

# GAME CHANGERS

## EDUCATION and INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES

Edited by **DIANA G. OBLINGER**

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Game Changers: Education and Information Technologies

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#### FROM THE EDITOR

I would like to thank the many people who made this book possible, particularly Gregory Dobbin for managing the project and Karen Mateer for her research.

—Diana G. Oblinger

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# The Open Course Library of the Washington State Colleges

**Tom Caswell**

THIS CASE STUDY describes an initiative of the Washington State community and technical colleges called the [Open Course Library \(OCL\)](#). The Open Course Library is a large-scale curriculum redesign effort leveraging a variety of existing open educational resources (OER) as well as original content by our faculty course designers. Our state agency invested in the development of educational content and requires that the resulting digital course materials be shared under a Creative Commons open license. This case study begins with background on our college system, our Strategic Technology Plan, and the formal adoption of an open licensing policy.

The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) is an organization that provides leadership and coordination for Washington's public system of thirty-four community and technical colleges. Based on the 2009–10 [Annual Enrollment Report](#), the number of students attending our colleges is 470,000 and climbing. This is the highest enrollment level in SBCTC history, with most of the increase due to growth in e-learning—more students are able to fit school into their busy schedules by attending hybrid and fully online classes.

In 2008, SBCTC released its [Strategic Technology Plan](#) to provide clear policy direction around a single goal: mobilizing technology to increase student success. One of the guiding principles of the plan is to “cultivate the culture and practice of using and contributing to open educational resources.” With a clear plan in place, our next step was to provide opportunities, incentives, and policies to promote OER in our system. On June 17, 2010, SBCTC's nine-member board unanimously approved the first state-level [open licensing policy](#). It requires that all digital works created from competitive grants administered through SBCTC carry a Creative Commons Attribution-only (CC BY) license.



This license allows educational materials created by one college to be used or updated by another college in our system as well as by other education partners globally. Allowing the free flow of all educational content produced by SBCTC competitive grant funds is an efficient way to participate in the OER movement while maintaining a focus on the specific needs of Washington's community and technical college students.

Building on the Strategic Technology Plan, eLearning director Cable Green launched the Open Course Library in 2010, an initiative to design and openly share eighty-one high-enrollment, gatekeeper, and precollege courses. The goals of the OCL project include

- lowering textbook costs for students,
- providing new resources for faculty to use in their courses, and
- fully engaging in the global open educational resources discussion.

OCL participants are selected through a competitive grant-proposal process. Each winning faculty member or team of faculty designs one course. Each of the eighty-one course teams is directly supported by a librarian, two instructional designers, and an eLearning director. All teams receive additional support from two institutional researchers, two accessibility specialists, and a multicultural expert.

Open Course Library development will occur in two phases. The first forty-two courses developed in Phase 1 were released in fall 2011 and are available at <http://opencourselibrary.org>. In the first four months the site has received over 25,000 visits from 125 different countries. The remaining courses will be designed in Phase 2 and completed by early 2013. Each phase is spread over four college quarters. In Phase 1, the first two quarters (summer/fall 2010) were spent designing course objectives, finding appropriate OER content, and creating assessments that aligned with the content. Faculty course designers worked closely with their assigned instructional designers (IDs) during this time to ensure that assignments and assessments are tied to course objectives. Faculty pilot taught their newly designed college course during the third quarter (winter 2011). They used feedback from two peer reviews and the course pilot to make updates to the course during the fourth quarter (spring 2011). Phase 2 will follow the same, four-quarter time line and will benefit from lessons learned in Phase 1.

It is important to emphasize that SBCTC will not mandate the use of Open Course Library materials within the Washington State colleges. While faculty course designers are asked to adopt the courses they have designed, adoption by other faculty is optional.

Another important consideration is how we will share the eighty-one OCL

courses. Internal sharing is currently done through our existing WashingtonOnline learning management system. We will include a copy of the full course as a system-shared course so it can be viewed and copied by faculty at any of our thirty-four colleges. We are also exploring the use of Google Docs to make copying and modifying OCL course materials even easier. For external sharing, we have partnered with the Saylor Foundation, the Connexions Consortium, and the Open Courseware Consortium. At <http://www.saylor.org/sbctc-saylor-courses/>, visitors can search and view OCL course content adapted for self-learners. Because our course materials are openly licensed, anyone will be able to access, modify, adapt, translate, and improve them.

As student advocacy groups continue to make textbook affordability a top priority in Washington State—as well as nationally—the Open Course Library stands as a clear response to that call. The cost of making a million digital copies of an open textbook is essentially the same as the cost of the first copy. Print-on-demand solutions are making paper copies very affordable as well—often under \$10.

Student feedback from the forty-two pilot courses was positive. Sixty-two percent of students surveyed stated they learned more from open materials. Eighty percent of students rated the redesigned content as either “good” or “excellent” on a five-point scale. In addition to this positive student-survey feedback, we were not surprised to learn that students were grateful they didn't have to pay \$200 for a textbook.

Beyond the content-development process, we seek to expand our system-wide culture of open content sharing. Future challenges include

- driving awareness and adoption of Open Course Library materials; and
- creating a sustainable model for faculty to use to revise and update versions of OCL courses, as well as to add new courses.

We are working through a variety of channels to raise faculty awareness of OCL, including our new faculty institutes, faculty trainings, regional conferences, and workshops.

We will continue to seek technologies to support and simplify open sharing of learning content among faculty. Whenever possible, we will use existing workflows. For example, we have introduced lecture-capture software that makes it easy to record and share lectures or portions of lectures. These recordings can be made public and shared widely with just a few clicks. Another step we are taking will facilitate open sharing for faculty who use our system-wide learning management system (LMS). We have also included an open publishing feature requirement in our upcoming LMS search. Faculty will be able to attach a Creative Commons license and share their course content directly on

the open web if they choose. This kind of sharing will likely attract prospective students and alumni alike, allowing them to preview and also review materials from open courses.

The Open Course Library is a significant step for our system as we strive to establish efficiencies and encourage a culture of open sharing in Washington's colleges. By sharing both the content and the process, we make two bold contributions to the open educational resources movement and set Washington State apart as a leader in that movement.

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