Centering diversity and inclusion in courses when adopting existing OERs

Broadening your curriculum
with inclusive OERs

Have you seen the calls to diversify your curriculum? What does that mean? And how can you do that with OERs?

Diversifying your curriculum simply means that you are intentional and inclusive of a diverse set of voices and perspectives in your course materials: texts, readings, case studies, problem sets, lectures, and any other course materials. In particular, one should highlight the contributions, experiences, and expertise of marginalized communities rather than solely focus on the historically dominant narratives.

Adopting Open Education Resources (OERs) into your course that are inclusive and culturally responsible are a great way to take a step toward diversifying your curriculum.
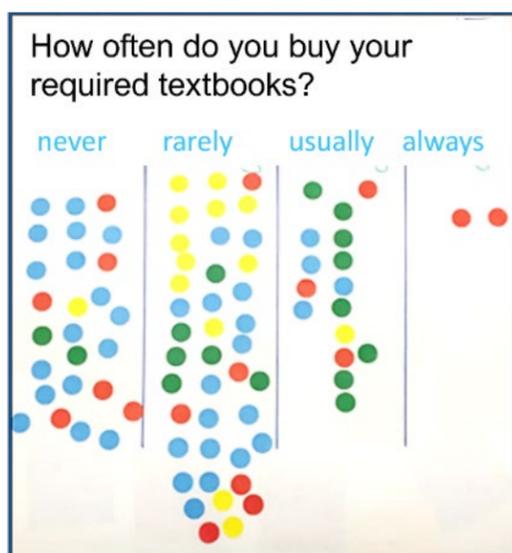

Fig 5. Student responses to purchasing texts.

Students at WPI rarely purchase textbooks but find other free ways to access course materials (data from 2022nstudent survey (IRB-22-0040).

Objectives of this guide:

- Understand the role of OERs in building an inclusive curriculum
- Find OERs that are relevant to your course
- Audit OERs for openness and inclusion
- Integrate OERs into your course curriculum

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OERs are teaching resources that are free, accessible, and shareable and have either an open license or are in the public domain.

OERs and Social Justice
Ways that OERs can address equity issues

Historically marginalized communities are systematically unrecognized and underrepresented in STEM materials (Sleeter & Grant, 2011; Becker & Nilsson, 2021).

Furthermore, open materials do not necessarily translate into achieving greater equity and inclusivity (DeRosa & Robison 2017; Croft & Brown 2020)

But OERs can address social justice issues by aligning with social justice principles of redistribution, recognition, and representation (Lambert, 2018). Creating and using OERs that are intentional in their connection with social justice can increase student access, develop deeper student relationships with course content, and strengthen our collaborative capacity to pursue the larger goals of a more empowered educational ecosystem.

"I enjoyed focusing on DEI in STEM and thinking about how seeing someone in the field with whom you identify can completely change your decision to go into said field" WPI student

OERs are more than textbooks:

- Texts/sources
- Lesson plans
- Activities/Labs
- Data sets
- Case studies
- Figures/diagrams
- Games/simulations
- Lectures
- Modules
- Syllabi
- Study guides
- Homework
- Assignments
- And more!

References

Becker, M.L. & Nilsson, M.R. (2021). College Chemistry Textbooks Fail on Gender Representation. *Journal of Chemical Education, 98*(4), 1146–1151. https://doi.org/10.1021/acs.jchemed.0c01037

Croft, B. & Brown, M. (2020). Inclusive open education: presumptions, principles, and practices. *Distance Education, 41*(2), 156–170. https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2020.1757410

DeRosa, R., & Robinson, S. (2017). From OER to open pedagogy: Harnessing the power of open. In R. S. Jhangiani, & R. Biswas-Diener (Eds.), Open: The philosophy and practices that are revolutionizing education and science (pp. 115–124). Ubiquity Press. https://doi.org/10.5334/bbc.i

Lambert, S. (2018), "Changing our (dis)course: A distinctive social justice aligned definition of open education", *Journal of Learning for Development*, Vol. 5 No. 3, pp. 225-244, https://jl4d.org/index.php/ejl4d/article/view/290/334.

Sleeter, C.E., & Grant, C.A. (1991). Race, Class, Gender, and Disability in Current Textbooks. In M. Apple & L.K. Christian-Smith (Eds.), The Politics of the Textbook (pp. 78–110). New York, NY: Routledge.

Tips for adopting OERs that center diversity

First steps:

- Audit your course for inclusiveness and find gaps or areas of improvement in representation and recognition in your course (see resources below)
- Identify types of OERs that best suit your needs for the course (texts, lesson plans, activities, videos, syllabi, data sets, tests, etc.)
- Explore repositories of OER materials, like OER Commons, OpenStax, Merlot, Open Textbook Library
- Or use a search tool, like the Mason OER Metafinder (MOM)

Second steps:

- Visit WPI's Libguide on OERs: https://libguides.wpi.edu/c.php?g=826100&p=5897578
- Connect with a research and instruction librarian for assistance and guidance with a discipline-specific database
- Explore the resources on the WPI OER website: https://wp.wpi.edu/open/
- Reach out to faculty who have worked through similar projects and have similar interests

Key Reminders:

Start small- you do not have to change out all materials from your course at once. Instead, add one OER element in here and there into where you could easily replace a similar component.

Use a scientist/engineer/researcher spotlight to highlight the expertise of a person from a marginalized community. See Figure 2 for a student-written OER example with a research spotlight.

Share your work with your peers, your department, at a local workshop or conference (e.g., New England Faculty Development Consortium), and others.

Fig. 2 This student-created OER in an animal behavior course that used a research spotlight that included recognition of the work of experts in the home country of this species of interest. McGinty, T, Nason, M, Whittier, R. (2022). Caring for Young. Worcester Polytechnic Institute.

DEIJ Audit Resources
To facilitate centering diversity and inclusion

"OER Evaluation Rubric" by Open 4 Social Justice Class, Lehman College, CUNY is licensed under CC BY 4.0

Boston University's School of Public Health has a great tool (available here: https://www.bu.edu/sph/about/diversity-and-inclusion-at-the-boston-university-school-of-public-health) that you can reference. In particular, they have a nice section on "**Diversity Through Course Content and Materials**" that considers how to contribute diversity across different materials in the course (e.g., assignments, lectures, readings, etc.)

This open rubric allows you to use and customize it for the best application to your course! It's an OER!

Peralta Community College District. (2020). Peralta Online Equity Rubric, version 3.0 [Creative Commons license: BY-SA]. Retrieved from https://web.peralta.edu/de/peralta-online-equity-initiative/equity/

Here is an adapted version of the above rubric that has been used in courses at WPI:

DEI Rubric_Bakermans

Reflect on inclusive OERs and expand how you communicate your course changes
OERs in teaching and research

Reflect on the changes to your course and add information to your annual faculty report and dossier for promotion and tenure. Driving OER Sustainability for Student Success (DOERS3) 's website (https://www.doers3.org/tenure-and-promotion.html) encourages you to consider how your work with inclusive OERs improves student learning outcomes, contributes to campus innovation, increases student engagement, reduces cost to students, is used in Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTOL), disseminates knowledge to larger audiences, connects to presentations, publications, and grants. Complete their Contribution Matrix for ideas on how to document and communicate your efforts.