Affordable Learning Georgia Textbook Transformation Grants

Final Report

Date: 12/12/2017

Grant Number: 232

Institution Name(s): Clayton State University

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

☐ Sheryne Southard, Professor of Legal Studies, SheryneSouthard@clayton.edu

☐ Lawrence Menter, Senior Lecturer, School of Business, LawrenceMenter@clayton.edu

Project Lead: Sheryne Southard, Professor of Legal Studies, SheryneSouthard@clayton.edu

Course Name(s) and Course Numbers: Tech 3115 (Legal Issues for Managers) and BLAW2106 (Legal Environment of Business)

Semester Project Began: Spring 2017

Semester(s) of Implementation: Fall of 2017

Average Number of Students Per Course Section: TECH 3115: 29 and BLAW 2106: 34.57

Number of Course Sections Affected by Implementation: 4 (TECH 3115) and 7 (BLAW 2106)

Total Number of Students Affected by Implementation: 359

1. Narrative

A. Describe the key outcomes, whether positive, negative, or interesting, of your project.

The goal of the project was three-fold: adopt, create, and diffuse open educational resources (OER) to offer no-cost-to-student interactive textbooks to reduce financial impediments to student's completion of their degree. The majority of Clayton State University student (57%) are Pell Grant recipients. Since CSU serves as an access school to many first-generation college students, this cost savings is significant.

The first outcome was the adoption of an OER textbook to eliminate the textbook cost in Tech 3115 ($81.00) and BLAW 2106 ($86.65). During this stage, we did not drastically change the materials, although some of the content was reorganized and abridged.

The second outcome was to create an interactive eBook by embedding interactive exercises and activities into the chapter content. Research indicates that this helps students to 1) prepare for quizzes and exam, 2) complete assignments, 3) improve their grade, and 4) master difficult concept (Vassall, 2015). We hypothesized that this enhanced resource would improve student outcomes and the data collected at the end of the implementation semester positively supports this assertion.

The third outcome was to expand the use of OER student resources at CSU by mentoring faculty members in Department of Interdisciplinary Studies in submitting a large-scale transformation grant and assisting with the adoption and creation of no-cost-to-students textbooks for other upper-division online courses. This third goal was attained as the project lead learned enough during this grant process to mentor a history professor in securing an ALG grant and to lead a successful grant application for the entire department for round 10. An additional benefit of the dissemination of this type of information is the faculty's heightens awareness of the student's financial obstacles in planning student resource requirements for additional courses.

B. **Describe lessons learned, including any things you would do differently next time.**

The first lessoned was the value of frequent and early communication of the implementation. Students received an email prior to the beginning of the semester notifying them of the free book for the class and links to the book. This information was received very positively by the students as indicated by three excerpts below of unsolicited student email responses to this notification:

> "I really appreciate that you have done this. The cost of books are out of control. I have two other classes where my books cost $200 each. I wish all other professors would do this as well. Thank you and I look forward to taking this class."
> "This is great news! Thank you!"
> "Thank You, I really appreciate that."

Near the middle of the semester, students were asked to "check in" and provide the instructor with feedback about their experience with the OER book. Several commented they liked it but would have preferred a print version. We then informed them they could access the PDF version, print out the text using their cost savings and create a notebook to serve the same purpose. This suggestion was positively received.

The second lesson learned was the need to carefully review the content and the links. As indicated previously, we reviewed the content and made minor revisions. However, we accessed several links with different formats and forwarded them to the students (Web-version, Word, PDF). We later learned that one of the links was a slightly different version with some variations in the chapters.

2. Quotes

- "I wish every class would use free text books. It is stressful paying so much money out of pocket for some books that you have to pay 300 dollars. I try to rent books every chance possible because it is cheaper. Thank you for using the free text book option."
- "I really appreciate the free text book because I'm a non-traditional student who pays out-of-pocket for all of my courses that I take."
- This course is much better with the text book being online because most of our research is online so it came with ease plus being free was a bonus.

3. Quantitative and Qualitative

Measures 3a. Overall

Measurements

Student Opinion of Materials

Was the overall student opinion about the materials used in the course positive, neutral, or negative?

Total number of students affected in this project: 85 for Fall 2017

- Positive: _ 94_____% of __ 67_ _ number of respondents
- Neutral: _ 6 _____% of _ 67____number of respondents
- o Negative:_____0____% of____67_____number of respondents

Student Learning Outcomes and Grades

Was the overall comparative impact on student performance in terms of learning outcomes and grades in the semester(s) of implementation over previous semesters positive, neutral, or negative?

Choose One
TECH 3115
- _X_Positive: Higher performance outcomes measured over previous semester(s)
- __ Neutral: Same performance outcomes over previous semester(s)
- __ Negative: Lower performance outcomes over previous semester(s)

Choose One
 BLAW
  2106
- _X__Positive: Higher performance outcomes measured over previous semester(s)
- __ Neutral: Same performance outcomes over previous semester(s)
- __ Negative: Lower performance outcomes over previous semester(s)

Student Drop/Fail/Withdraw (DFW) Rates

Was the overall comparative impact on Drop/Fail/Withdraw (DFW) rates in the semester(s) of implementation over previous semesters positive, neutral, or negative?

Drop/Fail/Withdraw Rate:

TECH 3115: __11_____% of students, out of a total __46__ students affected, dropped/failed/withdrew from in the final semester of implementation.

Choose One:

- _X_ Positive: This is a lower percentage of students with D/F/W than previous semester(s)
- ___ Neutral: This is the same percentage of students with D/F/W than previous semester(s)
- ___ Negative: This is a higher percentage of students with D/F/W than previous semester(s)

BLAW 2106: _5_____% of students, out of a total __39__ students affected, dropped/failed/withdrew from in the final semester of implementation.

Choose One:

- ___ Positive: This is a lower percentage of students with D/F/W than previous semester(s)
- _X Neutral: This is the same percentage of students with D/F/W than previous semester(s)
- ___ Negative: This is a higher percentage of students with D/F/W than previous semester(s)

3b. Narrative

Student impression data collected in this project includes quantitative data from Likert-scale formatted questions and qualitative data from open-ended questions. Students were offered nominal extra credit to incentivize participation. This had a positive effect as the participation rate was 79%. The grade distributions data was collected each of the exams in the courses.

To confirm the value of the OER resource for the Clayton State University student population, students were asked two questions 1) if they "have a small budget for textbooks," and 2) if they "take into consideration the cost of a course textbook and other class materials when register[ing] for a class". The responses for the first question were as follows: 88% - strongly agreed or agreed, 5% - neutral; and 7% – disagreed or strongly disagreed. The responses for the second question were as follows: 69% - strongly agreed or agreed, 19% - neutral; and 12% – disagreed or strongly disagreed. The extremely high percentage of students that agreed with the statements confirmed the students' textbook cost concerns and the need for the transformation project.

To evaluate whether the students were amenable to an alternative to the traditional (non-free) textbook, we queried them and 93% strongly agreed or agreed, and 7% were neutral. When surveyed about whether the OER book selected for the course was sufficient for their needs to successfully complete the course the results were extremely positive. A total of 97% strongly agreed or agreed and 3% were neutral. One student even commented: "I had a better outcome without a textbook hardcopy." The overwhelming high percentage of students that had a favorable viewpoint of the OER textbook and the complete absence of students with a negative impression leads us to believe the project was successful.

Our final inquiry was whether the students would also want the option to purchase a printed version of the OER resource. The feedback indicates that most of the students would not avail themselves of this option as the results were as follows: 15% - strongly agreed or agreed, 28% - neutral, and 57% - disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Finally, the most important variable was the impact of the project on the student outcomes. The students outcomes in both courses was positively impacted. The student grades during the implementation semester were higher in both course. The D/F/W rate was lower in Tech 3115 and neutral in BLAW 2106 in the implementation semester.

4. Sustainability Plan

Given the extremely favorable student feedback and positive student outcomes, we are committed to continue using the OER resources selected for the courses. Other faculty members in the Departments will be asked for feedback and suggestions for modifications to the text. Since the eBook is digital, changes can be immediately implemented. Annually, the

textbook will be reviewed in according accordance with the instructional matrix.   The intention is to continuously monitor, assess and improve the materials to maximize their pedagogical benefit to the students.

5. Future Plans

During the implementation semester, the course was adopted in two sections of Tech 3115 and one section of BLAW 2106. These were the sections taught in the implementation semester by the grant recipients. The grant recipients sought to use the pilot semester to resolve any issues before the books were adopted by other professors teaching the same courses (e.g. the problem with different links with different content). The OER book was not adopted in the implementation semester in three sections of BLAW 2106 and students in these sections attempted to transfer to the OER section once they learned of the free resources from their fellow students. Next semester, the OER resource will be adopted by the other professors teaching BLAW 2106 so that all of the students taking this course at the University can benefit from this project.

6. Description of Photograph

From Left to Right: Lawrence Menter, J.D. and Sheryne Southard, J.D.