

2021 Report

Affordable Instructional Resources (AIR)

Supporting Faculty to Make Courses More Affordable



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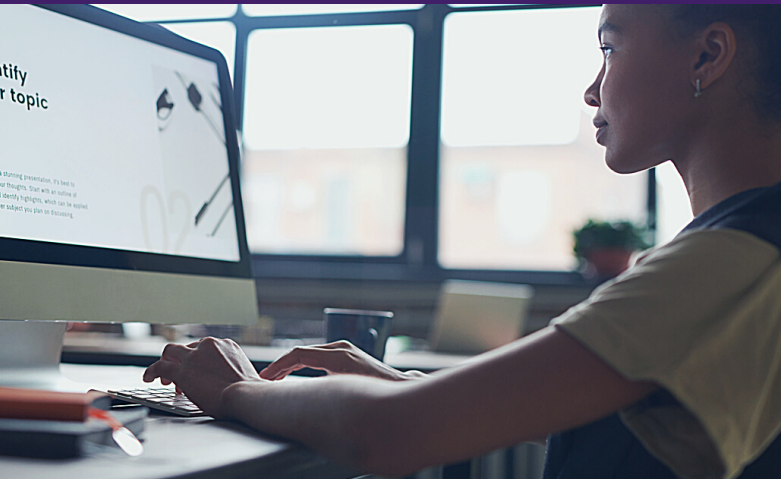
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AIR Overview



The Affordable Instructional Resources Initiative (AIR) is a collaboration between the Office of the Provost, University Libraries, Northwestern Information Technology, the Northwestern Bookstore, and the Faculty Senate.

We are interested in issues related to access and inclusion in higher education, specifically focused on the supplemental costs of a Northwestern education. We recognize the challenges in balancing quality and cost when selecting required materials for courses and aim to provide systematic support to faculty in making their courses more affordable.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Faculty maintain full discretion to choose course materials that meet their pedagogical needs.
- Student privacy is protected and student agency is maintained.
- Equitable access to course materials is prioritized, including providing low and no-cost options in a variety of formats (print and digital).
- Access to course materials is streamlined with Canvas integration when possible.
- Campus partners, such as the bookstore and student groups, are included in campus-wide course material decisions.

When all students can afford course materials, the entire class benefits from a more enriched learning experience.

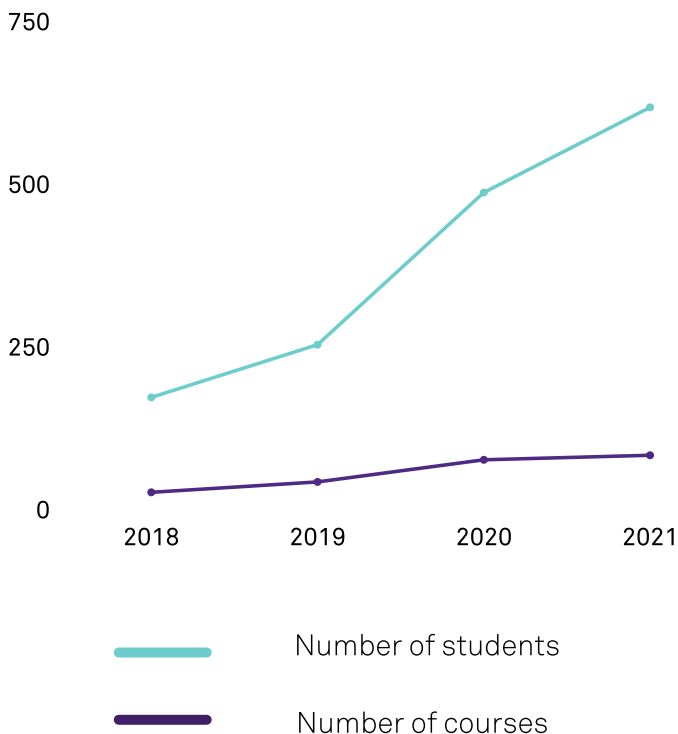
Books for 'Cats

2018-2021 REPORT

The Books for 'Cats program offers eligible first year students the ability to borrow course materials (including textbooks, access codes, clickers, and lab equipment) in selected introductory courses. Eligible students are identified by the Financial Aid Office and are sent quarterly invitations to participate.

The program started in the 2017-18 academic year focused on STEM courses, and increased its reach each year by adding non-STEM classes and expanding eligibility criteria.

BOOKS FOR 'CATS 2018-2021



86

2021 BOOKS FOR 'CATS COURSES

1542

NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO PARTICIPATED 2018-2021

\$778K

STUDENT SAVINGS 2018-2021

FUTURE PLANS

The program thus far has focused primarily on providing students course materials for introductory science and social sciences courses. The program anticipates expanding next to including language courses.

Student Feedback on Books for 'Cats

"I am so grateful for the Books for 'Cats program. Having access to the textbooks was immensely helpful."

"The Books for 'Cats program really helped me out with the textbooks. I would not have been able to get the textbooks without this program."

"The Books for 'Cats Program has been great to me. Their support makes me not feel the impact of not being able to purchase books."

"Books for 'Cats was a LIFESAVER"

"Books for 'Cats has been extremely helpful in allowing me to take classes with no worries because the expenses would have been an enormous burden."

"The Books for 'Cats and Art for 'Cats programs are amazing and very appreciated."

OER Faculty Grant

2019-2021 REPORT

Open Educational Resources (OER) are teaching materials that are free, distributed online, and allow anyone to copy, use, adapt, and remix the materials for free. OER are commonly used as alternatives to expensive textbooks by providing students with high quality course readings at no cost.

The OER Faculty Grant Program is an annual program that started in 2019. Funded by the Office of the Provost and University Libraries, the grants support the work involved in finding, creating, using, and sharing OER as replacements for required commercial textbooks.

Grant Benefits of OER include:

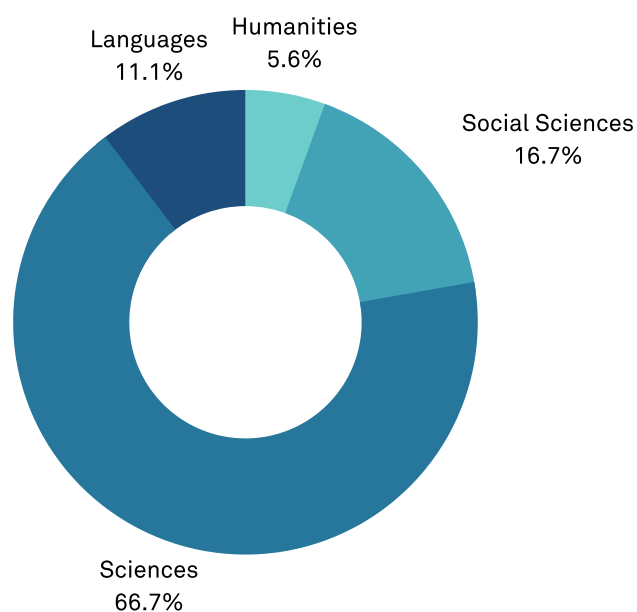
- At least \$5,000 to develop, use, and publish OER for a Northwestern undergraduate course.
- Individualized support from librarians on finding, using, and publishing OER.

INVESTING A LITTLE TO SAVE A LOT

As of 2021, the Office of the Provost and University Libraries have invested a total of \$103,750 for projects that will save Northwestern students an estimated \$476,000 per year. That's a 358% return on investment annually.

In addition to a monetary investment, University Libraries also created a librarian position in 2020 dedicated to supporting open education and OER creation at Northwestern.

Funded Projects by Discipline



SHARING GLOBALLY

Once published, OER are shared publicly so students from around the globe can benefit from course materials created by Northwestern faculty.

18

Number of grants awarded from
2019 - 2021

4071

Estimated number of
students impacted per
year

\$476K

Estimated savings
on course materials per year

Faculty Feedback on OER Grant Program

In addition to providing significant course cost savings to students, surveyed faculty unanimously agreed that the OER they created for their classes supported teaching and accomplished learning goals. One grant recipient even won an award for her OER: Professor Jean Clipperton was awarded the "R. Barry Farrell Faculty Award for Excellence in Curriculum Development" from the Department of Political Science following the first year of in-class use.

"The grant funds have enabled us to do work we had been wanting to do for several years, to support many faculty to contribute their voices to that work, and to give students more current and inclusive course materials that are completely free to them."

-Lisa Del Torto, Cook Family Writing Program

"It worked really well and I am pleased with the project."

-Jean Clipperton, Political Science

"I have seen a significant improvement in my students retention of what they have learned and their oral proficiency."

-Peter Mwangi, Program of African Studies

"This was amazing. It was a way to formally provide support for many of the ideas we've wanted to implement AND the librarians involved contributed expertise to help us curate, publish, and organize our resources."

-Alex Birdwell, Segal Design Institute

Other Accomplishments

Increase Use of Library Materials

COURSE RESERVES AND ALTERNATIVE COURSE PACKS

Since its inception, AIR has sought to eliminate course packs and increase the use of course reserves, both print and digital. As a way of addressing expensive course packs which often include articles and chapters that could be sourced for free from the Libraries, AIR launched a syllabus review service where faculty could submit their syllabus and receive a list of persistent article links to add to their Canvas course. We also increased our communication efforts around course reserves services with customized emails and handouts to faculty.

Collaborative Communication

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND DIGITAL COURSE MATERIALS

Thanks to the collaborative nature of AIR, timely communications regarding Fall 2020 course materials options, such as e-book access and alternative course packs, were sent on behalf of AIR from Miriam Sherin to Associate Deans and Directors of Undergraduate Studies, who then shared the messages with their faculty. Liaison librarians were also a channel of communication to get the word out to faculty.

Projects Inspired by AIR

ART FOR 'CATS

After witnessing the success of the Books for 'Cats program, the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences launched their own version designed to provide art supplies for low-income students enrolled in art courses. Art for 'Cats has significantly increased enrollment of low-income students into art classes in WCAS.

DEPARTMENT-FUNDED OER

Peter Mwangi, a 2019 OER grant recipient, developed an open textbook for his Elementary Swahili course using course notes and also audio recordings he captured on a trip to Kenya. The project's success inspired Peter to create another open text, this time for his Intermediate Swahili course. Instead of applying for a second OER grant, the Program of African Studies has agreed to fund the project.

Looking Ahead

GOALS FOR 2021-22 AND BEYOND



“AIR’s programs and support are making a tangible difference in the lives of students and creating a more equitable educational experience at Northwestern.”

-Miriam Sherin, Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education

INCREASE DIGITAL COURSE MATERIAL AVAILABILITY

Explore options for a digital course material platform that will allow students to have automatic access to assigned textbooks on the first day of class at a lower cost than the print.

EXPAND BOOKS FOR 'CATS OFFERINGS

Increase student participants by expanding offerings to include language courses.

EXPLORE PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Broaden AIR's reach to include programs and support for students beyond undergraduates.

IDENTIFY OPEN HOMEWORK PLATFORM

Introduce a homework platform that can be embedded into Canvas and used by instructors across disciplines at no cost to students.

ENABLE FREE PRINTING FOR ALL STUDENTS

Investigate ways to make free printing available to all Northwestern students at any location on campus that offers printing.