Overview: Advancing OER Efforts through Community-Building

The Iowa Open Education Action Team prioritizes helping our peers across the state build competencies to support their open education programs. Many colleges are still in the first phases of their program development, and lack infrastructure, funding, or staff to grow. Our projects focus on helping those supporting OER across Iowa find confidence in their place as local OER leaders. Over the past few years, we have coordinated:

### Building Connections
- A website (iowaoer.com), with regular blog posts contributed by our members.
- An email listserv, where news and discussions can be shared.
- A regular webinar series covering topics of interest to the community.

### Doing More Together
- A community-curated list of OER in use across Iowa, shared on our website as a searchable database.
- A consortial Open Education Network (OEN) membership for every college in Iowa, offering a discounted rate for institutions.

### Offering Support
- A Request for Support Form that local institutions can use to ask for training, advocacy, resources, or other help with their OER efforts.
- Presentations given to administrators, legislators, and local coordinating groups to share information about OER.

### Sharing Resources
- The Iowa OER Toolkit, a Google Drive containing curated resources aligned to community members’ needs, including handouts, FAQs, presentation slides, survey forms, and materials from the Open Education Network.

### Assesing Needs
To ensure that our work actually supports the needs of our local communities, we regularly check in with colleges and universities across Iowa through an annual survey. This survey informs our 6-month action plans and the projects we develop from those goals.

Recent Accomplishments

**Communities of Practice**
In 2022, we brought teams of instructors together to learn about and discuss OER. This program has expanded in its second year.

**OER Training Modules**
In 2023, a working group developed a set of OER training modules available on our website for easy access and review.

**Adaptable Marketing Materials**
A working group recently finished a project to develop marketing materials that institutions can edit for their OER outreach needs.

Next Big Things

**Supporting Top-Down Advocacy**
As colleges are struggling with pervasive marketing from vendors pushing for auto-billing programs, we are developing professional development to help administrators navigate these business models.

**Meeting Our Goals**
We are currently exploring opportunities to conduct more in-depth research into the OER programs across Iowa and review pathways for Zero Textbook Cost (ZTC) degree programs within and across our institutions.

Ways MHEC Can Help

MHEC has shown a great proficiency in OER research through their OER Course Markings and ROI (Return on Investment) projects. This capacity for research could inform future directions for our team’s work and help us showcase the impact of OER through environmental scans and assessments at both the state and regional levels.

Our Team

Our team consists of representatives from Iowa’s community colleges (CCs), Regent universities, and private colleges, as well as representatives from the Iowa Department of Education.

**Current Action Team Members**
Abbey K. Elder, Iowa State University
Statewide Open Education Coordinator
Rachel Boon, Iowa Board of Regents
Jenni Breems, Dordt University
Shannon Brenner, Northeast Iowa CC
Mahrya Burnett, University of Iowa
Holly DeGrote, Northwest Iowa CC
Kevin Engel, Grinnell College
Anne Marie Gruber, University of Northern Iowa
Teri Koch, Drake University
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