

\$4.9M pilot effort tests OER



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The U.S. Education Department (ED) will test using free, open textbooks through a pilot program that will include seven community colleges in California and one in Maryland. ED on Wednesday announced a \$4.9 million grant to the [University of California, Davis](#) (UC Davis) to lead a pilot program with targeted subjects in mind, including career and technical education (CTE).

UC Davis will head a consortium of 12 campuses that will begin by creating open textbooks focused on high-enrollment courses, such as chemistry, as well as CTE fields. “Technical textbooks are among the more expensive books that students must purchase, as they often must be updated frequently to keep pace with changing technologies,” the department said in a press release.

“This program is an important step toward reducing barriers, expanding access and increasing choice for students who want to attend college or learn a trade,” Education Secretary Betsy DeVos said of the pilot, which is funded through the fiscal year FY 2018 omnibus spending bill. Community colleges in the consortium include:

- Prince George’s Community College (Maryland)
- American River College
- Contra Costa College
- Cosumnes River College
- Diablo Valley College
- Folsom Lake College
- Los Medanos College
- Sacramento City College

According to the program’s July 30 [Federal Register notice](#), the cost of college textbooks increased 88 percent between 2006 and 2016. In the 2016-17 academic year, the average college student budget for books and supplies had risen to \$1,263 for students at four-year institutions and \$1,458 at two-year schools.

UC Davis plans to launch its efforts by expanding the [LibreTexts](#) open textbook service, which is a multi-institution effort to developing the next generation of open-access texts.