

ANNOUNCEMENT

Lumen Learning Signs Statewide Deals to Deliver Open Educational Resources, Yielding Huge Savings for Students on Textbook Costs

PDX-based startup signs four state-level agreements for training, courseware and support helping colleges replace expensive textbooks with open content

PORTLAND, Ore. (October 16, 2014) – Over the past two quarters, Portland startup [Lumen Learning](#) has extended its footprint substantially by signing state-level agreements in Virginia, Maryland, Washington and Oregon to support colleges and faculty in the transition to [open educational resources \(OER\)](#). Originally founded to pioneer OER adoption for institutions serving disadvantaged students, the company provides digital courseware designed using freely available, high quality open textbooks and other open educational resources. Over two years in operation working with more than 60 higher education institutions, Lumen has also built a convincing track record of how students benefit from its courseware and approach.

“Our message resonates with many academic leaders,” said Kim Thanos, co-founder and CEO of Lumen Learning. “When students have free access to high quality course materials from the first day of class, student success improves together with college affordability and access. The shift away from expensive textbooks to open educational resources is low-hanging fruit for institutions innovating around student success.”

Academic leaders appreciate the big wins delivered in Lumen projects. Courses supported by Lumen Learning typically reduce total textbook spending by 75-90%, yielding thousands of dollars in cost savings for every course, according to research published in the [International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning](#). Additionally, Lumen clients frequently see 5-10% improvements in student success, as described in [published case studies](#). Not surprisingly, each of Lumen’s recently-signed state-level agreements aims to support innovation initiatives focused on using OER to benefit students:

- **University System of Maryland (USM):** Supporting the [Maryland Open Source Textbook \(MOST\) initiative](#), a collaboration between the USM’s Center for Academic Innovation and the USM Student Council that aims to reduce textbook costs for students, Lumen Learning will train academic leaders and faculty members on adopting OER effectively and customizing open course materials curated by Lumen.
- **Oregon Community Colleges:** In Oregon, the Lumen team will deliver regional training sessions for community college personnel across the state to raise awareness about OER, share adoption best practices for boosting student success and support faculty transitioning selected high enrollment courses to OER.
- **Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC):** Washington SBCTC engaged Lumen Learning to develop 18 competency-based, self-paced, online courses using OER for a new business transfer degree that will offer a cheaper, quicker path-to-degree for many students.
- **Virginia Community College System (VCCS):** Supporting a [Chancellor’s OER Adoption Grant program](#) focusing on OER adoption within the Virginia Community College System, Lumen will help faculty from 23 VCCS institutions to develop OER-based courses and degree programs.

“Seeing the results of the Lumen Learning team’s phenomenal work with individual VCCS colleges, we recognized the importance of offering plenty of support to our faculty as the Virginia Community College System moves forward with the increased use of open educational resources,” said Richard Sebastian, director of teaching and learning technologies for the VCCS. “Through the Chancellor’s OER Adoption Grant, participating faculty and thousands of students will benefit from Lumen’s expertise creating effective educational experiences using OER.”

Lumen’s recent success signing state-level agreements reflects several trends converging in US higher education. As recent [research from the Student PIRGs](#) reveals, commercial textbook costs have grown at over three times the rate of inflation, while more than six in 10 students have gone without textbooks due to cost. Faculty members struggle to teach effectively when high proportions of students are not adequately prepared. The nation’s public colleges are under growing pressure to improve completion rates and other student success metrics, at a time when just 33% of students at open access institutions attain a degree within six years, according to [U.S. Department of Education figures](#). Aiming to address textbook affordability and access problems, over the past decade tens of millions of dollars have been invested by educational institutions, foundations and governments to create high quality, free textbooks for many general education courses.

“We think of ourselves as a ‘last mile’ solution, working with colleges and universities to take advantage of the great open resources now available to make education cheaper and more effective,” said David Wiley, the co-founder and chief academic officer of Lumen Learning who left a tenured position at Brigham Young University to focus on the company’s work with educational institutions. “We curate and organize OER into packaged, easy-to-adopt, customizable courses. When instructors adopt the courseware, they have the opportunity to revise, reorder and remix course content to fit their pedagogical approach. Each time a course is taught, learning analytics help pinpoint where content should be improved to strengthen student learning.”

In support of growth targets for the coming year, Lumen Learning anticipates closing an initial funding round in October. The company plans to continue expanding its course catalog which now offers OER-based textbook replacement for 50 of the highest-enrolling college courses.

About Lumen Learning

Lumen Learning provides high quality open courseware and support for institutions seeking to transition high enrollment courses to open educational resources (OER). Lumen’s OER-based courseware and support have been used by 60+ higher education institutions, including six of the 20 largest U.S. community colleges. Lumen Learning pioneers research-based approaches to successful adoption of open educational resources. Lumen projects typically reduce total spend on textbooks and course materials by 75-90%, while achieving 5-10% improvements in student success. Visit us at lumenlearning.com. Follow us on Twitter at [@LumenLearning](https://twitter.com/LumenLearning).

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