

## NEWS RELEASE

### Summary

Wiley College, Oakwood University, Florida Memorial University and Lumen Learning announce their collaboration in support of The Center for Excellence in Distance Learning at Wiley College, with the goal of improving online education at HBCUs through the effective use of open educational resources.

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## Wiley College, Oakwood University, Florida Memorial University and Lumen Learning Collaborate to Help Online Education Thrive at HBCUs

### New Center for Excellence in Distance Learning at Wiley College Uses Open Educational Resources to Support Faculty and Student Success

MARSHALL, Texas (March 11, 2014) – At a time when many small colleges, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), struggle with a successful approach to online learning, [The Center for Excellence in Distance Learning at Wiley College](#) is forging a new path. Tapping into the wealth of high quality open education resources (OER) available today, the Center is working with OER services provider [Lumen Learning](#) to tailor online courses to the unique needs of HBCUs and the students they serve.

“Distance learning creates inherent challenges for small colleges where the educational experience is grounded in personal relationships that cultivate scholarship and leadership among the students we serve,” said Dr. Haywood L. Strickland, President and CEO of [Wiley College](#). “We established the Center for Excellence in Distance Learning to encourage collaboration and innovation in online learning within the HBCU community, and open educational resources are essential to our approach.”

When Wiley College embarked on plans to build out its distance learning programs, faculty members found a growing body of free, high quality OER that aligned with many of the high-demand courses the College planned to offer. Seeking faculty professional development on how to use OER effectively, Wiley College joined the [Kaleidoscope Project](#) funded by Next Generation Learning Challenges (NGLC) and began collaborating with Lumen Learning and other colleges to design and improve OER-based courses.

According to Kim Thanos, CEO of Lumen Learning, OER offer several advantages over commercial textbooks for addressing challenges faced by many HBCU students. “Cost has an impact: OER are free, so no expensive commercial textbooks are required. Perhaps more importantly, OER provide faculty with the freedom to design a course that works for their students. With OER, they can excerpt, modify and rearrange course materials to align with learning outcomes. They can also add elements that encourage student success, such as study aids, embedded assignments, culturally-relevant examples, and materials that fit different reading levels or learning preferences.”

Success with the Kaleidoscope Project collaboration in 2013 soon led to the creation of The Center for Excellence in Distance Learning at Wiley College. With most HBCUs relying on lean staffing and leaner budgets, distance learning programs have been largely out of reach. Leaders from Wiley College, Oakwood University and other HBCUs hope to change this picture.

“As we introduced the new OER-based online courses for Wiley College students, we saw huge potential for broader collaboration with other HBCUs,” said Dr. Glenda F. Carter, Executive Vice President and Provost at Wiley College. “We all face similar challenges with online education. Through The Center for Excellence in Distance Learning, we can share courses, materials, progress and innovation. With a pooled investment, we can get further and faster toward the outcomes we all want to see.”

Fellow HBCUs [Oakwood University](#) and [Florida Memorial University](#) have joined The Center for Excellence in Distance Learning at Wiley College. Faculty members from these and other Lumen Learning client institutions are working together to develop new courses. Today the Center’s institutional partners offer 40+ online courses in high-demand subjects. Thirty more are under development for summer 2014, using the Center’s collaborative process for developing OER-based courses. Wiley College is in discussions with other HBCUs interested in joining the Center.

“This partnership is highly beneficial in helping small HBCUs deliver distance education through an affordable platform,” said Dr. Leslie Pollard, president and CEO of Oakwood University. “Collaboration helps us master economies of scale and minimize our margins for error. We can learn from our sister institutions where the financial, academic and organizational potholes lie, and steer away from them. The Center holds promise as a model for how HBCUs can not only survive, but thrive in tight economic times.”

In addition to cross-institution collaboration in support of distance learning, the vision for the Center is ultimately to develop a vast catalog of online courses, programs and supplemental resources that HBCUs can use to build distance education programs more efficiently and effectively. With this collection grounded in open educational resources, each institution and instructor has greater freedom to adapt the courses and materials to their programs, preferences and students’ needs.

“Online education is no longer the wave of the future. The fact is that it’s here today,” said Dr. Roslyn Clark Artis, president of Florida Memorial University. “Successful distance learning programs should be a strategic focal point for any college or university striving to broaden access to higher education and the lifelong opportunities it provides. The Center for Excellence connects us with colleagues, resources and expertise that are propelling us towards our distance learning goals far more rapidly and affordably than we could ever achieve on our own.”

Through the Center, Lumen Learning provides faculty training and ongoing support to help instructors teach effective courses using OER. This support assists with instructional design, maintaining current and high quality learning content, alignment with learning outcomes, proper licensing and attribution, and ongoing improvements to courses and materials based on student success data.

“In the end, this is all about encouraging student success,” said Dr. Kim Cliett Long, Director of The Center for Excellence in Distance Learning at Wiley College. “Many of our students lack the technology and information literacy they need to succeed in both online courses and the workplace. Using OER, we are designing online courses and programs to help them develop and apply these skills as an integral part of the education we provide.”

### **About Wiley College**

Wiley College is a four-year, privately-supported, historically black college located on the west side of Marshall, Texas. Wiley College holds distinction as one of the oldest historically black colleges west of the Mississippi River. Affiliated with the United Methodist Church and committed to the principle of educational access, the College serves traditional and non-traditional students from diverse backgrounds who have expressed a desire and potential for learning in a Christian environment. The College was established with the purpose of providing a liberal arts education with a global focus. To this end, it endeavors to maintain an intellectually stimulating environment, promoting student competencies in communication, as well as critical and analytical thinking. The College also supports spiritual, ethical, moral and leadership development. Visit us at [www.wileyc.edu](http://www.wileyc.edu).

### **About Oakwood University**

Oakwood University, in Huntsville, Alabama, is a historically black, Seventh-day Adventist institution of higher learning. Originally named Oakwood Industrial School, it was founded in 1896 to educate the recently-freed African-Americans of the South. The institution's vocational and academic programs evolved over more than a century to become Oakwood University in 2008. Today it offers quality Christian education that emphasizes academic excellence, promotes harmonious development of mind, body and spirit, and prepares leaders in service for God and humanity. *US News & World Report* perennially ranks Oakwood among the nation's "Best Colleges," both in terms of the "Historically Black Colleges and Universities" (HBCUs) and "Regional Colleges/South" categories. Oakwood also ranks among the top ten HBCUs with highest graduation rates. Learn more at [www.oakwood.edu](http://www.oakwood.edu).

### **About Florida Memorial University**

Florida Memorial University's history and traditions reach back to 1879. Affiliated with the Baptist Church and located in Miami Gardens, Florida, it is the only historically black university in southern Florida. Florida Memorial University is dedicated to academic excellence, to the pursuit of knowledge and truth, to the free exchange of ideas, and to the transmission and preservation of African-American history and heritage. The University serves a culturally diverse student population through programs in liberal and professional education, with all programs designed to prepare students to function in a highly competitive, technological and global society. For more information, visit [www.fmuniv.edu](http://www.fmuniv.edu).

### **About Lumen Learning**

Lumen Learning provides sustained support for higher education and K-12 institutions to help them eliminate textbook costs, broaden access to educational materials and improve student success through the effective use of open-educational resources. Lumen's OER Services help institutions transition high-enrollment courses to open content and provide training and support for faculty members to teach open courses and sustain the quality of these courses over time. Learn more at <http://www.lumenlearning.com>.

### **For More Information**

Lumen Learning  
Julie Curtis  
503-840-5569 | [julie@thanospartners.com](mailto:julie@thanospartners.com)

Wiley College  
Tammy Taylor  
903-927-3385 | [ttaylor@wileyc.edu](mailto:ttaylor@wileyc.edu)

Oakwood University  
George Johnson  
256-726-8205 | [gjohnson@oakwood.edu](mailto:gjohnson@oakwood.edu)

Florida Memorial University  
Erica McKinney  
305-626-3626 | [erica.mckinney@fmuniv.edu](mailto:erica.mckinney@fmuniv.edu)