Speaker 1: On October 23rd, we're planning to have our OER kickoff event. At this event, we're going to be sharing information about the initiative, going through the application process, and then answering any questions that faculty might have.

Christina Barsi: Hi, I'm Christina Barsi.

Sun Ezzel: And I'm Sun Ezzel and you're listening to The Magic Mountie Podcast.

Christina Barsi: Our mission is to find ways to keep your ear to the ground, so to speak, by bringing to you the activities and events you may not have time to attend, the resources on campus you might want to know more about, the interesting things your colleagues are creating and the many ways we can continue to better help and guide our students.

Sun Ezzel: We bring to you the voices of Mt. SAC, from the classroom to completion-

Speaker 4: I know I want to achieve my goals and I know people here are going to help me to do it.

Speaker 5: She is a sociology major and she's transferred to CalPoly Pomona, Psychology major, English major-

Sun Ezzel: ... from transforming part-time into full time.

Speaker 6: We like the time that we spend with Julie about how to write a CV and a cover letter.

Christina Barsi: For just finding time to soak in the campus-

Speaker 7: To think of the natural environment around us as a library.

Christina Barsi: We want to keep you informed and connected to all things Mt. SAC, but most importantly, we want to keep you connected with each other. I'm Christina Barsi, Mt. SAC alumni and producer of this podcast.

Sun Ezzel: And I'm Sun Etzel, Learning Assistant Faculty and Professional Learning Academy coordinator.

Christina Barsi: And this is the Magic Mountie Podcast.

Emily: One of the many new expenses that students face when they come to college is textbooks. In high school and elementary school beyond, they were always provided. But starting in college, they have to purchase them and the sticker shock can be a lot for students. So the Mt. SAC library has a new initiative to help students with those costs by encouraging faculty to use OER for their textbooks. We're here at the library to learn more about it.

Emily: I am thrilled to be here in the library talking to three wonderful professionals about OER. So I'm going to give you guys a chance to introduce yourself and what your role is.

Esteban Aguilar: Hi, Emily. My name's Esteban Aguilar. I'm the electronic resources librarian here at Mt. SAC and I'm one of the library faculty members working on the new OER initiative that we have on campus.

Romelia Salinas: Hi, I'm Romelia Salinas and I'm Associate Dean of Library and Learning Resources. I am the lead on the OER campus initiative at this point and I'm working with Stefan and Monica.

Monica Travis: Hi, I'm Monica Travis. I'm the Career Education Librarian. I'm also working on the OER initiative.

Emily: Why don't we start with some of the basics. What is OER?

Esteban Aguilar: OER stands for open educational resources and those are free to use resources that faculty can adopt or create wholesale for use in their class. The reason that we encourage faculty to want to use that is to be able to cut down on the costs for students. Right? So we have this initiative here on campus because we're trying to get more faculty to get interest in OER, to get knowledge of what OER is and how they can adapt it for their own use.

Emily: When I think of OER, my focus goes to textbooks and I'm wondering is that all OER is or is it beyond textbooks?

Monica Travis: So technically, it goes beyond textbooks. Though, I think our initiative is only focusing on textbooks. The key is that if you have a license on something, so usually it's a creative commons license. I guess, like for instance, when people think of open educational resources, they think that things that you can just access online, which isn't necessarily true. The New York Times, even though for the most part you can access at least a few of their articles online for free, it's not an OER because it's copyrighted.

Romelia Salinas: When we're talking about OER, oftentimes it's associated with free textbooks, as Monica stated under this creative commons license, but an OER, it can be more than a textbook. It could be handouts, it could be quizzes. There's a lot of different types. It could be multimedia projects. So it's not just textbooks, there's different types of OERs, but I think what makes it an OER is the fact that it is available under this creative commons license that allows you to manipulate it and use it for free in different ways.

Emily: That's interesting that you say you can manipulate it. So it sounds like if I were an instructor who wanted to use OER in my classroom, I could maybe even take one or two textbooks that are available under that creative commons open license and use the chapters from one that worked for me, used the chapters from another. I could kind of mix and match to meet the needs of my course. Does that sound right to you?

Romelia Salinas: Absolutely. That's one of the options that we have available to faculty through our current initiative, our OER campus initiative. You can either adopt a book, which is basically taking existing OER and use it in place of a traditional textbook. Or you can adapt an OER, which basically takes, like as explained, different parts of chapters or parts from different OERs, create a new textbook. Those are things that you can do with it.

Emily: Is there anything that is not OER that maybe faculty would confuse for OER or may have a misconception about, "Oh, that's OER."

Esteban Aguilar: So library resources. Library resources aren't OER. Right? Their free to use, but we're paying for a subscription to that. Some eBooks have DRM rights, or digital rights management restrictions, where you can only print or save a certain portion of the book at a time. Some of them have concurrent user restrictions, right? So those things, while they're free to use in the classroom, because it's not like students are paying to access those things, access is still being paid for by somebody, in this case, the institution. Instructor can't just grab a textbook from the library and say, "This is replacing a for-cost textbook. Boom, I've adopted OER." That's not quite the spirit of it.

Emily: How does OER benefit students?

Romelia Salinas: As we know, the cost of textbooks poses a major barrier to student success. There's been a number of studies that have found that oftentimes, students choose to not buy the textbook because of the cost and not having access to the reading materials definitely hurts their probability of either staying in the class or succeeding in the class. I would say that if we're able to address this barrier, that that will increase their probability of succeeding. In some way, we're contributing to the success of students by addressing that barrier. There's also pedagogical reasonings. I think the fact that faculty have access to create that perfect textbook in a way, also gives students a different type of learning experience that a traditional textbook might not provide them with. So those are some of the reasons I think that using OER in place of a traditional textbook is beneficial for students.

Emily: Are there any other reasons that faculty might want to get involved with using OER?

Esteban Aguilar: It's a chance for them to help contribute to the scholarship, right? Because they could create something that benefits their discipline. It's something to kind of put a feather in their cap as well. Right? They're showing their expertise and they are sharing their expertise with the larger academic community as a whole. Right? So their students benefit, the academic community benefits at large and the instructors get to showcase their expertise. That's something that we really kind of want to encourage as well. Right? Share your knowledge

Romelia Salinas: I want to also add because it is so flexible, it's really easy to keep your content up to date. Oftentimes, when we have parts of textbooks that aren't really as relevant or out dated, when we're using OER, you can just switch that out and keep your content as current as it needs to be. I think definitely, that's another reason. The other one is just for equity reasons. If we are able to address the cost issue, that means on day one of class, every student will have access to the reading materials. It's not about waiting until your financial aid check comes in or you're able to get your paycheck at work because you don't have that money available at that time. I think it's definitely something for us to consider.

Esteban Aguilar: There is one other thing that Romelia had mentioned. She was talking about the freedom for faculty to be able to still use this and things like that. There can be a misconception about academic rigor or the academic freedom involved with OER. Right? Instructors are still able to maintain that level of academic freedom because with OER, they have that ability to be able to pick and choose just like they would do with their textbooks now, right? They have their students buy an entire textbook, but they only choose to have them read two chapters, three chapters out of a 10 chapter book. That doesn't change.

Esteban Aguilar: They find an OER that they really like and they only want to use one little piece. Well, they have every right to be able to just use that little piece so they're not losing academic freedom by using OER, but that academic rigor is still there as well. Right? It's not a drop in quality or anything like that. The OER content that is put out is still reviewed by experts in the field. It's still put out and still quality material. So that shouldn't be a concern for faculty as well.

Emily: All right, so it sounds like there's a lot of reasons faculty would want to do this. I know here at Mt. SAC we have such a strong commitment to students and especially, students in our equity categories who may not have as much money to buy books and it gives us the chance to customize things how we like them and we can even contribute to the world of knowledge by sharing what we did with everyone else. Now, I'm curious what an OER might look like. Would the students just view the whole thing online? Is it cut and pasted together? Is it printed? What does it look like?

Monica Travis: I think it depends on what platform they use. Generally, OER is online just because that's the easiest way to give access to people. But because of the licenses you can print it. So if you have students that prefer a more textual experience in reading, then you can print it out for them or they can print it out.

Emily: I would love to hear more about the initiative that you all have put so much work into here at Mt. SAC. What is it? How does it work?

Romelia Salinas: Yeah, we're really excited. So this initiative allows for faculty to be involved in three different ways. One is to adopt an existing textbook. So that means take an OER and then replace your traditional textbook with the new OER. The second approach is to adapt, which means that you combine or remix multiple open textbooks and create your own textbook and use that in place of your traditional textbook. The last way is to create. If you're not able to find an OER textbook that meets your needs, you can take on the challenge of creating your own textbook, basically, creating your own OER. Those are the three ways that we hope faculty will be interested in becoming an involved in our initiative.

Emily: Now, I've got to think, a lot of faculty have been hearing about OER different places and are excited about it and want to do it, but recognize that it's a lot of work. Are you able to offer any kind of compensation for the faculty who are willing to put in that extra effort?

Romelia Salinas: Yes. If a faculty member chooses to adopt a book, there's a $1,000 compensation. For the second option, which is adapt, it's $2,500. And if you choose to create an OER, you are eligible to get $5,000.

Emily: That sounds awesome. There's a lot of different ways to do it. I'm curious, because they're making an OER in the second and third option, that would then also still be shared as an OER with other faculty/ It would continue to be an open resource, correct?

Romelia Salinas: Yes, that's correct. It's part of the expectations or deliverables of being selected, is you have to then make your product available to the OER community and have it available under the open creative commons license, which I think Monica can probably comment on that.

Monica Travis: Yes, we're allowing any creative commons license except for the non-derivative one because that creates issues and isn't as freely accessible as we hope we can be with our initiative.

Emily: When I think about what you guys are doing, it makes me see that when a faculty member signs on to do something like this, they're not just helping the students in their classes be able to have better, easier access to education because they don't have the cost of the textbook. They're actually possibly, going to help many, many more classes of students because it keeps paying forward. So that sounds very motivating to me.

Emily: For faculty who are interested in learning a little bit more, where could they actually find OERs available that they could peruse and kind of get an idea of what's out there?

Esteban Aguilar: There are actually a couple of different places that faculty can find OER. We, here at Mt. SAC, have a lib guide that we created for OER. It's accessible through the Mt. SAC website, but there are just a couple of sites that they can go to offhand. OpenStax is a website that faculty can go to. MERLOT is like an OER aggregator that they can do a search on their topic and find resources on the same with MOM. I forget exactly what that stands for, but it's from George Mason University. Open textbook library. There are a lot of options for faculty to be able to try to find things on their own, but they're also more than welcome to come into the library and talk to us. Monica, I think, can talk a little bit more about that.

Monica Travis: I also just want to shout out skills commons for career education in case you're looking for OER in that area. But yeah, we're more than happy to help you if you come into the library.

Emily: Should we make an appointment or just stop by?

Monica Travis: It's best to make an appointment with us, but if you want to stop by that's fine too.

Emily: Where can people get more information about this initiative if they have any questions or kind of want to learn about what you're looking for?

Romelia Salinas: On October 23rd, we're planning to have our OER kickoff event. At this event, we're going to be sharing information about the initiative, going through the application process, and answering any questions that faculty might have. In addition to that, we're also going to be having an OER petting zoo. This is an opportunity for faculty come in and actually touch and feel and and see some of the OERs. We will also be having computers or laptops setups, so faculty can have an opportunity to sit down with the librarians and get a little bit of assistance as to where they can go and find information or explore OER on sites to see if there's any content or any existing textbooks that might work for them.

Romelia Salinas: That event is coming up next Wednesday and again, that's October 23rd in the pod loft from 11:30 to 1:00.

Emily: All right, so October 23rd, pod loft and 11:30 to 1:00. I hope we see lots of interested Mt. SAC faculty there. That sounds like a great event just to even learn more about it and see if that's what you want to do. What is the deadline for faculty to actually apply for OER, for this initiative?

Esteban Aguilar: Applications are going to be accepted until November 15th and we'll let people know if their proposals were accepted a couple of weeks after that on December 2nd.

Romelia Salinas: All right, sounds great. Anything else you would like to share about OER in general or the initiative here at Mt. SAC?

Esteban Aguilar: So one of the things too, we understand that this is a lot of work, right? For somebody who's new to OER or still doesn't quite have a firm grasp on it, we do want to say that as part of this initiative we are going to be offering workshops for those who are interested and for those who are accepted and to whose proposals are accepted because they're actually a requirement for them to show up. So that's important to note as well.

Romelia Salinas: In addition to that, we want to make sure faculty understand they're not going to be doing this by themselves. We will be providing them support as part of the initiative. One of the ways we're going to be providing them support is we're going to have some OER faculty mentors. These are faculty members who have experience using OER and they will be available to answer questions and work with the new faculty members as they work on their projects and integrating and adopting an OER. I'm really excited about that. I think it's going to be a good way for more experienced faculty members to work with new faculty members in this area.

Emily: Well, I just want to thank you all for meeting with me today. I hope the kickoff event is very successful and you get lots of applications for this great initiative. I just want to encourage all the Mt. SAC faculty listening to this podcast to check it out and see if OER might be a great match for you.

Christina Barsi: Thank you for listening to the Magic Mountie Podcast. Remember to subscribe on Apple podcasts, Spotify, or wherever you like to get your podcasts so you can listen in the car, in your office or however you like to listen. Once you subscribe, we'd love to hear what you think by leaving us a review. And don't forget to share your favorite episodes.