



# **PROVIDING HIGH-QUALITY, LOW-COST LEARNING MATERIALS AND RESOURCES TO MARYLAND STUDENTS**

**Interim Report on Potential Collaborations Between**

**The University System of Maryland's  
William E. Kirwan Center for Academic Innovation**

**and**

**The Maryland State Department of Education**

**As requested in SB424: The Textbook Affordability Act of 2017, SECTION 2**

**December 31, 2017**

## **Purpose of this Interim Report**

Per the Textbook Cost Savings Act of 2017 (Senate Bill 424) and in accordance with Section 2–1246 of the State Government Article, this interim report provides a status update by the University System of Maryland’s Kirwan Center for Academic Innovation on progress in collaborating with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) on providing primary- and secondary-education students with high-quality, low-cost learning materials and resources, such as open educational resources (OER).

## **Status Update**

Since passage of the Textbook Cost Savings Act of 2017, Dr. MJ Bishop, Director of the University System of Maryland’s William E. Kirwan Center for Academic Innovation (the Kirwan Center) and Mrs. Val Emrich, Director of Instructional Technology at the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), have met twice to share OER initiatives underway in the PK-12 and higher education sectors and explore areas of synergy for potential collaboration.

MSDE has been actively supporting the adoption of OER since becoming a #GoOpen state in February 2016 under the U.S. DoEd project ([http://archives.marylandpublicschools.org/press/02\\_26\\_2016.html](http://archives.marylandpublicschools.org/press/02_26_2016.html)). Since then, every district in Maryland has become involved and is actively engaged in the implementation of a statewide strategy, creation of communities of practice for sharing best approaches, and development of a statewide repository of openly licensed and fully accessible instructional materials. See Appendix A for more details.

The Maryland Open Source Textbook (M.O.S.T.) initiative began in August 2013 as a collaboration between the USM Student Council and the Kirwan Center to provide a state-wide opportunity for faculty to explore the promise of OERs to reduce students’ cost of attendance while maintaining, or perhaps even improving, learning outcomes. Between Spring 2014 and now, the project has involved faculty teaching 84 different courses at 14 institutions across the state (not just USM), saving over \$2.8M cumulatively in just 4 short years. See Appendix B for more information.

Momentum across the state’s higher education institutions for OER adoption continues to build. On December 8, 2017, the Kirwan Center co-sponsored a state-wide OER Summit attended by more than 500 higher educators representing all of Maryland’s 2-year and 4-year public institutions and most of the private institutions.

## **Potential Areas for Collaboration**

Like MSDE, with the passage of SB424 and the \$100,000 state grant, the M.O.S.T. initiative is exploring development of a sustainable business model to support OER adoptions across Maryland’s public higher education institutions, formation of OER professional learning communities, and piloting an OER

repository. The many opportunities for M.O.S.T. to learn from MSDE and for us to work together across these three broad categories of activity are obvious. Potential areas for collaboration include:

Share strategies for scaling and sustaining OER adoptions. While our contexts are not identical, there are things we can learn from each other around managing change with respect to OER. We will continue to meet regularly to share these experiences and “lessons learned.”

Co-developing online professional development modules and/or regional meetings for faculty. There are several, high-level concerns that faculty must consider when adopting OER: digital licensing, accessibility, quality of materials, and student privacy.

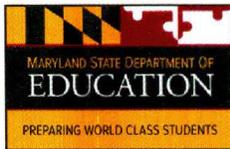
Bridge MSDE and M.O.S.T. repositories. As M.O.S.T. considers the development of a postsecondary repository for OER materials, we will work to ensure that they can be bridged (or even shared) to allow a space for K-12 to postsecondary collaboration and to enhance pathways into college.

Teacher preparation programs. Work with our USM institutions that have teacher education programs on developing OER training and support for OER resources in their libraries.

Cross-over content. Work together to develop OER content for higher-level secondary and dual enrollment courses, built out by discipline.

## Next Steps

The Kirwan Center and MSDE will be scheduling a planning meeting in January/February to prioritize and flesh out these ideas further with the goal of pursuing those projects we can implement without additional support as soon as possible and/or to propose more resource intensive projects in our final report next December 31, 2018.



## APPENDIX A

### MSDE Open Educational Resource Work (OER)

On February 26, 2016, Maryland officially became a #GoOpen state. This initiative kicked off at the Luke Skywalker Ranch in California ([Press Release](#)). Representing the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), Val Emrich was asked to address the event attendees. As a #GoOpen state, Maryland agreed to do the following:

- *Adopt/Implement a statewide technology strategy that includes the use of openly licensed resources*
- *Develop and maintain a statewide repository*
- *Publish Open Educational Resources (OER) to the Learning Registry*
- *Participate in a community of practice*
- *Create a webpage to share the commitment to and progress for #GoOpen (Website)*

Howard County Public Schools became Maryland's first #GoOpen district. Later in 2016, Anne Arundel County Public Schools committed to the initiative. Both school systems are creating and curating resources to replace at least one textbook.

We anticipate that several more of our school systems will actively join the #GoOpen movement. The goal is to share what is being done statewide and nationally. Educators and students will be able to access a repository of relevant, current, interactive resources that support Universal Design for Learning and are available anytime and anywhere.

### State Efforts related to Open Educational Resources (OER) in Maryland

Communities of Practice:

- Val Emrich co-leads the National Outreach and Support Community of Practice
- Erin Senior represents Maryland on the National Evaluation and Vetting Community of Practice

Statewide Repository:

- In 2016, MSDE signed an agreement with Amazon Inspire to populate their repository with vetted OER materials. This will serve as the statewide repository.
  - Various states will also be using this repository. Links to resources already created by other states or districts, such as OER courses, materials, and textbooks, will be included
  - Amazon Inspire will communicate with the Learning Registry
- 750 Maryland resources have been meta-tagged and submitted for uploading to the repository that went "live" during the fall of 2017. Thousands of Maryland resources will be uploaded by February 2018.



Adopt a statewide strategy:

- Through funding provided by the Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) Grant Program, MSDE was able to hire an educational specialist for two years to assist with OER efforts.
- A strategic planning team was created in June 2016 that consists of representatives from at least 12 Maryland school systems. This team has met six times since June 2016 and has continued their work through an eCommunity and Google documents. The team's areas of focus are listed below:
  - Marketing
  - Professional Development
  - Evaluating and vetting – to include accessibility for individuals with disabilities, privacy considerations, meta tagging schema, copyright and attributions
- The strategic planning team assisted MSDE's Office of Instructional Technology in planning seven 2-day regional Open Educational Resource workshops that were held throughout the summer. Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) Grant Program funds were used to support these workshops efforts.
- The Office of Instructional Technology has spent the past year presenting or providing workshops at various conferences and/or meetings:
  - Congressional staffers meeting in DC
  - Common Ground, 2016 and 2017 (in 2017 provided differentiated sessions)
  - International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL) presentation with the Federal Department of Education and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)
  - Mid-Atlantic Conference on Personalized Learning with CCSSO, 2016 and 2017
  - The Council of Educational Administrative and Supervisory Organizations of Maryland (CEASOM)
  - Maryland's Assistant Superintendents
  - School system presentations – Garrett Co., Anne Arundel Co.
  - Maryland Elementary school conferences
- MSDE has been collaborating with the University of Maryland to expand eTextbook efforts with Institutes of Higher Education and Maryland's school systems.

MSDE is collaborating with school systems to plan a regional OER summit during spring 2018.

Summer 2017: MSDE collaborated with statewide Assistant Superintendents to develop Open Educational Resource cohorts.

- Every Local Education Agency (LEA) and the Maryland School for the Deaf submitted names for the cohorts
- Seven regional 2-day workshops were held to include all LEA cohort members. These workshops were held across the state. The goals for the workshops were to:
  - Create solid collaborative teams from each LEA – several team building activities were provided



- Develop a deep understanding of OER considerations around privacy, accessibility, copyright/licensing, and the evaluation of OERs – hands on activities were included
- Provide time for LEA cohorts to begin formulating their plan for delivering customized PD (based on what was provided during the workshops) to all levels in their school system
- Assist MSDE in adjusting MSDE's PD to meet cohort needs through participants' daily evaluations
- The Office of Instructional Technology reached out to University of Baltimore in order to collaborate on an OER marketing project. This project will be presented to us in January 2018.

#### Fall/Winter 2017:

- Seven 1-day regional workshops were held across the state. The goals for these workshops were to:
  - Allow cohorts to participate in meta-tagging activities
  - Provide access to Amazon Inspire and the 800 MSDE vetted OER resources, demonstrate how to create collections, and upload resources
  - Offer “deeper dives” into OER considerations such as:
    - Assigning Creative Common Licenses
    - Using a rubric to evaluate OERs
    - Recognizing elements of websites that may not be accessible
    - Testing and converting a Word document into an accessible format
    - Learning the steps needed to create and include closed captioning
  - Provide time for LEAs to work on their PD plans – each LEA can request funding for their PD delivery or for resources needed to deliver this PD
    - PD plans and budget requests are due December 19, 2017
- Collaborate with statewide Assistant Superintendents to identify educators who are strong in instruction and technology to create new and interactive OERs – to be called “Inspired Designers”

#### Plans for Spring/Summer 2018:

- Inspired Designers will work with MSDE content specialists to begin creating and curating quality OERs for instruction
- Hold web meetings with cohorts
- Develop and deliver accessibility related webinars
- MSDE accessibility specialist to meet regional with LEA web masters and developers
- LEA cohorts begin to deliver PD to their school system educators
- Regional Summit to be held at one of the two MD #GoOpen districts (Howard or Anne Arundel)
- Eastern Shore and MSDE to sponsor a 2-day workshop to include any eastern shore district interested



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### APPENDIX B

#### Maryland Open Source Textbook (MOST) Initiative - Fall 2017 Update

Replacing costly textbooks with open educational resources (OER) shows promise to reduce students' cost of college attendance significantly while maintaining, or perhaps even improving learning outcomes. In August 2013, the Maryland Open Source Textbook (MOST) began as a collaboration between the University System of Maryland Student Council and the University System of Maryland's (USM) William E. Kirwan Center for Academic Innovation to support faculty adoption of freely available, openly licensed instructional materials for their courses. While MOST is being led out of the USM, the opportunities being pursued are open to all Maryland 2- and 4-year public higher education institutions.

Since its launch, MOST has encouraged faculty to evaluate available OERs and consider adopting them for use in a course. The Kirwan Center has been working with Lumen Learning ([lumenlearning.com](http://lumenlearning.com)) to provide participating faculty with the support they need to locate materials and incorporate them effectively into their classes. Faculty receive a modest \$500 stipend in acknowledgement of the time they spend redesigning their courses and facilitating data collection for the Kirwan Center.

To date, 66 courses at 14 institutions across Maryland have switched to OER, impacting over 3,800 students and saving them \$141 per course on average, or \$550,000 cumulatively. Assuming those courses have continued to be offered once per year with level enrollments, we are estimating a cumulative cost savings to students of approximately \$1.6 million in 3 short years. To increase the impact of MOST, we recently launched the MOST High-impact OER Mini-Grant Program to target and scale OER adoption across high-enrollment general education courses for which high-quality OER materials already exist. The additional impact in Fall 2017 alone is estimated at \$1.3 million in textbook savings for approximately 8,000 more students in Maryland.

In addition to those direct benefits, indirect benefits of OER adoption have included:

- **Student Access:** Ensuring all students have full access to all learning materials from day 1 of class to help them be prepared and successful.
- **Faculty Control of Learning Materials:** Giving faculty full control over the amount, order, and content of learning materials.
- **Faculty Collaboration:** Collaboration with like-minded faculty also working with OER.

Faculty have reported they spent, on average, more time preparing to teach the class, but that once that work was done they were generally positive about their experiences working with the open materials, with 89% of faculty somewhat to very likely to use OER materials in future courses.



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Findings from the MOST data collected indicated that students:

- **Saved a significant amount of money:** Sixty-three percent of students surveyed typically spend between \$200-\$500 each semester on books and 10% of students spent over \$500 each semester. Sixty-seven percent of students in the MOST initiative did not spend any money for resources for their course, and an additional 21% spent less than \$40 for materials.
- **Were more likely to use the resources:** Fifty-seven percent of students surveyed used traditional textbooks 2-3 times per month or less. Sixty-two percent of students in the MOST initiative used their materials 2-3 times per week or more often.
- **Found the OER to be the same or better quality than traditional resources:** Sixty-five percent of students surveyed said quality was about the same and 29% of students surveyed said it was better.
- **Are likely to enroll in other courses using OER:** Eighty-seven percent of students surveyed said they were likely to enroll in another course that uses OER.
- **Prefer a course with OER over a course using traditional textbooks:** Given the choice between a course that uses OER and one that uses traditional textbooks, where all other variables are the same, 67% of students surveyed would prefer the course with OER.

At the same time, the University of Maryland University College (UMUC) recently became the first 4-year public higher education institution to move entirely to zero-cost instructional materials, saving their 84,000 students at least \$20 million per year and clearly demonstrating how quickly savings to students can add up when these initiatives are taken to scale. Further, evaluation of learning outcomes from the UMUC initiative has found that converting to OER has not negatively affected course quality.

But while MOST and the UMUC initiatives have seen impressive results, with Maryland 2-year and 4-year students spending over \$223 million annually on textbooks, the savings realized to date is just a drop in the bucket when compared to the potential OERs have for reducing the cost of education.

**Future Plans:** We believe it is time to build on that momentum and move from a pilot phase to a structured, large-scale implementation. To this end, in Spring 2017 the Maryland General Assembly unanimously passed Senate Bill 424 (cross filed with House Bill 967) *The Textbook Cost Savings Act*, which, with the Governor's support, added \$100,000 to the fiscal 2019 state budget as a grant to the Kirwan Center to support a state-wide OER summit and an additional round of mini-grant funding for Fall 2018.

While this is a great start, we are seeking foundation partners who are interested in supporting several additional initiatives designed to scale OER adoption and amplify the impact of the MOST initiative. We are also eager to disseminate the "lessons learned" at UMUC about scaling OER and investigate a range of OER sustainability models in use in other states. Once OER adoption reaches a critical mass, such models promise to allow MOST to generate the funds needed to sustain long-term OER adoption to help address college affordability and benefit Maryland students for generations to come.