PRESS RELEASE

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CIC ANNOUNCES GRANT FOR STUDY OF OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES TO REDUCE TEXTBOOK COSTS

WASHINGTON, DC – CIC today announced an award of $99,660 from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation to explore the potential of Open Educational Resources (OER) to reduce textbook costs for students at smaller and mid-sized independent colleges and universities, especially HBCUs and other minority serving institutions. CIC Senior Advisor Deanna Marcum, who previously served as managing director of Ithaka S+R and as former associate librarian for library services at the Library of Congress, will lead the “Affordable Access: OER at CIC” project. It will build on CIC’s history of programs that advance the work of libraries, including workshops on the Transformation of the College Library and on Information Fluency in the Disciplines, as well as the Consortium on Digital Resources for Teaching and Research.

The goal of the project is to issue a report that details the successes and challenges of existing OER projects at CIC member HBCUs and minority serving institutions. The report will highlight best practices for the use of OER to support underrepresented students, and will help promote the development capacity for OER at CIC member institutions.

In announcing the Hewlett grant, CIC President Richard Ekman said, “Students from historically underrepresented groups often face special financial challenges in enrolling and persisting in higher education. For these students, the cost of textbooks can become a major barrier to joining or excelling in a class, or even to continuing with their degree programs. With the price of textbooks at up to $1,240 per student per year and rising more steeply than college tuition or fees, students often must borrow more money or work more hours to afford the materials for all their courses.” Ekman added that evidence from past OER projects “has shown how dramatically these initiatives can lower textbook costs and increase adoption of course materials for all students, but those students from historically underrepresented groups often stand to benefit the most from lower textbook costs.”

The initial research activity will be a survey of librarians and academic officers from 159 CIC member colleges and universities that predominantly serve historically underrepresented student
populations to collect data on OER programs already in place. The survey will evaluate existing OER initiatives designed to promote access, reduce costs, and increase academic success for historically underrepresented students. Twenty institutions with the strongest initiatives already in place will be selected to participate in a further study for the purpose of developing models that can be replicated on other campuses. From that group of 20, five institutions will be selected to participate in a more in-depth look into faculty and student experiences with OER on their campuses.

In describing the project, Deanna Marcum said, “Through this research report, CIC anticipates learning about what has already been done in this field by member colleges and universities to advance the creation, evaluation, and implementation of OER across the whole sector. Member campuses will also benefit from analysis of how OER can be most effectively used in the classroom at smaller, private colleges to ensure equal access and support learning, especially for those students currently underrepresented in higher education.”

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The Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) is an association of 765 nonprofit independent colleges and universities, state-based councils of independent colleges, and other higher education affiliates, that works to support college and university leadership, advance institutional excellence, and enhance public understanding of independent higher education’s contributions to society. CIC is the major national organization that focuses on services to leaders of independent colleges and universities and state-based councils. CIC offers conferences, seminars, publications, and other programs and services that help institutions improve educational quality, administrative and financial performance, student outcomes, and institutional visibility. It conducts the largest annual conferences of college and university presidents and of chief academic officers in the United States. Founded in 1956, CIC is headquartered at One Dupont Circle in Washington, DC. For more information, visit [www.cic.edu](http://www.cic.edu).