

**Letter of Support for the Adoption of Open Educational Resources in courses at New York
University**

Date: 3 March 2022

To: NYU Senior Leadership Team

Dr. Andrew Hamilton, *President*

Dr. Katherine E. Fleming, *Provost*

Dr. Yanoula Athanassakis, *Associate Vice Provost for Academic Affairs*

CC: Concerned Parties

Dr. Sherry Glied, *Dean, Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, Chair of Deans Council*

Dr. Darcey Merritt, *Associate Professor, NYU Silver, Chair of Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty Senators Council*

Ethan Youngerman, *Chair of Full-Time Continuing Contract Faculty Senators Council (C-FSC)*

Ellen Schall, *Senior Presidential Fellow & Dean Emeritus of NYU's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service.*

Deborah J. Glick, *Assemblymember & Chair of Standing Committee on Higher Education*

**Subject: Letter of Support for the Adoption of Open Educational Resources in courses at
New York University**

Dear Leadership Team of New York University,

We are writing to you on behalf of New York University faculty, students, and student groups who wish to adopt open educational resources in courses at New York University.

Affordability is a problem across the country as the cost of attendance (tuition, housing, textbooks, and transportation) continues to increase for students. The current cost of course materials is burdensome to students.^{1,2,3} An aspect that is burdensome for students is the cost of

¹ Coles, A., Keane, L., & Williams, B. (2020), Beyond the College Bill: The Hidden Hurdles of Indirect Expenses.

uAspire. Retrieved from: www.uaspire.org/BlankSite/media/uaspire/Beyond-the-College-Bill.pdf

² Hale, Michael. "Study Finds Majority of College Students Delay Purchasing Textbooks Due to Cost." VitalSource Survey QuickRead Report May 2018, VitalSource, 1 Aug. 2018,

<https://get.vitalsource.com/press/study-finds-majority-of-college-students-delay-purchasing-textbooks-due-to-cost>.

³ McKenzie, Lindsay. "Study: High Textbook Prices Lead to Poor Grades." Inside Higher Ed, VitalSource, 20 Sept. 2017, <https://www.insidehighered.com/quicktakes/2017/09/20/study-high-textbook-prices-lead-poor-grades>.

textbooks. At NYU, the average cost of textbooks is \$718 for students.⁴ However, we recognize that NYU has significant resources and has saved students over \$1 million in savings on course materials.⁵ The cost of course materials has increased exponentially over the past several years.^{6,7} Students take on additional debt to purchase their course materials or forego purchasing course materials entirely due to the high cost of those materials.⁸ We believe that OER can help students even more.

Open Educational Resources (OER) is defined as teaching, learning, and research materials in any medium – digital or otherwise – that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license, and are free to access, use, adapt, repurpose, revise, and redistribute at no cost and with no or limited restrictions.⁹ Teaching with OERs can have many benefits for instructors and students. NYU contains platforms to create or revise OER.¹⁰

The adoption of Open Educational Resources in courses would significantly reduce the cost for students to enroll and participate in those courses. Thus, it will support student success by increasing course affordability and breaking down barriers to course participation. Colleges across the country have implemented open educational resources as part of their affordability campaign.¹¹ Studies show that 93% of students who use OER do as well or better than those using traditional materials since they have easy access to the content starting the first day of classes.¹² Not only will OER help affordability at NYU, but it can improve the educational

⁴ [2021–2022 Cost of Attendance](#)

⁵ NYU Libraries Communications. “NYU Libraries Save Students an Estimated \$1M in Course Materials.” NYU Libraries: News and Stories, NYU, 14 Oct. 2020, <https://guides.nyu.edu/blog/NYU-Libraries-Save-Students-an-Estimated-1M-in-Course-Materials>.

⁶ Popken, Ben Popken. “College Textbook Prices Have Risen 1,041 Percent since 1977.” NBCNews.com, NBCUniversal News Group, 6 Aug. 2015, <https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/freshman-year/college-textbook-prices-have-risen-812-percent-1978-n399926>.

⁷ Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, The Economics Daily, College tuition and fees increase 63 percent since January 2006 at <https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2016/college-tuition-and-fees-increase-63-percent-since-january-2006.htm> (visited March 03, 2022).

⁸ Senack, Ethan, et al. “Fixing the Broken Textbook Market: How Students Respond to High Textbook Costs and Demand Alternatives.” Fixing the Broken Textbook Market, U.S. PIRG Education Fund, June 2020, https://uspig.org/sites/pirg/files/reports/Fixing-the-Broken-Textbook-Market_June-2020_v2.pdf.

⁹ [Open Educational Resources \(OER\)](#)

¹⁰ [Manifold](#), [Web Publishing](#), [Web Hosting](#)

¹¹ [List of North American OER Policies & Projects - SPARC](#)

¹² <http://openedgroup.org/review>

experiences for students across the country and around the world by granting them access to free and quality materials.

Unlike other alternatives, Open Educational Resources better address the shortcomings of the status quo as they are completely free to use, they are available indefinitely, and students are given a true opt-out option. Faculty and students both share a concern about course material affordability and its impact on student success. We recognize that it is the prerogative of the faculty to select the course materials that are most appropriate for a class. Open Educational Resources can be integrated into every aspect of a course, incorporating course readings, homework problem sets, and question banks for quizzes and tests.

We urge that faculty have the opportunity to sign a pledge stating that they will seek and consider open textbooks, other open resources, and library-licensed resources when choosing course materials.

We encourage New York University to offer institutional support to faculty and educational technologists, such as by rewarding the use and creation of OER in tenure & promotion processes and by providing monetary funds to compensate for the labor of transitioning courses from traditional materials to OER.¹³

We encourage New York University to work with the Legislature of the State of New York to support Open Educational Resources as a solution to high course material costs, by investing in the creation and dissemination of quality Open Educational Resources developed by our state institutions of higher education.

OERs are not just lower-cost than traditional print textbooks but are free to access and can be retained after the end of a course. Additionally, OERs are intentionally designed to remove commercial profit as a factor, and their open licenses empower instructors to teach with

¹³ [OER in Tenure and Promotion](#)

them in innovative ways if they choose, and to mix, match, tailor, and edit the resources at will according to what will work well for the class. In these ways, we believe that OERs can be seen as an ideal solution to textbook costs.

Sincerely,

Ryan Carney, *SGA Director of Finance, Chair of SGA Financial Affairs Committee, LS Alternate Senator*

*In Collaboration with **Juan Arias**, **Anastasia Chiu**, and **Rachel Pisciotta***

Student Senators Council (SSC)

Student Government Assembly (SGA)

SGA Executive Committee

Liberal Studies Student Council (LSSC)