

Seneca OER Action Plan 2022-2024

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Executive Summary

Overview

Open educational resources (OER) have been developed and used for over twenty years. Their impact has been felt worldwide but never as much since 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic really brought to light how access to open educational resources in digital format can impact a course. Aside from day-one access for all students, the cost saving benefits for all students, and the increased course materials flexibility for faculty, many students with disabilities find lower barriers when accessing OER. Hybrid and flexible delivery modes still outnumber in-person classes at Seneca and OER can provide equitable course materials access to all students in all modes.

For years now, Seneca has invested resources into integrating open and no additional cost materials into courses, resulting in flexible approaches to teaching and learning as well as cost savings of between \$1,645,597 and \$2,468,396 for students from September 2019 to December 2020. Now is a critical time to grow Seneca's OER commitment even further.

Seneca Values

At Seneca, we understand the importance of OER and how it aligns closely with all of our values:

- Respect - understand that our students have lived experiences and knowledge to contribute to their learning just as much as faculty. OEP offers a chance for learning to be more participatory.
- Excellence - with OER faculty will be empowered to customize resources specifically for their learning contexts. Publishers will not dictate what our students learn, instead our academics will be guided internally by our own experts.
- Innovating - Both OER and open pedagogy are still new approaches in higher education, the tools and strategies allow us to experiment and explore better ways for teaching and learning.
- Community - OEP is often centred around community and collaboration. Many hands are involved in developing, adapting and maintaining OER.
- Diversity - OEP allows for all voices to be heard. Instead of resources or approaches developed solely in the white, euro-centric tradition, OEP gives the opportunity for new histories, new frameworks, and more inclusive examples to be explored. Open pedagogy can empower students to take the course in a new direction, one that involves silenced voices and censored truths.

Objective

The Seneca OER Action Plan provides a comprehensive overview of our future goals to support awareness and growth of OER across the college. The action plan focuses on building infrastructure and community, outreach and communication strategies, and assessment of OER. The plan begins in September 2022 and continues through to August 2024, at which point we will reflect on the program once again to ensure we are aligned with college goals.

Solution

Through the goals outlined in this action plan, the institution can operationalize OER in our day to day teaching and learning. Investing in staff, students, and incentives can further motivate faculty to adapt and adopt OER into their curriculum which will benefit students in many different ways, especially in a more virtual and flexible Seneca. Building a strong infrastructure to support faculty is the key to continued success

of OER at Seneca. Through these efforts, we can contribute to student success, cultivate innovative pedagogy, and improve the teaching and learning experience at a post-pandemic Seneca.

Why is OER Important for Seneca?

OER impacts various stakeholders at Seneca in different ways. Outlined below are different ways OER impacts our students, faculty, and administration.

Students

What are some things students face on a daily basis that prevent them from fully engaging in their studies? Often it is a lack of time, commuting, finances, or part-time work. Open education focuses on practices that create a more inclusive and accessible environment for learning, including open textbooks, which are resources developed by educators and then often adapted by a professor. These are usually available online with no extra cost to students. Students can print or not print any part of them, though the bookstore is happy to print bound copies at a low cost. Seneca has made a good start with open texts and has saved students between \$1,645,597 and \$2,468,396 from September 2019 to December 2020.

There is also open pedagogy which includes students customizing course resources, they can create examples or cases that reflect their experience and then future students will use them to learn and further build upon.

Faculty

Faculty often say they feel constrained by the textbook model. Some faculty may feel guilty assigning a textbook that they only use a portion of, while others feel the content isn't exactly what they are looking for or the examples are not representative of our communities. Faculty use a lot of online resources but there are also resources they can customize themselves or with their students. These resources exist and there may be funding available for them to work on adapting them. Both Seneca and eCampusOntario offer grants to faculty who are looking to adapt and adopt open texts into their course. Not only will it empower faculty to have custom course resources, it will make access to course materials so much easier for students.

Administrators

Seneca is focusing our strategy on diversity, equity, and inclusion, as well as pivoting to a more virtual college. Open education practice has the potential to help us achieve these goals. Open educational practice includes open textbooks and open pedagogy. Both can include students in the educational process, but they can also reduce barriers to resources for example, day one access and cost savings for course materials for all students, including those who require accommodated versions of materials, are achievable with open textbooks.

With open pedagogy, students have the opportunity to create reflections of themselves in the course materials, as well as reflections of the diverse communities found at the college. Open projects at Seneca have already saved students between \$1,645,597 and \$2,468,396 from September 2019 to December 2020, but there is more we can accomplish. By extending the use of open textbooks and other cost efficient course resources we can reduce further financial barriers for students, but also make access to materials seamless for virtual students.

Expansion of our OE program could include creating an open education hub where students lead adaptation projects for open texts or open course resources, such as interactive activities. Students would gain skills such as project management, interpersonal communications, time management, copy-editing, graphic design, and technology skills while assisting faculty to develop open resources that would be used by other students at the college. Faculty from all Seneca campuses, including those overseas could be supported through the open education hub.

To ensure sustainability of our OE initiatives we need to implement a maintenance program that could be facilitated through the open education hub. Students could coordinate with faculty to conduct the review and edit of open resources previously developed. These projects can further extend the skills gained by students through the hub but also can ensure the resources are kept up-to-date and useful for their courses.

SMART Goals

Our goals are focused on expanding the already operational OER initiative, except now we are focusing on streamlining our procedures and building capacity. We hope to build capacity by including students in our future OER initiatives as well as benefit from the recent growth in the Teaching and Learning Centre. Increased capacity will also help us achieve the other goals outlined below.

| SMART Goal: Launch the revised open text adaptation grant by September 2022 |
|---|
| Specific Steps I Can Take: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare a new Terms of Reference • Prepare a new application form • Draft copy for the T&L website • Draft copy for marketing's weekly newsletter |
| Potential Collaborators & Resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centennial College has a similar program so I will request info from them to write the adapted terms of reference • Teaching and Learning will be providing the guidance for the new grant program • The library provides multiple resources for the grant winners so I will need to liaise with the managers for the adapted terms of reference • Past grant winners are eligible for a grant to update their original resource, I will send targeted communications to them. |
| Potential Barriers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty still don't have a contract, arbitration will begin in September but many faculty are still working to rule until the contract is settled. |
| Questions/Issues I Need to Resolve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a relationship with the new VPA |
| Desired Outcome(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New grant program launches for the Fall 2022 semester and we receive multiple applications • Our new VPA is excited and supportive of furthering our commitment to OER |

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| SMART Goal: Involve students in the grant recipients' adaptation of open texts |
| Specific Steps I Can Take: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft a plan for having students work on open text projects • Find funding for the students • Find potential talent pools for students (co-op programs, etc.) |
| Potential Collaborators & Resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centennial College, Ontario Tech, and Fanshawe college all have similar programs so I will seek their advice • Lambton College has a design program that we could potentially partner with for hiring. • We could also partner with Seneca's software development program |
| Potential Barriers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because many colleges hire students to work on these projects we may have a hard time finding students. • Training and supervising is time consuming and we don't have a dedicated person to work on the grant projects. • Ideally we would like students to commit for multiple semesters otherwise training each semester would become cumbersome and inefficient. |
| Questions/Issues I Need to Resolve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many students can we hire and who will train, supervise and pay them? • Where can we find students who can commit for longer periods of time? |
| Desired Outcome(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We create an incubator where students are able to assist faculty with their adaptation projects in an efficient and cost-effective way. |

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| SMART Goal: Onboarding of Teaching and Learning employees by December 2022 |
| Specific Steps I Can Take: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft a framework for Teaching and Learning staff who will be working on open text adaptations, eg. scope and expectations, workflow, guidelines • Provide training on specific tools related to open texts as well as guidelines for copyright, citation, and other related processes. |
| Potential Collaborators & Resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult with other Ontario colleges who use their T&L Centre staff for open text adaptations • Engage the library's copyright team to organize the training for copyright and citation • ITS will provide accounts and access to tools for staff |
| Potential Barriers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching and Learning is extremely busy with lots of different types of projects • Many of the staff will not have experience with open text related tools and issues • Many of the T&L staff are new to Seneca and will not be familiar with our networks |
| Questions/Issues I Need to Resolve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure open texts adaptations are added to job descriptions of staff in T&L so that they are not treated as "side of desk" projects |

Desired Outcome(s)

- T&L staff become proficient in open text tools, eg. Pressbooks, H5P, as well as copyright and citation guidelines and are able to efficiently assist the grant recipients

SMART Goal: Streamline Metrics**Specific Steps I Can Take:**

- Review past metrics and identify what data is missing, redundant, or needs to be more fulsome
- Map data points to college and library strategic plans and mission
- Develop a dashboard for statistics that admin can view on demand

Potential Collaborators & Resources:

- Systems Librarian and the Manager of User Services have extensive experience with developing data dashboards so I can consult with them to build one for OER
- Explore Google's metrics system (the one we use for the Learning Portal) to see if it's appropriate in this context.

Potential Barriers:

- Lack of data expertise in the library and the Teaching and Learning Centre and lack of time to develop this expertise

Questions/Issues I Need to Resolve:

- Can someone in the library help me develop the framework for these revised metrics?
- Is there an existing framework online I could work from?

Desired Outcome(s)

- Easily accessible and readable metrics for admin and students to readily understand the impact of the OER initiatives

SMART Goal: OER work added to sabbatical and PD time applications/approvals**Specific Steps I Can Take:**

- Discuss this with the Dean of Quality and a Director in HR.
- Find exemplar programs from universities and colleges in North America.
- Create an outline of how an OER project could look within the timeline of a 2-month PD, or a 6-12 month leave.

Potential Collaborators & Resources:

- Other colleges in Ontario
- Ontario OER librarians group

Potential Barriers:

- Lack of knowledge about OER in HR

Questions/Issues I Need to Resolve:

- Is OER different enough from curriculum development to be considered an outcome for a leave?

Desired Outcome(s)

- OER is considered for outcomes for a leave, in addition to research, curriculum development, and credential.

Program Timeline

Having just experienced the COVID pandemic, one of the most incredible events in our lifetime, we have learned to expect the unexpected. Thus, any timeline for any project has to be flexible and dynamic to adapt to sudden changes in our work and environment. The funding from the Teaching and Learning Centre for open grants is finite and so the grants will adhere to the timeline below, but the work on the adapted texts can continue past deadlines and extensions will be offered if needed.

| | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 |
|---------------|--|--|---|
| Winter | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 4 projects will begin, consult with faculty and develop a project timeline Liaise with T&L staff and students, and library about the work required Pilot a metrics dashboard Reach out to Dean of Quality and a director in HR to discuss adding OER to PD leaves | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 4 projects will begin, consult with faculty and develop a project timeline Liaise with T&L staff and students, and library about the work required Speak to Teaching and Learning Director about the renewal of funding for the project |
| Summer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revise terms of reference for open text adaptation grant program Draft new communications materials | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work may continue on projects or they may take the summer off and resume in the Fall T&L staff will continue to work on projects Prepare communications materials to call for additional applications | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work may continue on projects or they may take the summer off and resume in the Fall T&L staff will continue to work on projects Prepare communications materials to call for additional applications |
| Fall | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch the new grant program and review applications Train T&L staff to prepare them for projects beginning in Winter 2023 Hire and train students Liaise with library about the changes to the program Begin exploration of metrics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review applications Hire and train students Deploy the metrics dashboard Calls for PD leave applications go out so ensure I have the OER portion included | |

Budget and Resources

The Teaching and Learning Centre has committed to funding the revised open text adaptation grant program for two years both by funding the course releases for the faculty, and by providing the support for the adaptations (graphic design, multimedia, instructional design, etc.). New this year will be the inclusion of students to work on the adaptations which the Teaching and Learning Centre has also agreed to fund. We will begin by hiring two students to work on the projects and then see if we need to expand the team. After the two years we will revisit the funding model.

Teaching and Learning Centre Budget

Faculty Grants for 2022-2023 Academic Year - \$24K

- 4 faculty x 1 course release for 2 consecutive semesters

Staff for 2022-2023 Academic year - in-kind from the Teaching and Learning Centre

- Student employees - 2 students x 24 hours x 12 weeks x 2 semesters
- T&L employees for graphic design, multimedia, data entry, pedagogy - as needed

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Outreach and Communication Plan

General Outreach

We have some solid, on-going communications and outreach already in place at Seneca, here is a sampling of our activities:

- Open Call for OER Grant Applications - [This call](#) is to be published on the Employee Intranet and is highlighted in the weekly college newsletter sent to all employees.
- The [OER information website](#) is already posted on the Employee Intranet
- I will continue to write a regular article for the academic newsletter on the status of the OER grant program and include some basic metrics, [example here](#). I also try to include infographics for quick overviews of data.
- I will write additional interviews for the academic newsletter, called [OER Stories](#), which focuses on a single case of OER adoption into a course.
- I have created a [guide for Pressbooks](#) so that faculty can get started on their books on their own.
- I will encourage more faculty to appear on the Teaching and Learning Centre's [podcast](#) to tell their stories about adaptation and adoption of OER

But I recognize this is a lot of content to ingest in an already packed academic life for faculty. Sometimes the best communication is when I talk to them in person or better yet, when their colleagues talk to them. I would like to encourage more visits to faculty meetings and more follow-ups in person. Although it can be time-consuming I feel it is worth the work.

Continuing Education

We currently try to include an OER session at as many Teaching and Learning events as possible, covering topics such as finding open content, adapting textbooks, and creating open learning activities and assessments. We also like to remain a constant presence at provincial conferences and events to share our work from Seneca but also to find partners and build our network. Here are some examples of past sessions:

- [Faculty Panel](#) on adapting textbooks
- [Session on the Learning Portal](#) for part-time faculty
- [Session for librarians](#) from other institutions on how our bookstore collaboration works
- [H5P workshop](#)
- [Overview of our OER grant program](#) provided to Ontario library staff
- [Training for our library staff](#) on what their roles are in OER
- [Templates and workflows](#) created for other libraries to conduct training in OER support

I would like to continue offering these types of sessions, but also start to create asynchronous materials to support faculty who cannot attend our workshops synchronously but don't find the recordings of the workshops sufficient.

Evaluation and Assessment Plan

Goals

I am often asked for evidence of how a project or program positively impacted students and the college, often to answer the question "should it be funded further?" Resources are often scarce and so we need to ensure our efforts are producing gains. As a result we could use goals to guide our selection of metrics to demonstrate outcomes for the OER initiative. Goals of our OER program are to:

- Contribute to student success
- Enhance the teaching and learning experience for both faculty and students
- Lower access barriers for accommodated and/or distance learners
- Reduce costs for students
- Demonstrate OER are being used by students
- Support the positive reputation of the college as an OER innovator and leader

Metrics

CONTRIBUTE TO STUDENT SUCCESS

In the past we have discussed collecting student performance indicators in courses where OER is used in certain sections while a textbook is used in other sections. We were told we should not and could not measure student success in this way as there are too many external variables that affect a student's potential success. I would like to revisit this with the new Director of Teaching and Learning to see if there is a way we can explore these measurements, such as:

- Changes in grades
- Changes in drop rates
- Changes in graduation rates

ENHANCE THE T&L EXPERIENCE FOR BOTH FACULTY AND STUDENTS

It makes the most sense to explore qualitative data for this goal as students and faculty would need to reflect on their experiences with OER compared to traditional textbooks. We have facilitated surveys with [faculty](#) and [students](#) in the past to determine their perceptions of OER and how it impacts their T&L experience. Unfortunately the uptake for these have always been extremely low and the data likely has low external validation. We may have to offer incentives for more people to participate.

LOWER ACCESS BARRIERS FOR ACCOMMODATED AND/OR DISTANCE LEARNERS

This goal is to ensure all students have access to readings on day one of a course, whether they are studying on campus, from another country, and whatever their format needs are. Therefore I would like to advocate adding a question to the college-wide evaluation surveys at the end of term asking whether the student had access to their course readings on day one of their course, if not, why not?

REDUCE COSTS FOR STUDENTS

I collaborate with faculty and the bookstore to [calculate these numbers](#) and then track enrollment from semester to semester. We use a formula from [BC Campus](#) "Our high end of the range will still be based on the total cost savings based on new textbook purchases. But the new low value is to better reflect the alternative buying options available for students. This low end value will be calculated based on an average cost of \$100 per student per textbook. This \$100 value is becoming more widely used in the open textbook community to represent students' savings, and was derived by OpenStax College based on a formula that takes into account used textbook purchases and rental costs as well as new textbook costs. This number is also being used by the Tidewater Community College in their Textbook Zero program." For texts that are much lower than the \$100 average suggested above we use the cost of the text multiplied by half the number of students for the low estimate and the cost multiplied by three quarters for the high.

I then present it in a [more digestible table](#) for publishing in updates.

DEMONSTRATE OER ARE BEING USED BY STUDENTS

I collect a variety of data to provide a 360 degree view of students' use of OER, but also external use of the OER. I ensure I qualify the data by saying we don't know for sure that use equals engagement but at least we know x number of users are visiting the item. We will compare the number of students enrolled in all sections of the course to:

- Downloads
- Page visits
- User engagement (e.g. how long a student is looking at the web page or an article)
- Geographic access of text
- Number of items printed at the bookstore through our Print-On-Demand service

SUPPORT THE POSITIVE REPUTATION OF THE COLLEGE AS AN OER INNOVATOR AND LEADER

We will often be asked to share our experiences with our OER grant program with other institutions across Canada. I share the number of presentations we've done, who has requested our advice, who is asking for our documentation, templates and workflows as an example of our program serving as a benchmark in Canadian OER initiatives.

SWOT Analysis

Not only is Seneca the largest polytechnic college in Canada, we are also a leader in innovation in Canadian colleges. But innovation is an iterative process and we must acknowledge our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to expanding initiatives at Seneca. The weaknesses and threats are not insurmountable as you will see our strengths and opportunities are many and can support the success of this program.

| Internal | |
|--|---|
| <p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seneca faculty and students are diverse, many students are international, open pedagogy and content strengthens EDI and supports a more virtual Seneca • Our OER initiatives to date have saved millions and empowered faculty and Teaching and Learning at the college • We already have the infrastructure and expertise to support OER development, and many other Ontario colleges are rapidly developing their resources which leads to broad potential partnerships • We have a community of faculty who have developed open content with Seneca grants who could mentor faculty in their own programs • We have eCampusOntario's support for open content and pedagogy, as well as their technology tools for development and hosting. • Seneca's Teaching and Learning Centre has more staff than ever before, including specific expertise we could benefit from (e.g. video, graphics, ID) • COVID emergency online teaching has advanced our virtual education faster than all of the last 20 years | <p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We collect cost-savings metrics but this is just one part of the picture. Using grades to make statement about effectiveness can be tricky as there are many confounding elements • We do not have a staff member who has expertise with metrics collecting and processing this data • Metrics are manually collected which is time-consuming • Students are currently not involved in any open initiatives at Seneca beyond being passive users of the content • Open content initiatives are still very grassroots and led by one employee who can commit maybe 5% of her role, when she went on leave, the grant program and any communications were put on hold. There is no succession planning in place • Faculty still have biases against open content, especially those who author publisher texts • Seneca has no formal policies for open content or pedagogy |
| External | |
| <p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eCampusOntario has calls for open projects that we can plan for • The 24 Ontario colleges should develop their own open network to discuss partnerships • A student open content hub would enable students to strengthen those skills while assisting faculty to develop their open content, especially part-time faculty | <p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty like the custom materials from publishers (lecture slides, test banks) • Many of our faculty are part-time and do not have the capacity to adapt open content or integrate it into their curriculum • We have many niche subject areas that do not have open content • Many of our faculty do not have the expertise to adapt or develop open content. |