
CAPSTONE FINAL REPORT

OPEN EDUCATION LEADERSHIP PROGRAM



Want to Join the Open Education Movement?: A Road Trip

Zachariah Claybaugh

University of Connecticut

May 15, 2022

Abstract

The following report gives an overview of the capstone project I created as part of the 2021-2022 SPARC OER Leadership Program. I am new to my home institution, the University of Connecticut (UConn), and much of my capstone project is reflective of the ways I went about better understanding the status of and advocating for open education at UConn. My primary goal with this project was to organize my own thoughts, develop strategies for advocacy, and encapsulate this in content that provides users with valuable information about the open education movement and how to potentially leverage that information to push forward open education at their institutions.

The core of the project is around research and design. I wanted to provide users with editable promotional materials that they can utilize for their own work, as I have for mine. The images were developed in the publishing program Canva and were created using their free suite of design elements. The content of the images focuses on data derived from public sources, academic research about open education, and publicly-available research from an advocacy group. This allows users to utilize similar tools, if they so wish, to modify the content to fit the needs and reflect the communities at their home institutions. Additionally, I developed a learning module that walks users through information about open education, spaces to find resources, information about government policy around open education, open education organizations, funders, and strategies for engaging with stakeholders.

This process helped me to develop further as an open education advocate and practitioner, while also allowing me to learn new skills and refine my outreach efforts around open education. My hope is that others will find this material useful and repurpose it for their own needs.

Project Overview

This capstone project is composed of promotional materials and a learning module. The promotional materials were created using Canva and can be utilized by signing up for a free account through the platform. The module was created in Adobe Captivate. In addition to the publicly posted module, users can access and utilize the base PowerPoint file and have the ability to reach out to me for the Captivate files for the resource. All materials are licensed using a CC BY 4.0 license.

The entire project was developed with an eye towards serving the wider higher education community. As someone that found it difficult to get well grounded in the open education ecosystem when I started this work in 2016, I wanted to build something that individuals interested in learning could utilize as a single entryway to the basics of open education, while also providing a space to learn who to connect with in the larger community, such as government entities and non-governmental organizations. Additionally, I wanted to connect people with the spaces they could go to for professional development opportunities, funding, and to find open content. This led me to the creation of the learning module, titled "Want to Join the Open Education Movement?: A Road Trip." While hopefully providing the wider community with a useful resource, building the content for this module aided me in organizing content for my own usage. It provided a valuable reflective exercise to see some of the ways that my knowledge of the open education movement has expanded with my involvement in the SPARC OER Leadership Program, and displays a more holistic understanding of open education that can be applied for strategic outreach purposes.

The module is divided into eight sections. The first section presents a definition of open education. Three areas of open education are the focus of section two, with subsections discussing open courseware, open pedagogy, and open educational resources (OER). Section three directs users to opportunities for developing as an open education leader. Subsections on this topic direct people to conferences focused on open education and formal educational programs for developing your skills and knowledge in the open education realm. Section four focuses on OER and government policy with two subsections. The first subsection highlights state-level information for the United States and OER at the provincial and territorial levels in Canada. The second subsection highlights movement at the national level in the United States. Organizations with a focus on open education are the subject of section five. Section six calls attention to spaces for pursuing funding opportunities for open education projects. Section seven emphasizes the importance of getting to know your institution, with subsections spotlighting stakeholders and data. The final section encourages users to think strategically about their outreach efforts by combining an understanding of the people that you wish to reach and their specific needs and goals and how the open movement can help them satisfy those needs and reach their goals.

The promotional materials created for the capstone focus on advocating for usage of open educational resources (OER). Two of the images do this by utilizing current public data about my home institution (the University of Connecticut). One poster uses data provided by College Scorecard from the U.S. Department of Education to highlight the percentage of UConn students receiving Pell Grant assistance. Another highlights the indebtedness of current and past UConn students with data again from College Scorecard. Another poster uses information provided by research from the U.S. PIRG, which highlights the number of students who forego purchasing required instructional materials. The final image highlights the numerous benefits of open education. The UConn-specific numbers gleaned from the College Scorecard helped me to consider the overall impact lower instructional costs can have on my specific community. The first image derived from these sources lays out in clear detail a singular data point that traditionally helps to mark the number of students with difficult financial circumstances, percentage of Pell Grant recipients. While the second shows the percentage of students taking on federal loans to pay for their education, along with the percentage of students struggling to pay back their education debt. Seeing these percentages helps the viewer to better encapsulate the financial struggles of past and current UConn students. For individuals that wish to use these images as templates for their own promotional work, as long as they are at institutions that participate in the federal financial aid system, they can simply look up these same metrics for their own institution and plug them into the images. The two other promotional images do not require modification of the content, unless desired. All images can be edited to include the colors of the user's institution, branding can be added, and any other modifications a user may desire.

My long-term plan for this project is to continue adding and modifying content. I regularly create promotional materials for open education and they will be uploaded to the capstone project's page as they become available. All will be openly licensed for others to reuse as they wish. The learning module will be regularly updated to reflect changes in the open education ecosystem, but also with technological changes, such as new delivery formats. It is my hope that this space will become one that people in the community find relevant and valuable to their own work. There is also the possibility of building out a larger repository for this type of content generated by the larger open community. Creating and cultivating a space for people to share openly-licensed promotional materials may be outside the boundaries of this instance of the project homepage. However, if it is something the larger community feels is a need, finding a more appropriate space for housing this content is something that I would be interested in exploring.

Evaluation

While not everything I had hoped made it into the final project, I was able to complete the core element of my capstone, the module. I am particularly proud of this, because I feel it encapsulates much of what I learned during the SPARC OER Leadership Program and during my time as an open education advocate. I hope this information can be useful to others in the higher education community. The additional elements, the promotional images, were just a sample of what I had hoped to create. However the ones that are included are usable and hopefully effective. My plan is to continue uploading additional images to the capstone project page as I create them.

Overall, I am pleased with the end product and feel it reflects the work that was put into it. The resources created are hopefully of interest to and useful for others involved (or looking to become involved) in the open education movement.

Lessons Learned

Work and life happen, so lean on the planning from the roadmap document created in the first semester. That careful planning pays off when completing your capstone project and can help keep you on track and on task when the inevitable interruptions occur.

Lean on your mentor. My mentor was an extremely valuable resource in everything from the capstone project, to advice about work, and thinking long-term about how the SPARC OER Leadership experience can impact your professional growth.

Expect the unexpected. When building the module, I was delving into Adobe Captivate for really the first time. It took several iterations of the module and many modifications before it came out looking close to what I wanted. I certainly did not expect some of the issues the software had with modifying existing slides and adding new ones.

Try new things. Building a module with Adobe Captivate was a new experience, as mentioned above. While it was not the easiest software to use, I feel the project is better for the struggles.

Know when to say when. I have a tendency to continue tweaking stuff as long as possible. While I think everything turned out well, it may have been less stressful completing some of the items in the project if I stepped away and left well enough alone.

Make time on your calendar for focused work and stick to it. I was not always good about doing this. Just remember that you cleared that space for a reason, so stick with it.

You don't have to know everything. I utilized the expertise of many people in creating this content. My colleagues at UConn, Kate Fuller, Kelsey Brown, and Jason Nicosia were instrumental in suggesting content changes and technical expertise. And my mentor, Bryan McGeary, was very helpful in making valuable suggestions to the content and planning.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons [Attribution 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) License.