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# CAPSTONE FINAL REPORT

OPEN EDUCATION LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

**SPARC\***

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## Assessing Faculty Needs to Inform Development of a Campus OER Initiative

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# Abstract

This final report shares the process and outcomes of my capstone project as part of the 2020-2021 SPARC Open Education Leadership Program. My project entailed conducting a faculty OER needs assessment survey at Gonzaga University in Spring 2022. My overarching goal for this capstone project was to understand current attitudes, use, needs, and barriers related to OER at a local level in order to eventually develop an OER initiative on our campus. In order to accomplish this, I designed and conducted a faculty survey, and compiled the results in a report to be shared with campus stakeholders. I also created a Faculty OER Survey Toolkit based on my experience. The first section of this report provides an overview of the project, its four phases, and the activities involved in each. The second section evaluates the outcomes of the project and discusses future goals. The final section reflects on some of the lessons I learned throughout the project.

# Project Overview

## Background

Gonzaga University does not currently have a formal OER initiative or program. When I first began thinking about my capstone project, I knew I wanted to do something that would jump-start a conversation about formalizing support for OER at Gonzaga. I also knew that proposing any kind of new initiative on my campus would ultimately require having data about our specific environment and needs. It occurred to me that I didn't know much about the extent that OER is used or not used on our campus, what our faculty think about OER, and what form of support would serve them best. At that point, it became clear that my capstone project should revolve around assessing local faculty needs related to OER, and that is when the Faculty OER Needs Assessment project was born.

The primary goal of the project was to document and understand Gonzaga faculty attitudes, use, needs, and barriers related to OER. In order to accomplish this, I designed and conducted a faculty survey, and compiled the results in a report to be shared with the library administration and potentially other stakeholders at a later time. The project consisted of four main phases: Planning, Implementation, Data Analysis, and Reporting.

## Planning

I began planning the survey in December 2021. My first step was to create a timeline for the entire project, which I updated often as I made progress (or discovered I left out a step). I then began to research survey design and IRB requirements, as this was my first time conducting a formal survey and applying for IRB approval. At the same time, I also sought out existing faculty OER surveys to see if there were any I could adapt. Next, I created a draft of my survey questions and shared them with some colleagues for feedback. I also learned how to use Qualtrics to create the survey. I then devised a strategy for distributing my survey through our Faculty Senate newsletter, and coordinated with the Faculty Senate President on the timing and logistics of this. In January 2022, I submitted my full project proposal to the IRB and received notice of exemption about a week later.

## Implementation

The survey officially launched on January 26, 2022 via the Faculty Senate newsletter that is distributed to all senators. The announcement encouraged senators to share the survey widely with faculty in their departments. Two weeks later at the Faculty Senate meeting, the Faculty Senate president verbally reminded all of the senators about the survey. After the survey had been out for three weeks, I still had only received a handful of responses. At that point, I moved on to plan B, which was to ask all of the liaison librarians to send the survey directly to faculty in their liaison departments. This strategy was much more

effective, and survey responses came rolling in shortly thereafter. The survey was originally set to close on Friday, February 18, but I received several responses over the weekend so I decided to keep it open for an additional week until February 25. In the end, I received a total of 59 complete responses.

## **Data Analysis**

I examined and analyzed my data in Qualtrics throughout the month of March. This month was particularly busy with other commitments, so I only spent about two weeks on this part of the project. Much of that time was spent familiarizing myself with the backend data analysis tools in Qualtrics. Once I got the hang of it, I created charts and tables for each question with various breakouts to try and identify patterns in the data. As I made discoveries, I noted these in a Word document.

## **Reporting**

Writing the report on the findings was the most time-consuming and difficult part of the project. In part, this was because the survey itself was rather long—14 main questions, plus up to 7 additional questions depending on how faculty responded to earlier questions—so writing about the findings from each question took a while. This was also the first time I had written a report for a survey, so I initially wasn't sure how to structure it. Thankfully, my mentor shared an example of a report he wrote in the past that I used as inspiration.

I also struggled with figuring out the best way to incorporate figures and tables into my report. Initially, I tried recreating all of my figures and tables using Google Docs since that's where I was writing the narrative, but that turned out to be a bit of a mess. Once I mastered Qualtrics Reports, I realized that it made more sense to create my figures and tables there and export them to append to my narrative.

## **Community Resource**

Over the course of my capstone project, I discovered that there weren't many existing resources about planning faculty surveys related to OER, and it felt like this was an area where I could contribute. For my Community Resource, I decided to create a Faculty OER Survey Toolkit. The toolkit is a collection of resources to help others with the process of planning and conducting a faculty survey about OER. The survey instrument I used for my needs assessment along with my final report are both included in the toolkit among a number of other resources.

## **Next Steps**

The next step for the Faculty OER Needs Assessment is to share the final report with stakeholders at Gonzaga. I intend to initially share it with library administrators and the

library faculty so we can come up with internal recommendations for moving forward based on the findings. At a later date, it may make sense to share it with other stakeholders at the university as well.

# Evaluation

The immediate goal of my capstone project was to document and understand Gonzaga faculty attitudes, use, needs, and barriers related to OER. I successfully accomplished this goal by designing and conducting a faculty survey, and analyzing and reporting on the results. I also used the entire experience to inform the creation of my community resource, the Faculty OER Survey Toolkit. The only task remaining at this point is to share the final report with key stakeholders at my institution, which I plan to do in the coming weeks.

While I received 59 responses to my needs assessment survey, this was only a small percentage of Gonzaga faculty (8%), which was a bit of a disappointment. The low response rate made it difficult to analyze the data in certain ways. For example, in many cases, only one person from a department responded, so looking at the data by department wasn't very revealing. I managed this by grouping departments together and analyzing the data by discipline instead. If I could do it all over, I would reduce the number of questions on my survey, both to attract more participants and to lessen the amount of time needed for data analysis and reporting. At the same time, there are a couple of instances where I would have liked to have added a follow-up question so I could draw more meaningful conclusions. For example, when I asked respondents if they would consider using OER in the next three years, it would have been helpful to include a follow-up question for those who responded "no" to find out why.

Understanding faculty needs related to OER is part of a larger effort to eventually develop an OER initiative at Gonzaga. In the next year, I hope to use the results from the needs assessment to springboard conversations on campus leading towards that higher level goal. More specifically, over the summer, I plan to collaborate with library colleagues to develop recommendations based on the findings of the report and create an OER roadmap for the library.

# Lessons Learned

I learned a number of valuable lessons over the course of this project. The first is to start planning your project early. Certain steps may take longer than anticipated to complete, so give yourself a bit of breathing room from the outset. Breaking your project into phases and creating a timeline for each milestone is also helpful, as long as you acknowledge that you may need to periodically adjust your timeline as circumstances arise.

Another lesson I learned is to not be afraid to ask for help. There were several times during the project where I was struggling to figure out something on my own (e.g. Qualtrics) and it would have been much faster to simply ask for help at the beginning. Doing this may also open your eyes to resources on your campus or elsewhere that you never knew existed.

Lastly, I learned not to make assumptions about faculty at my institution. Before conducting the survey, I thought that no one at Gonzaga was using OER because so few faculty had ever asked for assistance from the library. The results of my survey demonstrated that, in fact, we have many faculty already using (and creating!) OER. This illustrates the importance of taking the time to do a needs assessment in the first place before embarking on a new initiative.



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