

Resolution to Establish a Formal Funding Mechanism for Open Educational Resources at UHD

WHEREAS the University of Houston–Downtown (UHD) is committed to academic excellence, affordability, and student success, particularly for its broad student body, many of whom balance complex financial obligations;

WHEREAS textbook prices rose by 88% between 2006 and 2016 and continue to grow by approximately 6% annually, consistently outpacing inflation and placing increasing financial strain on students;

WHEREAS in 2017, the 85th Texas Legislature passed Senate Bill 810, establishing the Open Educational Resources (OER) Grant Program (Texas Education Code §61.0668) to encourage faculty at institutions of higher education to adopt, modify, redesign, or develop courses that use only open educational resources; and UHD has responded through well-meaning efforts including the 2020–21 OER Task Force and the establishment of the Gator Textbook Access Program (GTAP) to expand affordable options for students;

WHEREAS UHD laid a foundation for OER advancement through its 2020–21 Open Educational Resources (OER) Task Force, which explored the role of OER in affordability efforts and issued recommendations to expand faculty engagement and course redesign initiatives;

WHEREAS the Gator Textbook Access Program (GTAP) has saved UHD students over \$1 million since Fall 2023 by providing day-one access to commercial course materials at a negotiated lower cost, offering predictability, convenience, and another pathway supporting affordability goals;

WHEREAS Open Educational Resources (OER)—freely available, high-quality, adaptable, and openly licensed materials—not only allow faculty to eliminate textbook costs by adopting, adapting, or creating content, but also provide students with immediate day-one access at no cost and continued access beyond a single semester, supporting long-term educational needs such as course retakes, preparation for certification exams, and comprehensive review;

WHEREAS OER allow faculty to retain academic control, customize resources to better fit pedagogical needs, and foster greater curricular flexibility without reliance on commercial publishers;

WHEREAS not all free resources meet the standards of OER; true OER must be openly licensed, accessible, high-quality, adaptable, and aligned with curricular goals to maximize long-term value for students;

WHEREAS developing high-quality OER is an iterative process that benefits from professional development, peer feedback, revision cycles, and the support of library and instructional design expertise, while the establishment of a peer mentorship network among faculty, particularly within

disciplines, can accelerate adoption, strengthen pedagogical relevance, and build sustainable expertise across the institution;

WHEREAS faculty and staff at UHD have developed and implemented OER through externally funded grants and public initiatives, and such publicly funded materials should remain freely and openly available to students, independent of commercial delivery platforms such as the Gator Textbook Access Program (GTAP), in order to preserve the open-access mission of OER;

WHEREAS sharing adopted, adapted, or created OER through established public repositories and platforms improves long-term accessibility, stability, and discoverability for students and faculty, supporting sustainable instructional use;

WHEREAS OER-related work, whether adopting, adapting, creating, or serving as peer reviewers, constitutes a meaningful contribution to teaching, scholarship, or service, and should be appropriately recognized in faculty evaluations depending on the nature of the project and departmental criteria;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the UHD administration is urged to establish a formal, recurring funding mechanism to support the adoption, adaptation, development, revision, and expansion of high-quality OER projects, with priority given to sustainable, student-facing resources that are accessible and openly licensed;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that funding be contingent upon the use or significant adaptation of openly licensed, accessible, and pedagogically sound materials that substantially enhance course delivery, avoiding superficial edits or duplications of existing commercial or OER resources;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that UHD invest in faculty professional development and support for OER work, including licensing education, accessibility standards, best practices for OER adoption and creation, structured peer review participation, sustainable content revision and expansion, and guidance on sharing materials through public OER repositories to maximize availability and impact;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that OER-related contributions supported by this funding mechanism be recognized appropriately as evidence of teaching, scholarship, or service, according to the nature of the project and the standards of the relevant academic units;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that strategic alignment continue between OER efforts, GTAP, and any future affordability initiatives, ensuring a balanced model that promotes flexibility, resiliency, and long-term cost management for students;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that any OER created or implemented at UHD with grant or public funding shall remain freely accessible to students and excluded from bundling within pay-to-access platforms such as GTAP, in order to preserve the principles of open access and ensure responsible stewardship of public resources;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the administration report annually to the Faculty Senate and broader campus community on the impact, outcomes, and future planning of OER funding initiatives and other instructional material affordability programs, including but not limited to GTAP, providing data such as participation rates, pricing trends, and student savings to support continuous improvement and decision-making;

BE FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution be communicated to UHD's administration, Faculty Senate, Student Government Association, and all relevant campus stakeholders as a formal request to invest in a future-focused, affordable and sustainable approach to course material access through sustainable OER funding;

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that UHD Faculty Senate requests the administration to reply to the Senate in the affirmative to this resolution no later than 5/20/25.