

# OER at FCC: Using Open Education Resources at Frederick Community College

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## Abstract

In 2018, the project team applied for and received a M.O.S.T mini-grant to implement Open Education Resources (OER) at Frederick Community College. OER was implemented during the 2018-2019 academic year, in multiple sections of General Psychology (PS 101). 171 undergraduate students were impacted by this implementation of OER. Specific impacts on course affordability, accessibility, and learning will be discussed.

## Background

- Frederick Community College (FCC) is a two-year college located in Frederick, MD. FCC offers several psychology courses including PSYC 101.
- In the 2018-2019 academic year, 907 undergraduate students took PSYC 101 at FCC. 44 sections were offered.
- PSYC 101 emphasizes the major factors that influence human behavior, including behavioral neuroscience, perceptual processes, consciousness, intelligence, personality and psychological disorders.
- FCC offers PSYC 101 in traditional face-to-face, online and hybrid formats.
- The previous traditional textbook for PS 101 costs \$119, a relatively high cost for students.
- In 2018, the project team applied for and received a M.O.S.T grant. A plan to implement OER was formed.
- The grant was executed during the 2018-2019 academic year.
- Seven sections implemented OER, impacting 171 students. The impacted sections were face-to-face courses.
- The impact of the chosen OER was observed each semester in regards to affordability, accessibility and learning

## Participants

Participants were 171 undergraduate students enrolled in PSYC 101 classes at FCC. Students' majors and demographic variables varied. There were seven total sections affected by OER across the Fall and Spring semesters.

## Resources

- Students were required to use Blackboard Learning Management System (LMS) regularly.
- Introduction to Psychology by Lumen Learning was utilized.
  - Text was available free of cost to students
  - Text was embedded into students' Blackboard site
  - A low-cost printed version was available to students.
  - Lumen's text provides comprehensive coverage of core concepts in psychology. Interactive activities and discussions are included in the text
  - Additional resources, including PowerPoint slides and (in some cases) quizzes were embedded into students' Blackboard site

## Implementation

- Various OER resources were explored and evaluated by the project team.
- The Lumen text was selected and a thorough review was conducted by the project team.
- Lumen was embedded into the LMS for Fall 2018 and students were notified the course would offer a no-cost text.
- Accessibility was explored in terms of providing low-cost print options to students, as needed.
- Accessibility was explored in terms of the text itself and the resources (e.g., videos) provided.
- Students were fully informed the first day of class regarding the nature of the text.
- Students completed course readings, utilized resources, and completed assignments via LMS.

## Results

### Pros

- Students reported finding the text approachable and accessible.
- Students reported liking the length of modules as compared to traditional textbook chapters.
- Students liked having the options to access the text online and on the go.
- Few students requested a printed, low-cost option.
- Students reported liking the resources (e.g., practice quiz questions) embedded in the text.
- Students reported few technological issues.
- Professors reported finding the instructor resources easy to use.
- Professors reported the text was easy to integrate into the structure of the course.

### Cons

- Both professors and students reported finding several content areas that needed to be supplemented.
- Professors reported wanting more in-depth discussions of core concepts and theories.
- Many FCC students report preferring a physical textbook, despite the cost burden.
- Few students explored the low-cost print option, despite the possible preference for physical texts.
- Professors reported concerns regarding the ongoing review process of this (and other) OER resource.
- Professors reported preferring more updated discussions of research.

## Discussion

After evaluating the implementation of OER during the 2018-2019 academic year, the project managers have chosen what is hopefully a compromise. A traditional, currently popular text has been selected for the 2019-2020 academic year but this text will be offered in several "lower cost" formats. The project team, along with other faculty members at FCC, will continue to explore and use OER on a class-by-class basis. Several sections of PSYC 101 will continue to employ OER in semesters to come.

The affordability of course materials as well as accessibility and facilitation of learning remain at the heart of this OER exploration. Students appeared to find the text affordable and accessible, however, some students reported that the text did not give enough detail regarding certain core concepts and theories. Professors' evaluations seemed to generally match this assertion. Professors reported preferring a text that included more detailed discussion of topics. Professors also reported concerns with the lack of a traditional peer review process.