

Designing for Access: OER and the Future of Online Learning

February 17-19, 2026

Growing Online Learning



Conference Schedule

| | February 17 | February 18 | February 19 |
|--------------------|---|--|---|
| 10am – 11am | The Importance of Community in Support of OER Amy Hofer Statewide Open Education Program Director Open Oregon Educational Resources | Supporting OER in Illinois Through the OER Commons and The Open Illinois Hub CARLI Staff | OER Development and Implementation in Chemistry & Math Matthew Lathrop Heartland Community College Saadia Khan, Triton College |
| 2pm – 3pm | OER Work at Illinois Community Colleges Panel Discussion Anne Humphrey, McHenry County College Joe Wachter, Harper College Stephanie Whalen, Harper College | OER You Ready? Faculty Created Course Content Chris Dobson, Harper College Sarah Etlinger & David Dosier, Rock Valley College | Partnering with the SIU Press to Grow OER Capacity for Illinois Mark Poepsel, SIU-Edwardsville |

Growing Online Learning



Conference Recordings

*Recordings of these presentations
will be available at:*

<http://www.ilcco.net/>

under Resources & Events

For more information about ILCCO:

jeff.newell@illinois.gov



Panelists



Holly Rey, Moderator, Director of Teaching and Learning, McHenry County College

Anne Humphrey, English Faculty, Innovative Course Materials Chair, McHenry County College

Joe Wachter, Chemistry Faculty, OER Coordinator, Harper College

Stephanie Whalen, English and College Success Faculty, Academy for Teaching Excellence Director, Harper College

How did you get started and establish a program structure and incentives?

The OER web page with OER grant application: [OER at Harper | Academy For Teaching Excellence](#), Joe Wachter, OER Coordinator

Harper Syllabus Blackboard

ACADEMY FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE

Adjunct Faculty Blackboard Ultra Calendar Communities of Practice Professional Development Teaching Support

OER at Harper College

This page provides information related to current OER initiatives and opportunities at Harper College

OER Facts at Harper College

\$79,750 spent on OER grants

Nearly \$300,000 in student savings.

1 out of 5 students impacted registered for an additional 3 credit hour course, generating an additional \$281,000 in tuition revenue

Students in impacted sections passed (C or higher) at a 3% higher rate than comparable non-OER grant sections.

Two-thirds of faculty reported that their approach to teaching was more innovative in the semester they implemented these resources

Nearly two-thirds of students rated the overall quality of the learning experience as higher than in non-OER grant sections.

History of OER at Harper College

OER @ Harper College

Teaching with OER

- [OER Overview](#)
- [OER at Harper College](#)
- [OER Resources](#)
- [OER Support Services](#)

Formal structure versus passionate individuals:

- One early adopter 1998-2017
- Pet project of new president 2017-present
- [High performers and departments](#)
- Scattered interest of others
- Continued support: emphasis and stipends
- As of fall 2023, over 50% of faculty participating
- As of now, 84 project courses
- 568 courses using ICM that did not go through projects (!!!!)



What has worked well to get faculty engaged?

Examples: The Pressbooks site [Harper First Year Seminar: A Guide to College Success – Simple Book Publishing](#) and [Equity Literacy Project – Simple Book Publishing](#), Stephanie Whalen, Academy Director

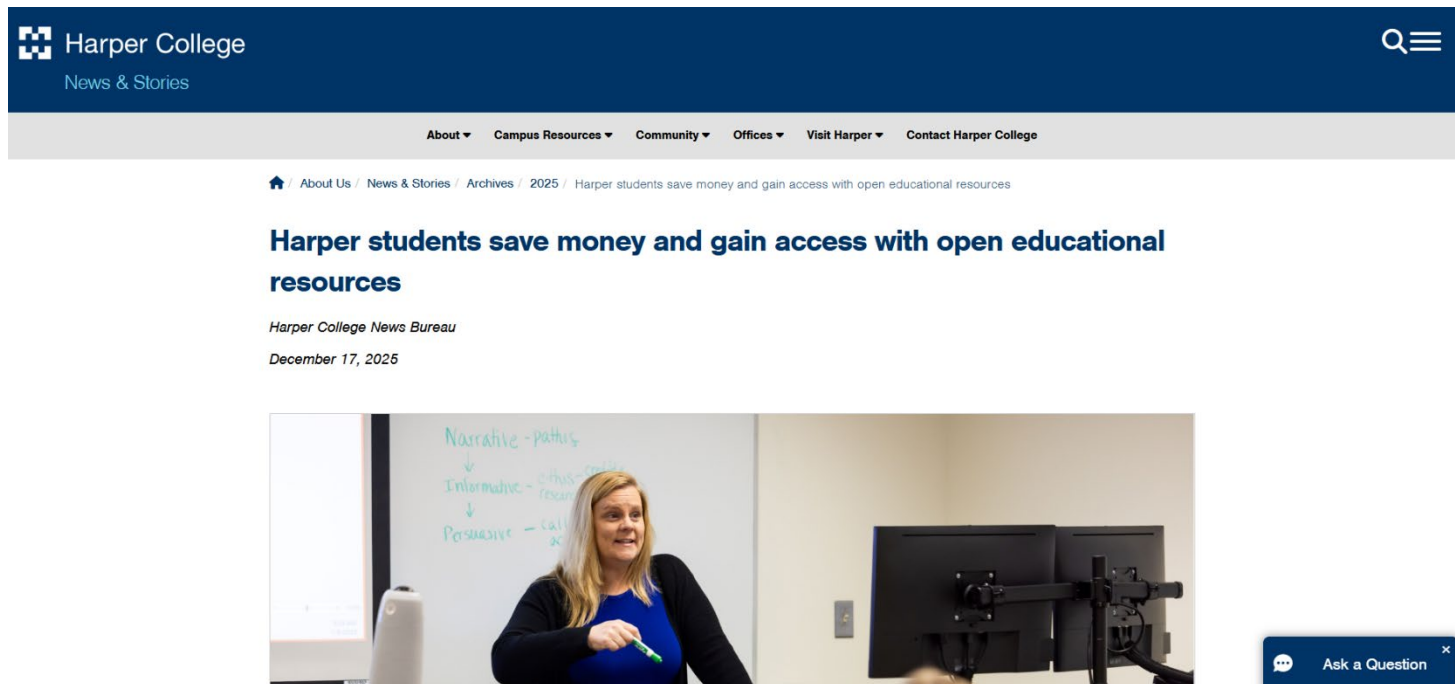
The screenshot shows the Harper College Pressbooks interface. At the top left is the Harper College logo and name. On the right, there are navigation links for 'Home', 'Read', 'Sign in', and a search bar labeled 'Search in book ...'. The main content area has a dark background with the title 'Harper First Year Seminar: A Guide to College Success' in white. Below the title, the authors are listed: 'by Annie Liotine; Bobby Summers; Chris Candelas; Elizabeth Ward; Jenyl Keeton; Jen Lau-Bond; Katye Speer; Megan Dallianis; Robert Allare; Stephanie Whalen; and Dawn McKinley'. There are four Creative Commons icons (CC, BY, NC, SA) and the text 'Creative Commons Attribution NonCommercial ShareAlike'. A white 'READ BOOK' button is at the bottom. On the right side, there is a blue sidebar with a smaller version of the title and a collage of four photos showing students and staff at a seminar event.

Moving faculty from interest to adoption:

- [Intro course](#)
- Partial stipends for partial replacement
- Becoming part of general HIPs focus
- On agenda at all-faculty meetings

Describe the progress you have made, including challenges, goals, and recommendations.

Harper students save money and gain access with open educational resources, Joe Wachter, OER Coordinator



The screenshot shows a news article on the Harper College website. The header includes the Harper College logo and 'News & Stories'. A navigation bar lists 'About', 'Campus Resources', 'Community', 'Offices', 'Visit Harper', and 'Contact Harper College'. The article title is 'Harper students save money and gain access with open educational resources'. Below the title, it says 'Harper College News Bureau' and 'December 17, 2025'. The main image shows a woman in a blue top standing in front of a whiteboard. The whiteboard has handwritten text: 'Narrative - pathos', 'Informative - ethos', and 'Persuasive - call to action'. A small 'Ask a Question' button is visible in the bottom right corner of the image area.

Harper College
News & Stories

About Campus Resources Community Offices Visit Harper Contact Harper College

Home / About Us / News & Stories / Archives / 2025 / Harper students save money and gain access with open educational resources

Harper students save money and gain access with open educational resources

Harper College News Bureau
December 17, 2025

Narrative - pathos
↓
Informative - ethos
↓
Persuasive - call to action

Ask a Question

What challenge didn't you anticipate?

- COVID slowed new participation
- Accessibility deadline brought fear
- Savings difficult to calculate:
 - within four years, calculated \$3M savings, lost track over COVID years
 - many courses not eliminating texts but being built from start with ICM
- Involvement difficult to track due to unreported use: new form helps

How do you generate interest and continue momentum?

Academy Newsletter [Academy News - January 21, 2026](#), Stephanie Whalen, Academy Director

Students Save Money, Gain Access with Open Educational Resources

Two-year college students spend \$1,302 per year on average for textbooks and supplies, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. Harper seeks to decrease this cost with the use of free open educational resources (OER).

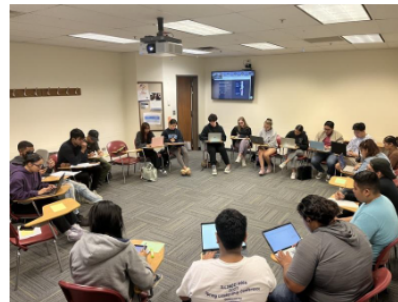
OERs are openly licensed textbooks and educational materials that can be used at no cost to students. Housed on digital platforms known as OER repositories or libraries, the books and other digital resources are created by educators who can make their own or collaborate with others to design materials entire departments can share.

Joe Wachter and Dr. Stephanie Whalen are helping lead Harper's efforts to increase OER use. [Continue reading...](#)

Ready to learn more about OER? [Register for an upcoming workshop.](#)



Joe Wachter, OER Coordinator, working with an OER team for FYS.



An English class using OER.

For colleges just starting, what is the very first step they should take?

- Unwavering and consistent administrative support
- Mentions at all faculty meetings
- Included in dean's assessments
- Committee established
- Stipends or release time given
- Research support granted
- [Talking points](#)



Attendee Questions

Conference Schedule

| | February 17 | February 18 | February 19 |
|--------------------|---|--|---|
| 10am – 11am | The Importance of Community in Support of OER Amy Hofer Statewide Open Education Program Director Open Oregon Educational Resources | Supporting OER in Illinois Through the OER Commons and The Open Illinois Hub CARLI Staff | OER Development and Implementation in Chemistry & Math Matthew Lathrop Heartland Community College Saadia Khan, Triton College |
| 2pm – 3pm | OER Work at Illinois Community Colleges Panel Discussion Anne Humphrey, McHenry County College Joe Wachter, Harper College Stephanie Whalen, Harper College | OER You Ready? Faculty Created Course Content Chris Dobson, Harper College Sarah Etlinger & David Dosier, Rock Valley College | Partnering with the SIU Press to Grow OER Capacity for Illinois Mark Poepsel, SIU-Edwardsville |

Growing Online Learning



Conference Recordings

*Recordings of these presentations
will be available at:*

<http://www.ilcco.net/>

under Resources & Events

For more information about ILCCO:

jeff.newell@illinois.gov

