

November 2025

Breaking It Open is a biannual newsletter from the OLER Advisory Council's Marketing and Education Committee. Here you will find a snapshot of OER news, publications, and events.

Massachusetts' OER Advisory Council is now the Open and Low-Cost Educational Resources Advisory Council



Five Years In: Same Mission, New Name

In late 2019, an advisory council of members from Massachusetts' 28 public colleges and universities was formed under the auspices of the Mass. Board of Higher Education, with [Dr. Robert Awkward](#) as the OER Statewide Coordinator. Their charge, based upon the 2018-19 *Commissioner's OER Working Group's [final report's recommendations](#)*, was to promote Open Educational Resource (free, openly-licensed, and revisable learning materials) implementation across our public higher education system through education and outreach in the short-term, while working together to implement the working group's mid- and longer-term recommendations (which were more focused on sustainability and culture change in higher education).

Over the past few years, those activities have included an ongoing collaboration with the [Open Education Network](#) that has included *OER 101* workshops and stipends for faculty reviews of [Open Textbook Library](#) e-books; increased access to [Open Massachusetts](#) (a statewide 'hub' within the OER Commons OER repository); promotion of OER news, initiatives, and learning opportunities (particularly those occurring within the state school system); advocacy for [clear labeling of low- and no-cost courses](#) courses/sections across MA public institution course registration systems; and an annual celebration of state OER 'champions' ([MA OER Faculty Awards](#)) that was inspired by student OER advocacy efforts. Ongoing quantitative and qualitative research guides the Council as it works towards implementation of longer-term goals, and documents the cost savings and other benefits of open educational resources.

This mission continues today. However, in early 2025, the originally-named *OER Advisory Council* adopted the name *Open and Low-Cost Educational Resources Advisory Council (OLERAC)*. This change helps to highlight the Council's determination to promote required learning material cost savings across Massachusetts public institutions to the maximum extent possible. The name also clarifies the mission, which is to function as a resource for all members of the Massachusetts public higher education community who are interested in learning about, working with, and advocating for free and low-cost learning resources

New Name, New Logo

To ease the transition to the Council's new name, the new logo (designed by Framingham State University OLERAC representative and Scholarly Communications Librarian Rebecca Dowgiert), builds upon the original OER Advisory Council's logo concept by retaining the familiar Massachusetts state outline and colors.

New elements include a clear reference to the group's genesis as state school OER proponents convened by the MA DHE (logo inside the 'O'). The logo also clarifies the Council's new acronym that was made possible by the longer name, as well as the 'OER' element (for those not as immediately familiar with that acronym).

Upcoming Events

Open Massachusetts Session: November 14, 10AM: Creative Commons 101- [Register Here](#)

This session will break down each CC license type, explain what they allow (and restrict), and help you understand the implications for reuse, remixing, and sharing.

Open Massachusetts Drop-in Office Hours: December 8, 9 – 11AM <https://necc-mass-edu.zoom.us/j/89656452253>

Call for Proposals: [Northeast OER Summit March 2026](#), Proposals Due January 5th

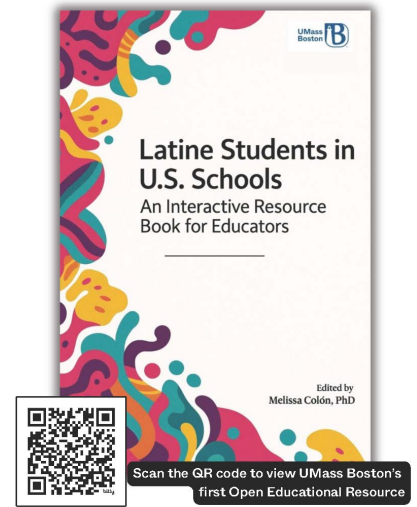
Call for Proposals: [Open Education Talks March 2026](#), Proposals Due December 14th

Save the Date: The [Open Education Global Conference](#) October 7-9, 2026. Open Education Global (OEGlobal), Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Open Learning, and **THE MASSACHUSETTS OLER ADVISORY COUNCIL** are proud to co-host the OEGlobal 2026 Conference (#OEGlobal26) in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and online.

OLER Spotlights: Featuring the Great Work of Massachusetts Public Higher Education

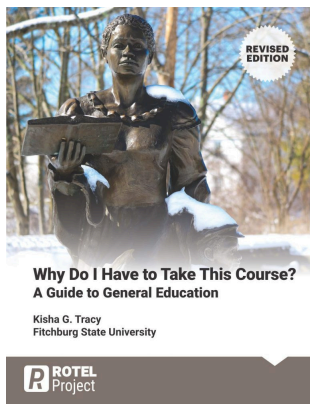
Healey Library is pleased to announce the first publication of an open educational resource (OER), supported by the OER Faculty Incentive Grant at the University of Massachusetts Boston.

“Latine Students in U.S. Schools: An Interactive Resource Book for Educators” by UMass Boston College of Education and Human Development Professor Melissa Colón and her doctoral students is the first open educational resource fully created using the support of this grant. In addition to the financial support from the Provost’s Office, authors also collaborated with Healey Librarians, who provided copyright information, assistance finding open access materials, formatting and platform training, and general publication guidance.



Read the book here: <https://pressbooks.pub/latinestudents/>

Read more about the OER incentive grant and UMass Boston’s mission to make education more affordable for their students: <https://www.umb.edu/library/open-education/>



Dr. Kisha Tracy, Chair of English Studies and the General Education Area at Fitchburg State University, was recently shortlisted as a finalist for the [2025 Open Education Global Award](#) for Excellence in the category "What We Share." Kisha was nominated for her OER textbook "[Why Do I Have to Take This Course?](#) A Guide to General Education." This was one of two textbooks authored by Kisha under the ROTEL (Remixing Open Textbooks through an Equity Lens) federal Open Textbook Pilot grant.

Previously Kisha was the OLER Advisory Council’s 2024 gold medal winner for her contributions to ROTEL. She became a member of OLERAC shortly after that and today is one of the Council’s co-chairs with Susan Tashjian, Academic Innovations Program Manager at Northern Essex Community College. The shortlist of finalists for the OE Global awards were selected from 193 nominations of open excellence representing 42 countries. Unfortunately, Kisha did not win this category, but as Kisha said, "just being selected as a finalist for this award is a win." We agree! Congratulations Kisha for continuing to advance and utilize OER.

ROTEL News

The **Career and AI Readiness while Remixing Open Textbooks through an Equity Lens (CA-ROTEL)** project is supported by a nearly \$2 million U.S. Department of Education grant. This initiative focuses on adapting open-source textbooks for high enrollment freshman and sophomore courses—critical for building a strong foundation for undergraduate success across community colleges, state universities, and UMass system institutions in the Commonwealth. Framingham State University leads the effort in collaboration with UMass Lowell and Northern Essex Community College.

Through CA-ROTEL, faculty have adapted open textbooks and developed ancillary materials to:

- Reduce reliance on costly traditional textbooks
- Provide significant savings for students
- Ease the transition into college, especially for transfer students
- Streamline classroom experiences
- Embed artificial intelligence (AI) into the curriculum while strengthening career-readiness competencies

All completed resources are open and available at: [Open Massachusetts \(CA-ROTEL Project\)](#).

If you're interested in using CA-ROTEL resources, please check back often. Resources will be added to Open Massachusetts through 2027!

If you teach a course at FSU, NECC, or UMass Lowell that will qualify as high-enrollment, please [apply](#) by March 20, 2026!

New OER Textbooks

CA-ROTEL Publications

By focusing on open-source textbooks in high-enrollment freshman and sophomore courses, CA-ROTEL is helping build a strong foundation for undergraduate success. The following is a selection of the latest CA-ROTEL publications.

- [From Spark to Startup: Your Guide to Building a Business Model and Running It](#) by Cintya Gajardo-Vejar
- [Introduction to Liberal Arts: Power, Ecology, and the Human Condition through Dune](#) by Jacob Smith
- [Introduction to Public Health](#) by Amanda Prophett
- [Introduction to Sociology](#) by Kaan Agartan
- [Marketing in Action: Interactive Learning Companion](#) by Julie Pierce
- [Professional Communications Course](#) by Linda Mallen
- [Threading Art into Educator Preparation Programs](#) by Megan Jacobs

More Publications from Open Massachusetts

- [Applied Electrical Engineering Fundamentals](#) by David J. McLaughlin
- [Business Analytics & Data Mining with R: Practical Applications](#) by Bharatendra Rai
- [Business Calculus: Functions at Work](#) by Stephen Flood
- [Culturally Responsive Computing: An Introduction into Computer Science, Security, and Technology](#) by Devan J. Walton