

Open Source Textbook Task Force

MEETING MINUTES

Monday, February 22, 2016

11:00 a.m. in Room1C of the LOB

Legislative Attendees:

State Representative Gregory Haddad

Task Force Attendees:

Christopher Clark, Professor and History Department Head, Moderator for Faculty Senate, UCONN

Martha Bedard, Provost for University Libraries, UCONN

Daniel Byrd, Undergraduate Student Representative, UCONN

Sally Reis, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, UCONN

Cynthia Gallatin, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Online Programs, Quinnipiac University

Kevin Corcoran, Executive Director, Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium

Patricia Banach, Director of Library Services, Eastern Connecticut State University

Clara Ada Ogbaa, Director of Library Services, Gateway Community College

Christon Kurker-Stewart, Academic Affairs, Office of Higher Education

Daniel Barrett, Professor, Western Connecticut State University

James Brunt, Professor, Southern Connecticut State University

Susan Deane, Professor, Charter Oak State College

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Representative Haddad at 11:07 am, where he proceeded to welcome everyone to the meeting and introduce the mission of the task force. Rep. Haddad reiterates that he is not a member of the task force but he would like to be available to the task force as a resource. He hopes that the task force can give this group of individuals the opportunity to speak clearly about the need for progress on open source textbooks and develop a plan to work collaboratively so that both public and private students can benefit from whatever structure emerges from this task force.

PA 15-18, was read in part by Rep. Haddad, this legislation established both this task force and a pilot program with the Board of Regents System and the UCONN system.

Representative Haddad referred to the enabling legislation and its requirement that the task force select two co-chairs from among its membership and suggested Kevin Corcoran and Martha Bedard as potential nominees. Rep. Haddad also expressed that while he makes these suggestions, he encourages all those with an interest to feel free to make that known before nominations are opened.

Daniel Barrett indicated that he would like to see one of the co-chairs held by non-administrative personnel to adequately represent those faculty members who will be crucial in this process moving forward.

Rep. Haddad opened the floor for nominations. Sally Reiss nominated Martha Bedard, seconded by Christopher Clark. Martha Bedard, UCONN representative, was elected co-chair of the task force unanimously. Co-chair Bedard continued the election process for the second co-chair. She opened the floor for nominations. Patricia Banach nominated Kevin Corcoran, Cynthia Gallatin seconded. Daniel Barrett was nominated by James Brunt, and seconded himself. Kevin Corcoran was elected co-chair of the task force unanimously.

Discussion

The newly elected co-chairs began the discussion to understand how the various higher education institutions in the state are using open-source textbooks currently.

The co-chairs will share survey tools to get a baseline to understand where our faculties and institutions are related to open-source textbooks.

Co-chair Corcoran would like to see experts, locally and regionally, to be involved in the work of the task force, whether they are participants of the task force itself or as presenters to inform the members. Organize and vet the material that already exists on OER (Open Educational Resources).

Chris Clark mentions the needs of our adjunct faculty because they are an important part of our system, in addition to our professional faculty.

James Brunt mentioned the need to compare and contrast open-source material to the materials bought from publishers. Co-chair Bedard states that there are faculty mini grants at UCONN to address this concern.

Co-chair Corcoran offered the suggestion that the task force look into a potential long-term goal and what other states have done legislatively and their policy approaches. The Federal government has made huge strides in this area, with the Affordable College Textbook Act. If it is publicly funded it should be publicly available.

Patricia Banach points to a model utilized by the state of Georgia, which has an incentive program for faculty to evaluate and analyze open educational resources for them to incorporate into their courses. She also reminds the task force of the time commitment this type of process will take faculty members to accomplish.

Cynthia Gallatin mentions that publishers provide these very attractive packages, which include assessment materials and adaptive learning platforms which may heavily assist faculty members.

Co-chair Bedard mentioned, OpenStax- Rice University.

Daniel Barrett considered the needs of faculty. He reiterates what Cynthia Gallatin discussed early in regard to the publisher's packages, but discusses the quizzes, flashcards, test banks that may be an advantage for both students and faculty if they are being utilized appropriately.

James Brunt mentioned the idea of student access and the importance of recognizing that some students across Connecticut only have access to online resources through their phones, so while we are having these discussions, it is important to keep a broad definition of access in mind.

Christopher Clark summarizes the topics thus far: provision, communication, and widening access. He ponders, what examples exist or need to be invented in order to convey how we think about what we are trying to achieve? Our university systems are complex and have a multitude of different disciplines. Is there a target regarding how much to reduce the expense to students? Are there existing examples we could follow? Do we have a benchmark to establish the outcome of what we should achieve through this type of program?

Co-chair Corcoran poses the questions, what is our end goal for Connecticut? We are aware of our legislative goal, but one for the whole state of Connecticut; Is it to solely reduce textbook cost for students, is it more focused on affordability or zero cost sum; will we consider anything about student outcomes or student improvements in here? We discussed open textbooks to date, but open community is a much broader conversation to define and discuss moving forward. The appropriate phrase may be “when appropriate” so we aren’t trying to do a universal replacement of all commercial textbooks, etc.

Patricia Banach mentions the importance of faculty talking to other faculty, focus on committee, on open resources. UMASS Amherst- looking at the hybrid model, and leveraging existing money.

Sally Reiss, faculty feel overwhelmed by all the options they have available to them, and find it difficult to make a decision regarding what resources to utilize. Can we come up with options for them based on content area or case studies?

Daniel Barrett – Disciplines are very important to consider as we discuss the way we move forward, some disciplines update more frequently than others. For instance, psychology moves more quickly because of constant new research; history wouldn’t likely need to update their textbooks as often. Maybe a student will have to buy an older version of the textbook, but have access to important updates regarding the course material online resources.

Christopher Clark insisted that history does, in fact, change. Although, he does agree that different disciplines have different models. He emphasizes the idea that we need to find what is affordable and what will make the most difference in the lives of Connecticut students. Where will our efforts be most cost effective for students? We could provide a system that models the marketplace, because the marketplace is what ultimately determines pricing and product quality with respect to each other.

Cynthia Gallatin –What are our goals short term and long term? Faculty awareness and long-term process.

Co-chair Bedard states that since we have short period of time to work as a task force on this, we should develop some short term goals.

Co-chair Corcoran mentions that we can come up with short term goals by utilizing information and models from other universities that have implemented these types of programs across the U.S.

Cynthia Gallatin questions whether we have an existing repository or if we can pull everyone's pieces together to create one.

Co-chair Bedard states that UCONN currently has a repository on their website for UCONN faculty and students, and reiterates that if we can get faculty talking to other faculty members, we will likely be more successful in implementing this type of program.

Sally Reiss mentions that Martha Bedard did a presentation at UCONN to department heads, which may be the way to go as we start to think about informing faculty of OER (Open Educational Resources) throughout Connecticut. Pat and Kevin both make similar comments relating to a universal guide of repositions and the importance of faculty in this process.

Patricia Banach brings up an important point addressing the need to find common ground in the task force and work on those things to move forward.

Co-chair Bedard discusses the differences between affordability or strictly open sources, and poses the question: how do we move the market toward affordability?

Chris Clark – Are there models of publishers of who have come into the market to make books more affordable?

Co-chair Corcoran – There are second-generation publishers who offer online texts but with print copies for one-third of the price of commercial textbook companies.

Patricia Banach – This can easily influence the market place, but these companies need to realize that their unfair profit margins cannot be sustained.

James Brunt mentions the bookstore mark-up and questions if faculty understand that markup when selecting the texts for their courses.

Daniel Byrd, emphasizes that we should be targeting the introductory courses with high cost textbooks. Since the courses have content that doesn't change often, and the textbooks are usually very expensive and widely used among students, this would be a good place to focus our efforts.

More discussion was held relating to the way students acquire their textbooks, whether it is through other online sources, or sharing with their peers. There was a survey done two years ago at UCONN to identify information relating to student textbook use, which could easily provide data and be replicated for more recent information. Dan Byrd will provide this survey data at the next task force meeting.

Co-chair Bedard states that we should be encouraging faculty to share content, MIT can be used as a model for this concept.

Discussion continued regarding the importance of raising awareness around available OER (Open Educational Resources), and the potential of utilizing a PowerPoint to inform faculty of the resources available to them to help reduce costs to students.

Daniel Barrett mentioned the fine line that exists legally with fair use. Christopher Clark suggested the development of a power point presentation which could include a brief legal guide to make faculty aware, and ultimately reduce some of the legal grey area.

Co-chair Bedard summarized the discussed topics of the meeting to two main areas. First and foremost, plan to educate ourselves (the task force) and their plan to educate others. We need to share our website /repository guide, complete extensive data collection; identify presenters to increase task force knowledge on various topics, and expand notion of open textbook sources to an affordability report, that would include information we discover about CT population.

Sally Reiss posed the questions; Should we consider looking for outside funding opportunities as we move forward and present some potential educational opportunities that would benefit by having some funding.

Co-chair Corcoran states that New England is behind the curve in the area and most sources for funding are tapped out by now. Although, the consortium is actually looking for innovative funding mechanisms for OER (Open Educational Resources) initiatives, so there could be an opportunity here. In addition, we could look into partnering with UMASS for funding on these initiatives.

Rep. Haddad proceeds to wrap up and reassures the task force members that with co-chairs Bedard and Corcoran, the task force is on the right track. With the deadline in mind, it is important to set strategic objectives moving forward, but this meeting had essential conversations that were free ranging in order to find out what the mission of this task force is and what will be accomplished.

The members of the task force decided they should meet at least once a month, although a lot of the work will likely be done independently. The central location will be the legislative office building, so we will work with Rep. Haddad's legislative aide, Mary Ann Daly to determine a date, time, and location for the next meeting.