

## Application Details

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### Manage Application: ALG Textbook Transformation Grants

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**Award Cycle:** Round 9

**Internal Submission Deadline:** Sunday, April 30, 2017

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**Application Title:** 313

**Application ID:** #001731

**Submitter First Name:** Daniel

**Submitter Last Name:** Farr

**Submitter Title:** Lecturer of Sociology

**Submitter Email Address:** dfarr4@kennesaw.edu

**Submitter Phone Number:** 470-578-7970

**Submitter Campus Role:** Proposal Investigator (Primary or additional)

**Applicant First Name:** Evelina

**Applicant Last Name:** Sterling

**Co-Applicant Name:** Daniel Farr

**Applicant Email Address:** esterlin@kennesaw.edu

**Applicant Phone Number:** 470-578-4828

**Primary Appointment Title:** Assistant Professor of Sociology

**Institution Name(s):** Kennesaw State University

**Submission Date:** Monday, May 1, 2017

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**Proposal Title:** 313

**Final Semester of Instruction:** Spring 2018

**Team Members (Name, Title, Department, Institutions if different, and email address for each):**

Evelina Sterling, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Sociology, Kennesaw State University, esterlin@kennesaw.edu

Daniel Farr, Ph.D., Lecturer of Sociology, Kennesaw State University, dfarr4@kennesaw.edu

**Sponsor, (Name, Title, Department, Institution):**

Dr. Dawn Baunach, Chair, Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice, Kennesaw State

**Course Names, Course Numbers and Semesters Offered:**

Social Problems, Soci2251, course offered Spring, Summer, Fall semester. Typically offered both online and face-to-face each semester. The focus of this transformation is the online format -- thus upcoming numbers will focus therein.

**Average Number of Students per Course Section:** 30

**Number of Course Sections Affected by Implementation in Academic Year:** 3

**Total Number of Students Affected by Implementation in Academic Year:** 90

**List the original course materials for students (including title, whether optional or required, & cost for each item):** Social Problems, 13th ed. Eitzen, Baca Zinn, and Smith. Pearson. 2013. required text. \$185.95

**Proposal Categories:** No-Cost-to-Students Learning Materials

**Requested Amount of Funding:** \$10,800

**Original per Student Cost:** \$185.95

**Post-Proposal Projected Student Cost:** \$0

**Projected Per Student Savings:** \$185.95

**Projected Total Annual Student Savings:** \$16,735.50

**Creation and Hosting Platforms Used ("n/a" if none):**

Brightspace D2L - online course teaching platform.

**Project Goals:**

goal for this transformation is to reduce student costs while simultaneously maintaining high academic standards and rigor. The use of no-cost course materials will support the USG initiative to reduce student debt. The overall goal of student savings via the transformation of three online sections of Social Problems offered per year (spring, summer, fall) will result

in an annual savings of at least \$16,735 per year.

This project will identify a no-cost textbook as the foundational source material for a newly transformed online course. Adoption of a new textbook will necessitate the restructuring of the online course and the development of new course content materials, including: powerpoints, instructional lectures, writing assignments, discussion activities, ungraded student self-assessments, and graded assessments. It should be noted that the initially identified open-source textbook is not accompanied by ancillary resources, thus all instructional materials will be teacher developed (including lectures, lecture notes, powerpoints, test question banks).

Student success will be supported with a newly transformed online course designed around the no-cost digital course materials. The instructional materials, centered upon an open-source textbook, will be accessible by students within the online course platform, Desire2Learn (D2L), on their desktop computers, and mobile devices. Any additional instructional resources added to the course will also be no-cost to students.

The newly developed online course will receive Quality Matters (QM) peer-review to assure quality of structure.

Pedagogical transformation of the course will be centrally focused upon the course content and materials. The newly designed course will be informed by online best practices.

Through student assessment feedback, modifications to instructional technique, student learning activities, and assessments will be on-going.

### **Statement of Transformation:**

1. This transformation is focused upon the development of a newly redesigned online QM-approved course based upon no-cost course materials. Within the creation of a new online course, which is expected to be taught three times annually (spring, summer, fall), the textbook will be sub-divided into course modules based on each major chapter (for example, gender inequality, the changing family, poverty, etc). Each module will be inclusive of several key components: a student work checklist, student learning objectives, the chapter reading, a Power Point presentation/lecture, a non-graded student learning self-assessment, a discussion board, and a graded assessment of student learning. Additionally, specific modules will include optional readings/articles, links to relevant sources/web resources, films, periodic exams, and written assessment activities and their supportive resources. All course materials will be no-cost to students. Course modules will encourage student-to-student, student-to-instructor, and student-to-content interactions and engagement.
2. The central stakeholders of this transformation are students, faculty, and the online sociology program.
3. Students remain central stakeholders of this transformation in that they benefit from cost savings in this newly transformed course. Students will also be informative of continued refinement and revision of the course in coming semesters as each cohort's feedback fosters changes to the class.

The transformation of this course will increase student success as all students will have access to the no-cost textbook and course materials. Currently, due to textbook costs, as many as 65% of students choose to forgo buying textbooks due to cost (USPIRG, 2014). Among such students, 94% indicated the concern that a lack of textbook access would hurt their course grade (USPIRG, 2014). The high cost of course texts results in academic ripples of poor student grades, course withdrawals, delayed degree completion, difficulties progressing in one's major, and may reduce the number of courses a student is able to enroll in during a semester. Indeed, 82% of students believe they would do significantly better in a course if their textbook were available online for free (USPIRG, 2014).

As course developers and instructors, we remain invested in maintaining academic rigor while also assuring the material remains current and relevant to the field of Sociology. Simultaneously, we are also concerned about the success of our students. We continuously seek to reduce withdrawal/fail/repeat rates for our classes and support appropriate progress towards the timely completion of student's degree program.

As online instructors we are also invested in the sharing learning outcomes from this endeavor with colleagues to encourage transformation of additional offerings of this course to no-cost resources.

The online sociology program remains a vested stakeholder in this process. The online sociology program was the first of its kind in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Kennesaw State University and strives to remain a model of online learning best practices and the pursuit of student success. Having a newly developed no-cost QM-approved online section of Soci2251 will provide the opportunity for this new format to be taught by other instructors in the program. This is a particularly salient point for the sustainability of the online program and this course, as additional instructors teach this course online in the future.

Finally, the Sociology and Criminal Justice Department as a whole remains a stakeholder in this process as well. Although Sociology has a fully online degree program option, our successful adoption of no-cost materials may serve as a model for the Criminal Justice program as they consider the option of a fully online major.

4. This grant will support a complete transformation of this course, through the revision of course content and offering of a new QM-approved class for online instruction. The use of a new online Soci2251 will impact both the online program and the department—as student success in this course increases, student program progress rates improve, retention improves, and graduation rates will increase. This course will further the department's reputation in student cost-reduction as this will be the second course in the online program to be transformed to no-cost course materials. Institutionally, and within this college, this course will serve as a model of course cost reduction and the student success that is supported by such transformations.

## **Transformation Action Plan:**

1. One open-source textbook has already been identified and reviewed for the purposes of this course redesign. Additional no-cost options, such as article collections and other open-source texts will also be sought using Google, word of mouth, conference networking, colleague consultation, and outreach via appropriate Sociology email listservs. Once various options are identified, they will be reviewed to determine the most effective option for this course. Selection will be based upon major topics covered, order of topic offering, how current the content is, and the reading level of the content. The review and selection of this material will be jointly shared by two full-time faculty in the department, Dr. Daniel Farr and Dr. Evelina Sterling with input from colleagues.

Should a ready built open-source textbook be selected, any gaps or shortcomings of that text will be identified. Additional no-cost resources, such as academic articles, will then be integrated into the course content to fill these gaps. The adoption of new course texts will require the development of new lectures and resources for the online environment, centrally via new Power Point presentation lectures and videos.

2. With the adoption of a new textbook, the online section of this course will require an entire redesign for Quality Matters review. The redesign of this course will include the restructuring of the chapter modules, revision of learning goals, creation of new instructional/lecture materials, the writing of questions for non-graded student assessments as well as graded assessments for student evaluation, and the development of new learning activities such as discussion board prompts and course writing assignments.

3. Dr. Farr and Dr. Sterling will equally share in the development of all course material and the design of the online course. Both Dr. Farr and Dr. Sterling are subject matter experts in Sociology. Dr. Farr has taught this course online and in the face-to-face environment. Both grant participants will serve as instructional designers for this new class. Each has participated in three College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS) Distance Learning workshops (Build a Web, Skills Update, and Advanced Skills Update). Each workshop ranges in length from one to two semesters. No additional workshops are available with a specific focus upon online teaching in the CHSS. Between the two, they have successfully developed and received QM approval for a variety of online courses, totaling eight courses. Additionally, Dr. Farr and Dr. Sterling are both approved reviewers for the Kennesaw State Quality Matters approval process, demonstrating their comprehensive understanding of effective online course design. In their current roles, both Dr. Farr and Dr. Sterling were hired to positions centrally intended to support the online program and are expected to continue to actively participate in course design and instruction therein.

4. Access to the newly adopted no-cost course materials will be facilitated through the online instructional platform used by the USG system, Desire2Learn Brightspace. This will allow

students enrolled in the course easy access to all instructional materials.

**Quantitative & Qualitative****Measures:**

1. We will evaluate the textbook transformation's effectiveness by student success and student perceptions of the redesigned Social Problems course. To do so, we will examine the following quantitative measures: the number of students who withdraw, fail, or earn a D in the course (a grade of C or better is required to fulfill major requirement); final grade distributions (mean, median, mode); select test questions that assess proficiency of course learning outcomes; mid-semester student course evaluations; students' course evaluations (quantitative scores); and an end of semester survey focused upon student feedback about the newly adopted course materials. Additionally, we will consult with the College of Humanities and Social Sciences Distance Learning office to develop additional tools (both quantitative and qualitative) for assessing learning outcomes. The intention is to compare student knowledge at the beginning, midpoint, and end of the course to determine the effectiveness of the new course text's impact on learning.

2. This collected quantitative data will be analyzed on its own merits, but will also be contrasted with data points from recent semesters of the course, before the adoption of no-cost materials. Centrally, comparisons of the withdrawal and fail rates, as well as grade outcomes will be contrasted with recently taught online sections of this course to assess the impact of transforming to no-cost course materials.

3. Qualitative assessment will be accomplished with the use of students' course evaluations (qualitative feedback), qualitative responses in the mid-semester evaluations, and qualitative comments within the end of semester survey on the newly adopted course materials.

4. Appropriate IRB approval will be sought for the above described assessments. In terms of evaluation, we are most interested in assessing course and teaching effectiveness. More specifically, we seek to determine 1) is the course delivering what it promised in terms of affordable learning?; 2) how effective were the instructional materials and pedagogy involving the open-access text

in helping students learn the subject matter?; 3) how effective were course activities in improving the ability of students to use their newly acquired knowledge of social problems?; 4) which of the instruction-related materials and assignments, including the open-access text, were most helpful in meeting learning objectives?; 5) how did students evaluate this course and instructors compared to other courses?; and 6) what additional observations did students offer when responding to open-ended questions about the use of this new course material?

## **Timeline:**

May 2017 – Spring 2018

May - June 2017:

Notification of award.

Attend Kick-Off Meeting June 5, 2017.

Review textbook options and explore additional supplementary resources.

Review online teaching literature for new ideas, innovations, and resources.

Based on material review, select specific no-cost text/material for course redesign.

Determine which topics to cover and in what order.

June - July 2017:

Collaboratively establish basic course outline, format, and structure.

Divide specific course development and module/topic responsibilities between Farr and Sterling; the chapters/modules of the course will be equally divided.

Farr and Sterling develop preliminary instructional resources for new online course.

Farr and Sterling design schedule for administration of course material for Fall 2017 semester.

August - Dec 2017:

Farr and Sterling will complete assigned module learning materials.

Farr and Sterling will review each other's developed course content and provide feedback for revision to assure course consistency.

Revision and finalization of instructional content will be completed.

Farr and Sterling will develop assessment questions for their assigned chapters/modules.

Each will review, comment upon, and develop additional assessment questions for each other's chapters/modules to assure assessment consistency across the course.

Online course will be finalized and submitted for institutional QM review.



July 2017:

In consultation with Distance Learning, quantitative and qualitative assessment tools will be developed for the fall administration of the course. IRB approval for appropriate evaluative tools will be sought.

Jan - April 2018:

The newly developed course will be offered to students in Spring 2018 by Dr. Farr or Sterling. During semester, assessments as described will be administered.

Final evaluation, assessment, and reporting of data outlined in Section 1.4 will be completed by Farr and Sterling.

Data will be shared with colleagues and administrators at KSU and may be presented in appropriate upcoming conferences or meetings.

### **Budget:**

The requested total budget is \$10,800 (\$5,000 x 2 team members + \$800 for overall project expenses and travel).

Salary compensation for Daniel Farr = \$5,000

Salary compensation for Evelina Sterling = \$5,000

Overall project expenses and travel costs = \$800

### **Sustainability Plan:**

As previously indicated, both Farr and Sterling are active in the online Sociology program and are expected to offer this course on a regular basis in the future. This course is a requirement of sociology majors and is typically offered online in spring, summer, and fall semesters.

Current enrollment for this course caps at 30 students per section, with one section offered per semester. It is possible that the enrollment numbers will increase in the future, but it is not expected to ever decrease. Institutionally, there are current efforts to significantly increase online offerings/seats in lower division courses.

As individual instructors, we will offer this no-cost-to-students course in future sections of online Social Problems. Both Drs. Sterling and Farr will use this no-cost format when offering this course online and will also translate this course to the face-to-face environment when taught by either. This course will additionally be shared with all other online instructors who may teach this course as an opportunity to support affordable student learning.

In an effort to maintain and continuously improve this course and its materials, we will meet at the end of each semester to assess if changes should be made for the next semester. Any

such changes will be based upon student feedback and our own evaluations of what is working (or not working) in the course. Adjustments in course content and material will be made to reflect changes in the field, as appropriate.

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April 4, 2017

Dear Members of the Proposal Review Committee:

I am writing to support Dr. Dan Farr's and Dr. Evelina Sterling's proposal to create low cost to students learning materials for Sociology 2251: Social Problems. This course is an important part of the online sociology major, which supports 100+ online students. But this course and transformation will not only benefit online sociology majors. It will provide more flexible and affordable options for f2f students needing flexibility. Also, we have four additional online majors either online or coming online in fall 2017 that this course will support in providing a relevant and beneficial elective, thereby speeding up graduation time for students across the university while reducing student debt load.

This course is an excellent class for transformation with a no cost textbook option. By replacing the current textbook with no cost to students resources, Dr. Farr and Dr. Sterling will save students in their social problems courses \$192.00 each, for a possible savings, if three sections of 30 students each are taught per year, of \$16,735.50.

At Kennesaw State University, faculty in the Sociology and Criminal Justice Department share their online courses with their colleagues, and it is possible that this course with no cost to students learning materials will benefit even more students as other faculty also teach the course using Dr. Farr and Dr. Sterling's innovations. Dr. Farr and Dr. Sterling understand that an important part of facilitating wider adoption of this textbook is creating robust and valuable support materials—quizzes in the lms to go along with the textbook, easily replicable assignments with grading rubrics, and PowerPoints (to create voiceover lectures) that bridge the gap between the course goals and the textbook readings. They have the skills to create high quality support materials for this textbook transformation project.

At KSU, online courses go through a Quality Matters re-review every three years, and course materials are updated. Therefore, sustainability is built into the course design. As such, sustainability will not be a challenge for these talented professors.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tamara Powell".

Dr. Tamara Powell, KSU Affordable Learning Georgia Champion and  
Director, College of Humanities and Social Sciences Office of Distance Education



College of Humanities  
and Social Sciences  
Department of Sociology  
and Criminal Justice

March 22, 2017

College of Humanities and Social Sciences  
Office of Distance Education

To the Members of the Review Committee:

I write this letter to offer my full support to the proposal for the Affordable Learning Georgia Textbook Transformation grant submitted by Dr. Evelina Sterling and Dr. Daniel Farr. The grant proposal seeks to identify and implement the use of no-cost course instructional materials for SOCI 2251: Social Problems. Social Problems is one of the three main lower-division Sociology courses offered by the Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice. Each semester the department offers multiple sections of the course, some online, reaching over 100 students each semester. The current textbook costs nearly \$200. By having a quality, low cost textbook available to instructors, students could save \$16,735 at KSU alone!

These savings would be available to all faculty teaching the social problems course; Drs. Sterling and Farr plan to make the no cost textbook available to all instructors. As part of the ALG website, all materials developed with these funds are publicly available. Therefore, instructors at other institutions, most of which offer a Social Problems course in their Sociology departments, will have access to the textbook. Students across the state will be able to benefit from a low cost Social Problems textbook.

Drs. Sterling and Farr are superbly qualified to work on this project. They are eminent and experienced scholars and instructors. I can think of none better to take on this important task. In fact, Dr. Farr has previously and successfully developed an Introduction to Sociology (SOCI 1101) course through an ALG grant. In summary, I fully support this proposal and strongly encourage the committee to fund it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dawn" followed by a stylized surname.

Dawn Michelle Baunach, Ph.D.  
Professor of Sociology  
Chair, Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice