
CAPSTONE FINAL REPORT

OPEN EDUCATION LEADERSHIP PROGRAM



One Minute to Open: An Open Education Email Marketing Campaign

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Abstract

Most faculty are familiar with open education and its benefits but hesitate to implement its practices due to the combination of limited time and an overwhelming amount of information.

This Open Educational Practices (OEP) Email Marketing Campaign introduces faculty to OEP according to their individual knowledge levels. Beginning with a single email, faculty choose the content journey they most closely identify with. Through this opt-in and self-identification process, faculty will be automatically sorted into audience segments by the email marketing software, ensuring that they receive only the content that is currently relevant to them. Emails will contain less than 260 words each so that they can be read in around one minute.

Each call to action contains small, straightforward steps to guide readers toward the discovery, adoption, and creation of OER or Open Pedagogy. The equity and inclusion benefits of Open Education will be emphasized in each of the journeys, with the goal of cultivating advocates across campus.

Community Resource: <https://1min2open.notion.site>

Project Overview

During the Fall semester of SPARC Open Education Leadership Program, I noticed a recurring theme emerge during conversations with my cohort—few members of our campus communities seemed to truly understand the meaning and transformative potential of Open Education. Some faculty lacked exposure, most were aware but unconvinced, some were excited but overwhelmed and lacking time, and the remaining few were fans and practitioners. Even among this latter group, however, there was limited knowledge of the value and benefits of OER beyond “free” let alone an understanding of Open Pedagogy.

All of this is, of course, unsurprising to anyone who has worked in Open Education for any period of time. Many who have come before me have diligently sought to solve this conundrum; because of them, we have a large and impressive body of open content about Open Education—we have Pressbooks, and YouTube videos, and H5P learning objects, and repositories full of content remixed for various contexts. We even have YouTube videos and H5P learning objects *inside* Pressbooks which are then found *inside* not just one but *many* repositories. Which begs the question: if we have the content, and the content is readily available and accessible, then why aren't people reading and learning it?

I still don't know the answer, but I do have a hunch—learning takes time, the amount of content is overwhelming, and the go-find-it format is inconvenient. This capstone project has been an attempt to take the knowledge to the people via an adaptive, micro-lesson-filled learning path disguised in a convenient format that even luddite faculty know and use: ✨email✨.

Aspirational Intentions

My original plan for this project was... let us say—absurdly ambitious. In the span of a single semester, I intended to map, create, test, review, and edit all content, launch the campaign, and analyze the results.

This did not happen.

Institutional Context

Lest my ambitions be interpreted as delusion, please note that I never planned on doing it all alone. At Texas State University Libraries, I am fortunate to work with several folks whose primary function lives in the realm of open. We have librarians for OER, Open Pedagogy, Copyright, Digital Publishing, and Open Licensing. We also have specialists for Instructional Design and Data Curation as well as a few people in administrative roles, like myself, who I can count on for support. In addition, I worked closely with our Marketing

Coordinator and IT department to learn the capabilities of our new email marketing tool, Microsoft Dynamics.

It should also be noted that this organizational structure is quite new, due, in large part to the arrival of new library leadership. At the time the project started, almost all of the people in positions mentioned above had been in their roles less than 5 months. Some were adjusting to new positions and learning new skills while others had been newly hired and were still completing the onboarding process.

The summer before, the University also got a new President. Along with a strategic initiative around retention and student success came attention to affordable learning materials. And before we knew it, the University announced plans to launch a flat fee, first-day access program through our bookstore vendor.

Challenges

The access program announcement gobbled up a great deal of our time and energy. Many people on campus assumed that such a program would nullify the need for OER, though the vendor assured us that increasing the number of OER adoptions would reduce the overall cost of the fee for all students come time to negotiate the annual contract. Our Open Education advocacy became urgently critical, and we pivoted our work accordingly.

Time and energy was also diverted in positive ways: We partnered with OpenStax to host two separate events, a luncheon and panel for administrators and a half-day workshop for faculty. Both programs were fruitful for a multitude of reasons. For this project, I took notes on OpenStax: how they were addressing common objections to OER adoption, the format and tone of their emails, the simplicity and consistency of language in both written and publicly delivered content. As the semester flew quickly by, I soon realized that the scope of my capstone project would need to be adjusted.

Augmenting the Work

Deciding to focus solely on the creation of the campaign map and content, I met with our OER and Open Pedagogy Librarians and Instructional Designer for brainstorming sessions. These meetings were essential to the development of the email sequence—my team asked annoyingly relevant questions, helped define desired outcomes, and lovingly taped the giant Post-It note with our plans onto my office door so I would see it everyday.

My original plan was to write the content and have the team edit and revise. At the encouragement of my SPARC mentor, I asked our OER and Open Pedagogy Librarians to take the lead on content creation, ensuring that their expertise would be used and valued. Due to time restraints and workload, however, in the end we pursued an augmented work model for drafting email content. Using the [Omniscience AI](#), I uploaded a custom [OER Dataset](#). All items in the dataset are licensed CC-BY; AI wrote the first drafts of emails based only on the dataset and any specifics included in the prompt. An unanticipated result of

this method is that all emails have a consistent voice and avoid the use of jargon. In the next step, human team members edited and revised the drafts. I later added the content for each email to the community resource, which includes a how to guide, user journey map, and two editions/options for deploying the campaign, depending on organizational need and access to email marketing tools.

We will officially launch the campaign in Fall 2023. I hope to receive IRB approval for the project so that I may publish the results of the analytics.

Evaluation

Project Outcomes

- Content for 15 emails
- Two editions of the campaign available for public use: Concise & Expanded
- Copy-and-pastable content for reusing or remixing for direct emails, websites, LibGuides, and other contexts
- How To Guide
- A use case for AI generated/remixed content from openly licensed material

Future Plans

- Official campaign launch: Fall 2023.
- A/B Testing!
- Acquire IRB approval to publish findings from MS Dynamics analytics and potential focus groups. Research questions include, but are not limited to:
 - Does engagement convert to OER adoption rates? To consultations with the department?
 - How do open rates compare between topics? What about click-through rates?
 - What are faculty perceptions of email as a vehicle for learning?
 - How long did it actually take people to read these emails? Does brevity affect engagement?
- Segment for the purpose of comparing engagement. This could be done by discipline, college, or department; by faculty rank or classification; or, according to topic/knowledge level self-selection.

Long Term Goals

- 8 new OER Adoptions by Spring 2024.
- 4 new open pedagogy materials developed by Spring 2024.
- 2 new Pressbooks created by Spring 2024.
- Achieve 23% open rate and 2.9% click through rate for at least 2 segments for the duration of the campaign (signifying awareness increase).

Lessons Learned

Prioritize yourself in order to prioritize the project.

As with most professional development endeavors, I struggled to prioritize work on my capstone project, because doing so felt (falsely) selfish. I reasoned that putting off the work would only negatively affect me. But the reality is that the project doesn't only affect me, it also has the potential to positively impact others.

Focus on the *Why* and lead with the pedagogy.

It's time to adjust our rhetoric. Inclusive and equity access programs are causing people to look harder at the many reasons Open Education is beneficial beyond being freely available. Present the holistic view and emphasize impact on student learning. Open Pedagogy is a solution to the post-COVID student engagement dip.

Resist the urge to include all the things.

Inspiring innovation and change does not happen with an exhaustive list of links. Do not go librarian-ing your marketing materials. Give yourself a word count (260 or less = roughly one minute to read 🗨️) and don't be afraid to keep it high level. The details will come later.

Set small goals for big dreams.

Aim for your blue sky idea, but set a series of small goals to get there. This will allow greater flexibility for new developments, delays, or opportunities to collaborate. Go slower than you think you should.



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