**Affordable Learning Georgia Textbook Transformation Grants**

**Final Report**

**Date: August 7, 2015**

**Grant Number: 92**

**Institution Name(s): Albany State University**

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**Project Lead: Dr. Hema Oshoone Mason**

**Course Name(s) and Course Numbers: PSYC 1101-General Psychology**

**Semester Project Began: May 14, 2015**

**Semester(s) of Implementation: Summer 2015**

**Average Number of Students Per Course Section: 25 per Summer Semester**

**Number of Course Sections Affected by Implementation: 1**

**Total Number of Students Affected by Implementation: 28**

**1. Narrative**

A. Describe the key outcomes, whether positive, negative, or interesting, of your project. The goal of this project was to provide a learning experience in which students would benefit immediately without financial burden. Specifically, this project aimed to provide students with free textbook and supplemental materials for PSYC 1101 – General Psychology in an effort to (1) increase student engagement and active learning and (2) decrease lack of preparedness due to students not purchasing expensive textbooks. To achieve these goals, team members searched for suitable low cost or free materials that would meet APA guidelines, as well as university and departmental expectations. When searching for these materials, it was important that the materials meet the following criteria: 1. Textbook must be free of charge to students, 2. Students must be able to freely access the textbook, 3. Supplemental materials must be free and easily accessible, 4. The materials must meet the academic rigor that other textbooks meet, 5. Textbooks must follow APA guidelines and 6. Supplemental materials such as exam questions and powerpoints must be included. For this project, we reviewed materials from MERLOT, College Open Textbooks, OpenStax College and several other sources. After an exhaustive search of the available materials, the team decided that OpenStax College would most closely meet the teaching needs of the instructor and also the needs of the students.

While OpenStax provided solid and straightforward materials for the PSYC 1101 course, the transformation was not without its challenges. For instance, there were at times instances when the URL for OpenStax was not working. However, when the course began, those problems seemed to go away. Also, with the size of the book, there at times seemed to be trouble downloading the textbook. However, we considered this problem to be minimal in that we provided the textbook in several ways. The most effective way we provided the textbook was through the learning management system. Students were advised of the different ways they could access the reading and supplemental materials during the first week of class. However, when they were advised of the learning management option, it appeared that everyone favored this option, as it was easy and quick for the students to access and then download to their laptops. After one week of courses, the Lead Team Member did a follow up with the class to see who had downloaded the textbook and 100% of the students in attendance reported that they accessed and were able to download the materials. This is not ordinarily the case. For example, in preparing for the transformation and implementation of this project, team members surveyed PSYC 1101 students taking the course in Spring 2015 by asking how many students had purchased the required textbook materials. Of the 59 students surveyed, only 37.5% of the students had purchased the required textbook prior to the first exam. By the end of the semester, about half of the students had textbooks.

The anticipated outcomes for this project included having access to textbooks on the first day of class, better GPA scores, better exam scores, better discussion assignment grades, better student engagement and preparedness for class. At the conclusion of PSYC 1101, a majority of these outcomes were met. Again, 100% of the students had access to and were able to download and print the required textbook materials on the first day, compared to just 37.5% of students who had access to required textbooks by week 4. The cumulative GPA scores for this course was 83.58%, compared to 73.88% in 2014. The exam scores under this new transformation improved over all of the exam scores in 2014 (more on the exam scores later). The discussion assignment grades did not improve, as expected. In fact, in one of the discussion assignments, the scores decreased slightly. We found this to be an interesting outcome given the assumption that students (in the 2014 course) did not perform well on these assignments because there were no textbooks to guide their understanding of the assignments. It was expected that the scores on these assignments would improve because of the immediate access to textbook materials. Another interesting outcome was the student engagement and interaction. It was proposed that students did not engage or participate in class lecture and discussions because they had not read the required materials prior to coming to class. It was assumed that this was because students did not have the reading material. It was therefore predicted that this transformation would impact instruction in a very positive way. We expected students to be more engaged and participative because they would now have the materials and be able to read and follow along in class, as well as ask questions. However, engagement and participation continued to be an issue for this course. While the transformation impacted the students positively, as reflected in their GPAs, their participation performance continued to lag. Performance that resulted in good exam or discussion grades was not seen in class.

B. We have learned many lessons from the transformation of PSYC 1101 but, would do a few things differently. While the OpenStax textbook was definitely suitable for this course, we would spend more time exploring additional options for required reading. We would also explore other options as it relates to supplemental and lecturing materials. Next, it is important to figure out why engagement and participation continues to be an issue. Certainly, students respond differently to the ways in which the lessons are being presented to them. Technology is important; demonstrations and interaction are essential as well. However, it was assumed that lack of engagement and participation was a textbook issue. Therefore, we would spend more time figuring out best practices on addressing this important issue.

**2. Quotes**

Formal evaluations are not offered to students in the summer. However, many students expressed their appreciation for being able to use free textbook materials. They were especially pleased with the authors’ ability to get straight to the point. It has often been noted by students and faculty that there are several psychological concepts and ideas that have unnecessary and even outdated facts and information. Students appreciated not having to question or wonder about the most important ideas.

**3. Quantitative and Qualitative Measures**

**3a. Overall Measurements**

**Student Opinion of Materials**

**Was the overall student opinion about the materials used in the course positive, neutral, or negative?**

***Required Textbook Materials***

Total number of students affected in this project: \_\_\_27\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* Positive: \_\_\_100\_\_\_\_ % of \_\_\_\_27\_\_\_\_ number of respondents
* Neutral: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ % of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ number of respondents
* Negative: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ % of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ number of respondents

***Supplemental and Powerpoint Materials***

Total number of students affected in this project: \_\_\_27\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* Positive: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ % of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ number of respondents
* Neutral: \_\_\_\_40\_\_\_ % of \_\_\_27\_\_\_\_\_ number of respondents
* Negative: \_\_\_60\_\_\_\_ % of \_\_\_\_27\_\_\_\_ number of respondents

**Student Learning Outcomes and Grades**

Choose One:

* \_X\_ Positive: Higher performance outcomes measured over previous semester(s)
* \_\_\_ Neutral: Same performance outcomes over previous semester(s)
* \_\_\_ Negative: Lower performance outcomes over previous semester(s)

**Student Drop/Fail/Withdraw (DFW) Rates**

**Drop/Fail/Withdraw Rate:**

One student, out of a total \_\_\_27\_\_\_\_ students affected, dropped/failed/withdrew from the course in the final semester of implementation.

Choose One:

* \_\_\_ Positive: This is a lower percentage of students with D/F/W than previous semester(s)
* \_X\_ Neutral: This is the same percentage of students with D/F/W than previous semester(s)
* \_\_\_ Negative: This is a higher percentage of students with D/F/W than previous semester(s)

**3b. Narrative**

**Analyses**

**The Sample** – The study sample comprised 48 undergraduate students enrolled in General Psychology courses in a Southwest Georgia university setting. 2014: There were 21 cases in 2014. 2015: There were 27 cases in 2015. The 2015 General Psychology course is the course under transformation. The 2014 General Psychology course was used as the comparison, as this class was required to purchase the required textbook. The 2015 course was provided all materials free of charge.

**Sample Characteristics** – The drop and withdraw (DW) rates for both classes were minimal. There were a total of 21 students who enrolled in the 2014 PSYC 1101 General Psychology course. There were zero students who dropped or withdrew from the course. There were a total of 28 students who enrolled in the 2015 course. There was one student who withdrew from the course. In terms of failing rates, 33% of the 2014 General Psychology course failed and only 11% of the students enrolled in the 2015 General Psychology course failed. The cumulative average GPA for the 2014 course was 73.88%. The cumulative average GPA for the 2015 course was 83.58%.

***Exams***

Independent Samples T-Tests were conducted to compare the means of exam scores (Exam #1) of students who were required to purchase textbooks in Summer 2014 and students who were provided with free textbook materials in Summer 2015. These tests were also conducted to determine whether the overall exam scores in Exam #1 improved in Summer 2015 over Summer 2014 Exam #1 results. Results indicated that the mean scores from Exam #1 in Summer 2014 (M=63.57, SD=14.23) was statistically and significantly different from the mean scores of Exam #1 in Summer 2015 (M=82.89, SD=11.93), t(25)=-4.08, p=.00. Results also indicated that Exam #1 scores in 2015 improved from 2014 scores.



Next, Independent Samples T-Tests were conducted to compare the means of exam scores (Exam #2) of students who were required to purchase textbooks in Summer 2014 and students who were provided with free textbook materials in Summer 2015. These tests were also conducted to determine whether the overall exam scores in Exam #2 improved in Summer 2015 over Summer 2014 Exam #2 results. Results indicated that the mean scores from Exam #2 in Summer 2014 (M=73.39, SD=16.69) was statistically and significantly different from the mean scores of Exam #2 in Summer 2015 (M=90.50, SD=7.27), t(22)=-4.06, p=.00. Results also indicated that Exam #2 scores in 2015 improved from 2014 scores.



Next, Independent Samples T-Tests were conducted to compare the means of exam scores (Exam #3) of students who were required to purchase textbooks in Summer 2014 and students who were provided with free textbook materials in Summer 2015. These tests were also conducted to determine whether the overall exam scores in Exam #3 improved in Summer 2015 over Summer 2014 Exam #3 results. Results indicated that the mean scores from Exam #3 in Summer 2014 (M=80.21, SD=11.54) was statistically and significantly different from the mean scores of Exam #3 in Summer 2015 (M=88.17, SD=6.07), t(25)=-2.72, p=.01. Results also indicated that Exam #3 scores in 2015 improved from 2014 scores.



Finally, Independent Samples T-Tests were conducted to compare the means of exam scores (Exam #4) of students who were required to purchase textbooks in Summer 2014 and students who were provided with free textbook materials in Summer 2015. These tests were also conducted to determine whether the overall exam scores in Exam #4 improved in Summer 2015 over Summer 2014 Exam #4 results. Results indicated that the mean scores from Exam #4 in Summer 2014 (M=66.67, SD=19.78) was statistically and significantly different from the mean scores of Exam #4 in Summer 2015 (M=88.64, SD=7.65), t(12)=-3.71, p=.00. Results also indicated that Exam #4 scores in 2015 improved from 2014 scores.



***Discussion Assignments***

Independent Samples T-Tests were conducted to compare the means of discussion assignment scores (Discussion #1) of students who were required to purchase textbooks in Summer 2014 and students who were provided with free textbook materials in Summer 2015. These tests were also conducted to determine whether the overall discussion assignment scores in Summer 2015 improved over Summer 2014 discussion scores. Results indicated that scores improved slightly from 2014 to 2015, however, the mean scores from Discussion #1 in Summer 2014 (M=15.23, SD=11.23) was neither statistically nor significantly different from the mean scores of Discussion #1 in Summer 2015 (M=17.85, SD=5.39), t(27)=-.98, p>.05.

Independent Samples T-Tests were also conducted to compare the means of discussion assignment scores (Discussion #2) of students who were required to purchase textbooks in Summer 2014 and students who were provided with free textbook materials in Summer 2015. These tests were also conducted to determine whether the overall discussion assignment scores in Summer 2015 improved over Summer 2014 discussion scores. Results indicated that scores decreased slightly from 2014 to 2015. However, this decrease was not significant. That is, the mean scores from Discussion #2 in Summer 2014 (M=19.52, SD=8.50) was neither statistically nor significantly different from the mean scores of Discussion #2 in Summer 2015 (M=18.25, SD=4.02), t(26)=.62, p>.05.



**4. Sustainability Plan**

There are normally 5-6 sections of General Psychology (a top 50 USG course) taught at Albany State University. This project initially introduced the no-cost materials to the one section of General Psychology that was offered in the Summer of 2015. The project had significant success and resulted in (1) significant monetary savings and (2) increased academic performance. Therefore, we will move forward and continue to transform General Psychology courses using the no-cost textbook method. Specifically in the fall, we will transform one of the General Psychology courses, offering no-cost textbooks and compare that course with another General Psychology course being offered in the same semester. The comparison course will require that textbooks are purchased. We are interested in collecting more data to confirm that this initiative is worthy to be rolled out across the board. We believe the transformation will result in an individual savings of $243.00 and a total savings of over $80,000.00 for all 5 sections, which we hope to roll out in one year. Also, with the success of the General Psychology course, we anticipate incorporating no-cost textbook materials into additional lower level psychology courses.

The current course materials will be housed and maintained in Desire2Learn. Every semester there will be a plan for ensuring that all materials are relevant and up-to-date. Additionally, as new and stimulating material is identified, this material will be added to the resource library.

**5. Future Plans**

This transformation project has truly been an enriching experience. We firmly believe that the exorbitant cost of textbook materials hinders the true success of students today. They do not purchase materials that will allow them to understand concepts and ideas presented in class. As a result, they do poorly on assignments and exams, which in turn results in low GPAs and few opportunities to compete for desired jobs and careers later on. We therefore desire to continue to see students save money on textbooks and perform better in classes. We also desire to have these no-cost materials available for other lower level courses, not just the top 50 courses. We will strive to make no-cost or low-cost materials available for lower level courses in hopes that it will result in student retention and success.

Once all of the data has been collected on the transformation project, we would like to disseminate the results before a group of our peers, prior to presenting our work at conferences and workshops.

**6. Description of Photograph**

Listed in photograph are Dr. Hema Oshoone Mason and Dr. Mark Thomas. Please see attached document for photo.