



Free for Students



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OPEN
Textbooks

An Open Textbook Grants Program

Why have a TRU Open Textbook Grants Program?

The Thompson Rivers University Students' Union presents, for consideration by the Senate, a proposal for an Open Textbook Grants Program.

Open textbooks are course materials created, published, distributed, and adapted under open copyright licenses. This minimizes restrictions on use to provide users the greatest possible benefits. There is enormous potential for open textbooks to contribute to the accessibility and affordability of post-secondary education (see attached backgrounder).

However, we also recognize that integrating open textbooks into courses adds time and effort to faculty members' busy workloads. We believe that TRU should invest to recognize the value and facilitate those efforts through our proposed grants program.

This is not simply a worthy addition to our work here at TRU. Open education is at the heart of our mandate and mission as outlined in both the TRU Act and the Strategic Priorities.

The university must promote teaching excellence and the use of open learning methods. – Thompson Rivers University Act
(www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/05017_01)

We promote access to open educational resources and learning. – Thompson Rivers University Strategic Priorities 2014-2019
(tru.ca/_shared/assets/2014-2019_StrategicPriorities_PDF31428.pdf)

We believe this program would provide considerable benefits for both students and faculty here at TRU, but is also a critical piece of our role in post-secondary education in this province and beyond.

We have modelled our proposal after four very similar programs in place at institutions across BC, and seek to replicate and build on their demonstrated success.

Our Proposed Program

Purpose

- Support TRU faculty members to integrate open textbooks into their courses
- Build capacity for the creation and adaptation of open textbooks that are up-to-date and appropriate for TRU curricula



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Resources

- Staff support from Library/Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching
- Up to \$5000/grant (\$50,000/year total for the program)
- Course release, when creating a new open textbook (two course releases/year total for the program)

Principles

- Eligibility
 - Applicant: Any instructional faculty member(s)
 - Expenses:
 - Student assistants
 - Data collection and analysis
 - Dissemination (i.e. conferences)
- Evaluation
 - Extent of creation or adaptation of open educational resources
 - Potential impact on student experience – quality, accessibility, open pedagogy, and cost savings
 - Distribution of grants across a range of disciplines
- Expectations
 - Participate in open educational resources workshops
 - Share experiences with colleagues at TRU
 - Provide a summary report
 - Make the end product “open”
 - Plans to (re)use open educational resource in courses in the future

Outcomes (at full implementation)

- Participation
 - At least 10 projects/year
- Production
 - At least 2 new open textbooks/year
 - At least 3 adaptations/year
 - At least 3 ancillary materials/year



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Support for a TRU Open Textbook Grants Program

The Thompson Rivers University Students' Union has been engaging students and open education experts in building support for our proposal.

Since September 2016, over **1,800** students have signed a petition calling for the creation of such a program to support the creation and use of open textbooks.

In developing our proposal, we have drawn on the experience of other institutions that have operated similar programs. More information about these programs is available as follows:

- Simon Fraser University (sfu.ca/oergrants.html)
- Kwantlen Polytechnic University (kpu.ca/teaching-and-learning/open-education/grants)
- British Columbia Institute of Technology (commons.bcit.ca/library/2016/06/29/open-education-sprint-grants/)
- University of Northern British Columbia (unbc.ca/centre-teaching-and-learning/oer-development-grant)

Key staff from these programs have also provided endorsements of moving forward a similar program at TRU (see attached letters in full):

In my experience at KPU (currently the leading institutional adopter of open textbooks in the province), the creation of an OER grant program has provided several of our faculty with the critical assistance or time that they needed to locate relevant and high-quality OER and to adapt these for their courses. Aside from the significant cost savings to students, this small institutional investment has helped catalyze pedagogical innovation while building a culture of collaboration across the university.

Rajiv Jhangiani, Ph.D.
University Teaching Fellow in Open Studies & Psychology Instructor, KPU
Open Education Advocacy & Research Fellow, BCcampus

We are pleased to support TRUSU's proposal and believe that our relevant experience with the OER grants program at SFU strongly demonstrates the potential benefits of such a program to faculty, students and staff alike.

Hope Power
Teaching and Learning Librarian, SFU
On behalf of the SFU Open Educational Resource Grants Team



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Our Request of the Senate

The Thompson Rivers University Students' Union humbly requests that a voting Senator move and that the Senate consider and resolve that:

The Office of the Provost and Vice President Academic develop and report back to the Senate, not later than its September 2017 meeting, a plan to implement an open textbook grants program in accordance with the purposes, resources, principles, and outcomes described in the proposal presented.

Dear Mico,

Thank you for reaching out. I was delighted to learn of your efforts to raise awareness and support the adoption of open educational resources (OER) at Thompson Rivers University. As you know, the adoption of OER provides clear benefits to students in the form of immediate, permanent, portable, and cost-free access to required course materials. However, OER adoption also benefits faculty (by granting the freedom to adapt course materials to suit their pedagogical goals and course structure) and the institution as a whole (via better student performance, greater enrolment intensity, and higher student retention; see <http://openedgroup.org/review> for a review of this research literature).

TRU already has a reputation for innovation in teaching and learning (something I saw up close during my years as an Open Learning Faculty Member) and a good number of staff and faculty who have expertise with working with OER (including for TRU's OERu courses). Both of these factors—openness to innovation and OER expertise—are significant strengths that any campus-wide OER initiative could draw upon.

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I look forward to hearing about your planned campus initiatives. Please don't hesitate to contact me if I can be of any assistance.

Warm regards,



Rajiv Jhangiani, Ph.D.

University Teaching Fellow in Open Studies & Psychology Instructor, KPU
Senior Open Education Advocacy & Research Fellow, BCcampus



LIBRARY

8888 University Drive
Burnaby, BC V5A 1S6
Canada

February 8, 2017

On behalf of the Simon Fraser University (SFU) Open Educational Resources (OER) grants team, I'm pleased to provide this letter of support for the Thompson Rivers University Students' Union (TRUSU)'s proposal to launch a similar program at your university. Our OER grants program was established in December 2015 with funding from the Office of the Vice-President, Academic, and Provost and is jointly administered by the SFU Library and the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC).

OER are teaching, learning, and research resources created with the intention of being freely available to users anywhere. The use of OER in higher education is gaining momentum as a means of addressing textbook affordability for students and enhancing broad access to learning resources. The SFU Student Society (SFSS) has identified promotion of Open Textbooks as a priority advocacy issue for the past two years. Follow the hashtag #TextbookbrokeBC to find direct evidence of the impact of textbook pricing on students around the province.

For faculty, the use of OER provides flexibility and control over easily customizable, high-quality instructional resources. Through our grants program, SFU instructors may receive up to \$5,000 to redesign a course using OER as primary course material, and to help them adopt and/or adapt open textbooks or other OER for that purpose. In addition to the funding provided by these grants, staff from the Library and the TLC are available to assist recipients in locating, evaluating and adapting high-quality open resources as an alternative to commercial course materials.

In our pilot year, funded projects covered a variety of subject areas from linguistics to genetics, and engineering to sociology. To calculate the financial impact of these projects on SFU students we added up the total number of students annually in all courses involved:

Initial investment in grants program: \$45,000
Number of funded courses: 11 (via 10 grants)
Total enrollment in funded courses over one year: 2300
Average textbook cost: \$100
Total student savings after one year: \$230,000



LIBRARY

As these courses are offered in subsequent years, the savings will continue. This is a powerful return on investment and directly affects affordability and accessibility of education for current and future SFU students.

In addition, our program has fostered the growth of a local community of practice with interest and experience in OER and open education more broadly. SFU faculty, graduate research assistants, librarians and TLC staff have worked together on small project teams and have also come together several times as a larger group to discuss experiences and share findings.

We are pleased to support TRUSU's proposal and believe that our relevant experience with the OER grants program at SFU strongly demonstrates the potential benefits of such a program to faculty, students and staff alike.

Best wishes,

Hope Power (Teaching & Learning Librarian)

On behalf of the Simon Fraser University (SFU) Open Educational Resources (OER) grants team

Website: <https://www.sfu.ca/oergrants.html>



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Backgrounder on Open Textbooks

What are open textbooks?

Open textbooks are an aspect of open education, a growing movement around the world to make education more accessible and engaging. The principles of that movement have been defined as follows:

[Open education] is built on the belief that everyone should have the freedom to use, customize, improve and redistribute educational resources without constraint.

Cape Town Declaration on Open Education
(capetowndeclaration.org/read-the-declaration)

In practice, the open education movement creates, distributes, and uses a wide range of resources.

Open Education encompasses resources, tools and practices that are free of legal, financial and technical barriers and can be fully used, shared and adapted in the digital environment.

Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resource Coalition
(sparcopen.org/open-education/)

These resources include videos, lesson plans, software, games, simulations, wikis, blogs, adaptive tests, and textbooks!

Therefore, open textbooks can be understood as course materials created, published, distributed, and adapted without restriction to provide users the greatest possible benefits.

How do open textbooks work in practice?

There are many platforms for the development and publication of open textbooks, but a good place to start is the BCcampus Open Textbook Project (open.bccampus.ca).

A key feature of the processes of open textbooks is that faculty are empowered at every stage.

- **Creation:** This begins with creation. A faculty member(s) prepares the content. BCcampus provides a number of resources online such as an authoring guide to support this process.



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- **Publication:** The prepared textbook is then published “openly”. That means it is published under a copyright license with few restrictions on its use (see creativecommons.org).

Publishing through BCcampus means an open textbook is available in an online database (open.bccampus.ca/find-open-textbooks/). There is a constantly growing inventory of open textbooks available. Many courses will have something appropriate available now, or may in the next semester or year.

- **Adoption:** Faculty members can search the database, and choose to adopt an open textbook that suits their curriculum. Because of the open license, they may also remix or revise the content to suit the specifics of their course. A faculty member then assigns the textbook to their students, who can access it without charge.
- **Review, Adaptation, and Supplementation:** The open textbook process doesn't stop at adoptions. Beyond the customization possible by end users, the content of open textbooks can be continuously updated and improved.

For example, open textbooks can be peer-reviewed. BCcampus will offer honoraria for qualified reviews, and these are then published with the textbook (open.bccampus.ca/call-for-proposals/call-for-reviewers/).

Open textbooks can also be formally adapted or supplemented. BCcampus supports these projects too (open.bccampus.ca/projects-in-progress/). There is an increasing amount of ancillary resources like test banks, videos, presentation slides, etc. that go with open textbooks and can make adoption easier.

What are the benefits of open textbooks?

Open textbooks are, by design, intended to provide the greatest possible educational benefits for users – both students and faculty.

- **Cost-savings:** The obvious advantage for students is cost savings, since open textbooks are free.

Textbook costs have increased 88% in the last decade – more than four times faster than inflation – and are an increasing proportion of education costs. (Bureau of Labor Statistics – bls.gov/opub/ted/2016/college-tuition-and-fees-increase-63-percent-since-january-2006.htm)

This has serious implications on students' financial situation, but also on their learning. Recent studies show that rising textbook costs undermine students' engagement in the classroom. Students often choose not to buy a required textbook, to take fewer courses, avoid a course, drop a course, or withdraw from a course due to



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- 2016 Student Textbook and Course Materials Survey. Florida Virtual Campus, 2016. (<https://oerknowledgecloud.org/sites/oerknowledgecloud.org/files/2016%20Student%20Textbook%20Survey.pdf>)
- Data on Textbook Costs. Higher Education Strategy Associates, 2015. (<http://higherstrategy.com/data-on-textbook-costs/>)
- Student Budget Consultation Report 2017/18. Thompson Rivers University Students' Union, 2016. <http://trusu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/1A-SC-I-BC-2017-Report.pdf>
- **Easy Access and Multiple Formats:** The moment an instructor lists an open textbook as a course material, a student can access it online. The student can read it online or download multiple file types to suit them. For a small fee, they can have a copy printed and delivered to their home address. That means there is no delay and no barriers to engaging in the course material.
- **Retention:** Because open textbooks are free, students don't need to try to resell them to the Bookstore or on Kijiji. They can keep their copy throughout their studies - building a library for reference and lifelong learning.
- **Portability:** Because they are available in many digital formats, students can take many of their open textbooks with them wherever they go - without a 50lb backpack.
- **Customization:** Open copyright licenses provide users with permission for what David Wiley calls the 5Rs - to retain, reuse, revise, remix, and redistribute. Faculty are empowered to use the content in ways that best suit a course with minimal restriction. A study last year right here in BC found that 59% of faculty found open textbooks of comparable or better quality than traditional textbooks, and those faculty who had actually used an open textbook rated them even more favourably.
 - Jhangiani, R. S., Pitt, R., Hendricks, C., Key, J., & Lalonde, C. (2016). Exploring faculty use of open educational resources at British Columbia post-secondary institutions. BCampus Research Report. Victoria, BC: BCampus. (bccampus.ca/files/2016/01/BCFacultyUseOfOER_final.pdf)

In concert, these features of open textbooks contribute to a universal benefit of improved learning.



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How to get started using open textbooks

Hopefully this has created some interest in using open textbooks and other open educational resources in your teaching. If you want to get started, there are a number of great resources available right now at TRU.

First and foremost is the TRU Library, and specifically Brenda Smith, who serves as the Open Education Librarian.

- Brenda Smith, Open Education Librarian
brsmith@tru.ca
250.828.5098

Brenda has curated a fantastic set of Library Guides on open educational resources including open textbooks, and can be contacted for further assistance in locating appropriate open textbooks and incorporating them in your teaching (libguides.tru.ca/c.php?g=246499&p=1642306).

There is also a larger community of open education champions at TRU, some of whom have prepared a workshop on open textbooks that they have generously agreed to provide upon request. If a department or another group is interested in learning more about how to adopt open textbooks, you can contact them through Brenda.