Roger Williams University

A Blueprint for Librarian-Supported Open Pedagogy

Roger Williams University, on behalf of the University Library and NC State University Libraries, requests a $93,072 LB21 Planning Grant in order to develop a Blueprint for Open Pedagogy and pilot a training program to prepare librarians and faculty to support this work.

Statement of Broad Need: Education is at a crossroads. In response to the global COVID-19 pandemic, many institutions are doubling down on commercial digital tools that promise security and control at the expense of student privacy, academic freedom, and an ethic of care. These tools range from automatic textbook billing programs that lock students into proprietary digital platforms to test proctoring services that monitor (and monetize) students' ideas, eye movements, and personal spaces. This move towards the perceived economic efficiency of surveillance capitalism is made at the cost of the thing that is most-needed during a time of crisis: open pedagogy that supports authentic connections, empathy, inclusivity, and especially student agency. This project offers a better path forward.

Open pedagogy, as embodied in values and practices such as learner-driven control of student work, critical understanding of and engagement with technology and privacy, and inclusive learning, is at the heart of open education. Open pedagogy offers a more ethical and sustainable path for education but many instructors feel unprepared to communicate these values and scaffold these skills. This lack of preparation has been identified as a significant barrier for instructors who are otherwise excited about open pedagogy.

In order to help meet these needs, the three co-PIs have been conducting research as Hewlett- and Gates Foundation-funded [Open Education Fellows]. In 2019-20 this nationally-recognized Fellowship supported a set of initial interviews with leaders and practitioners of open pedagogy that have revealed concrete practices that can make up a Blueprint for Open Pedagogy. Putting these practices into action requires partnership between the faculty that teach and librarians who support with expertise in copyright, learning technology, and open education. This project will bring them together to offer a better path for individual instructors, library experts, and the institutions where they work.

Project Design: In order to support broad adoption of open pedagogy that centers inclusion and student agency we propose a two-year planning process where we will: (1) deepen our understanding and develop a Blueprint for Supporting Open Pedagogy; (2) gather expert practitioners for an online Symposium to review and expand the Blueprint; and (3) partner with these experts to pilot a training program for faculty and librarians.

The PI's will begin with a broad series of interviews with leaders and practitioners from a diverse set of institutions and intersectional identities. With a deeper and more representative set of models for open pedagogy, we will be prepared to gather a diverse group of these expert practitioners for a Symposium to review our findings and synthesize them into a written Blueprint for open pedagogy that includes models for good practice and related educational materials. Both the interviews and Symposium will be held online to reduce barriers to participation and assure participants' health and safety during the pandemic.

In the second year we will develop and pilot training to prepare faculty and librarians to implement open pedagogy at their own institutions. We will partner with established programs in open education (RE-70-17-0073-17), copyright (RE-246377-OLS-20), and data privacy (LG-96-18-0044-18; RE-18-19-0014-19) to bring these threads together using open pedagogy as a model for concrete, values-driven open educational practice. The topics and format of the training will be informed by our research and the Symposium. We expect to offer some grounding in the values of open pedagogy but primarily focus on hands-on work building policies, course materials, and assignments that support student agency, privacy, and inclusivity. We are prepared to offer this training online or in person, depending on public health concerns.

As a pilot, this training will provide valuable experience for participants and offer an opportunity for deep assessment that can be used to further refine the Blueprint and the training. At the end of our second year we will release a revised Blueprint and data from assessment as well as all training materials with an open license. We also plan to propose an IMLS-funded Project Grant to develop a full, sustainable training program.

Broad Impact:. This project gathers a robust set of resources to guide open pedagogical practice and pilots a model for training librarians and faculty so that they are prepared to support open pedagogy in this moment of crisis. It also builds a sustainable model for values-led open education going forward. Lessons from this project will inform practice in an emergent area of open education and offer a counterweight to inequitable digital-only, surveillance-based commercial solutions. Lessons will also be fed back into the curricula of the established training programs discussed as partners above as well as related training on OER in graduate programs and professional development. It also sets the stage for a full training program that can continue to refine, refresh, and expand the reach of these practices.

Diversity Plan: The critical lens of open pedagogy is particularly necessary during an ongoing pandemic and in a time where the US is renewing engagement with the inequities in our society, from systemic racism to the digital divide. By explicitly centering student agency and critically engaging the increasingly common model of surveillance capitalism, we will intentionally build practices and pedagogy that welcome underrepresented and marginalized students. This project prepares educators to build equitable policies and assignments that value students' work, help them see themselves in the materials, and have meaningful agency in the tools they use. By centering underrepresented voices and practices, we hope to offer a more just pedagogy. By empowering educators to do this work, we hope to make this pedagogy meaningful.

Budget Summary: The total amount requested from IMLS is $93,072. The budget will support $23,524 in RWU senior personnel salaries, student wages, and fringe benefits. Travel to relevant conferences for the investigators are budgeted at $24,000. The symposium and workshop are budgeted at $20,000 total. The budget for consultants is $18,000 for the Co-PI from NC State and a graduate student. Indirect costs are $7,548 using the RWU federally negotiated rate (38.4% on Salaries and Wages).