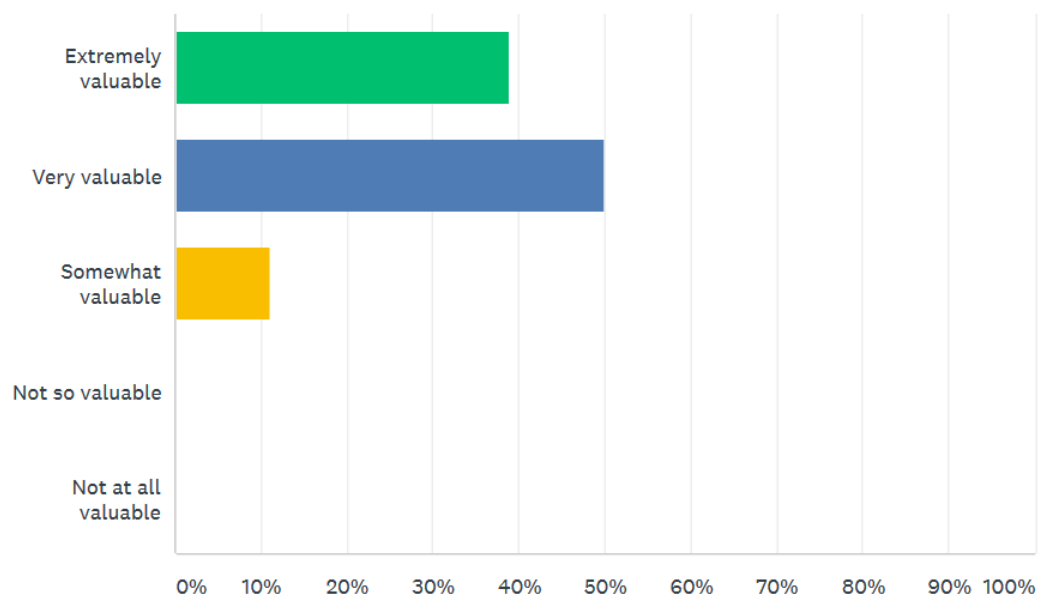Answered: 18   Skipped: 0

Did the event improve your understanding of Open Educational Resources?
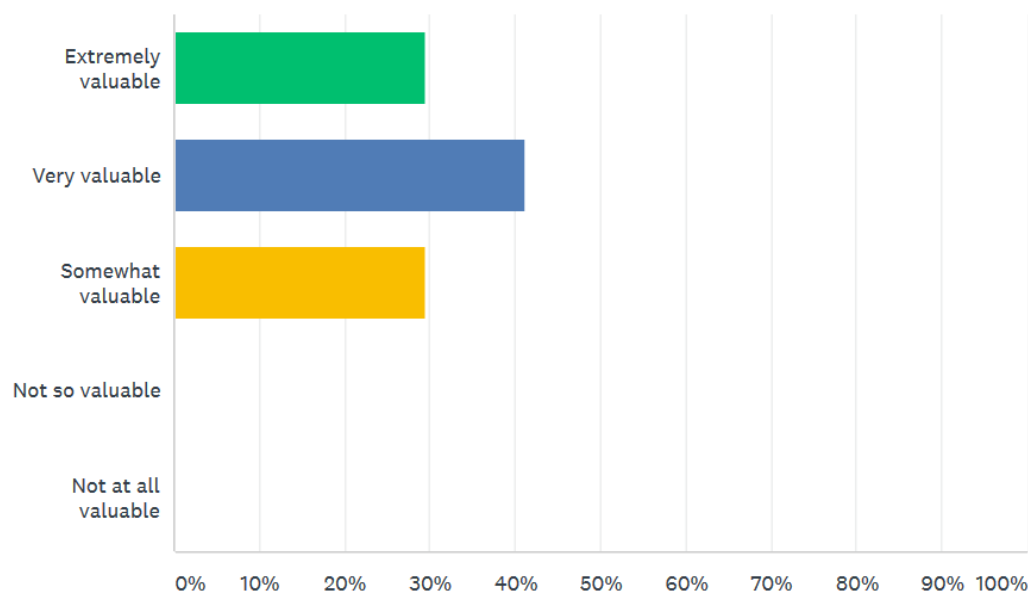
Answered: 18   Skipped: 0

How would you rate the presentations?

Answered: 18   Skipped: 0

How would you rate the exhibitors?

Answered: 17   Skipped: 1

Sample Attendee Feedback

- *"I liked the range of people that attended. I enjoyed the keynote, the panels, and the Pedagogy session I attended. They provided different perspectives and presented different aspects of OER so we could see the human element rather than solely focusing on the textbooks."*

- *"My biggest takeaway was how much work is being done on this front. The amount of effort being put into this is amazing, and it's good to know there are other organizations out there making headway."*

- *"How OER can really change a student's college experience, especially those that are struggling financially."*