Digital Learning



Open Educational Resources (OER) Grant Program

A Report to the Texas Legislature in accordance with the General Appropriations Act, SB 1, 87th Texas Legislature, Article III, Section 49

October 2022

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Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board



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Agency Mission

The mission of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) is to serve as a resource, partner, and advocate for Texas higher education, resulting in a globally competitive workforce that positions Texas as an international leader.

Agency Vision

The THECB will be recognized as an international leader in developing and implementing innovative higher education policy to accomplish our mission.

Agency Philosophy

The THECB will promote access to and success in quality higher education across the state with the conviction that access and success without quality is mediocrity and that quality without access and success is unacceptable.

The THECB's core values are:

Accountability: We hold ourselves responsible for our actions and welcome every opportunity to educate stakeholders about our policies, decisions, and aspirations.

Efficiency: We accomplish our work using resources in the most effective manner.

Collaboration: We develop partnerships that result in student success and a highly qualified, globally competent workforce.

Excellence: We strive for excellence in all our endeavors.

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Executive Summary

The Open Educational Resources (OER) Grant Program, was designed to incentivize faculty at Texas institutions of higher education to adopt, modify, redesign, or develop courses that use only open educational resources. This report is required by the General Appropriations Act, SB 1, 87th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, Section 49 (III-63).

This report details the administration of the competitive grant program and provides initial information about cost savings for students from the use of OER by faculty grantees, as well as the number of students served by the first and second rounds of grants (awarded in 2018 and 2020, respectively). The second round of grants in 2020 used appropriations allocated for the OER Grant Program during the 86th Texas Legislature. Additional funding in the amount of \$212,049 was appropriated by the 87th Texas Legislature in 2021. A Request for Applications for a third round of the OER Grant Program will be released in late 2022.

Introduction

An "open educational resource" is defined in <u>Texas Education Code (TEC)</u>, <u>Section 51.451</u>, as "a teaching, learning, or research resource that is in the public domain or has been released under an intellectual property license that permits the free use, adaptation, and redistribution of the resource by any person. The term may include full course curricula, course materials, modules, textbooks, media, assessments, software, and any other tools, materials, or techniques, whether digital or otherwise, used to support access to knowledge." Open educational resources (OER) are usually free or offered at a low cost for students.

Consumer prices for college textbooks increased 40.6% from July 2011 to March 2018. Textbook costs decreased steadily between March 2018 and January 2020, yet have increased since January 2020 (BLS, 2021). A recent report by the College Board states that students at public, four-year, in-state institutions spend on average \$1,240 on books and supplies each year (Ma & Pender, 2021). In a national survey, 64.2% of students indicated that they had decided against buying at least one textbook because of the price, and 42.8% said that the cost of textbooks affected how many courses they took in a semester (Florida Virtual Campus, 2019).

The COVID-19 pandemic spotlighted the importance of quality, reasonably priced, digital educational materials, as courses across the country transitioned to remote learning. From March 2020 into the fall 2020 semester, institutions experienced "large-scale digital materials adoption" (Seaman & Seaman, 2021, p. 25). In a study of how institutions across the United States rapidly shifted from in-person to online delivery, Johnson, Seaman, and Veletsianos (2021) state that within higher education, "these techniques created a sense of optimism towards digital materials in their instruction post-pandemic. For instance, more faculty are now familiar with incorporating video, digital materials, and OER into any mode of course delivery" (p. 7).

Use of OER can lead to significant cost savings for students. For example, the University System of Georgia's Affordable Learning Georgia program projects that since its inception, it has saved students over \$124 million in textbook costs (Affordable Learning Georgia, 2022). As of 2014, North Dakota spent \$107,250 for faculty OER training and workshops and institution-level grants, for a savings of between \$1.1 million and \$2.4 million, a return of 10 to 20 times the investment (North Dakota Office of the State Auditor, 2018).

The Open Educational Resources Grant Program was created in 2017 to incentivize faculty at Texas institutions of higher education to adopt, modify, redesign, or develop courses that use only OER. Evidence from other states indicates that OER grant programs positively impact students. OER are an accessible and affordable option and the OER Grant Program facilitates OER use and adoption by Texas students and faculty. This report compiles data on student impact and cost savings from the first two rounds of the Texas OER Grant Program (2018 and 2020).

Program Development

Rules for the OER Grant Program were established using the THECB's negotiated rulemaking process with input from stakeholders, including representatives from public universities, community colleges, and Texas state technical colleges. Following the negotiated rulemaking process, the THECB adopted rules for the program in February 2018. Rules are codified in the Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Title 19, Chapter 4, Subchapter O, and available on the Texas Secretary of State's website.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) administers the OER Grant Program through a competitive grant application process. In fiscal years 2018 and 2019, \$200,000 was appropriated for the program (including one FTE for administration), and 15 faculty members were awarded grants under the OER Grant Program. Additional funding in the amount of \$212,049 was appropriated for grants by the 86th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, for awards to be made in fiscal years 2020 and 2021, and 20 grants were awarded in October 2020. Faculty members that adopt, modify, redesign, or develop OER for their course(s) under the program are required to offer those materials at no cost to students (other than the cost of printing, should students choose to print the materials), and the course must be taught four times within the grant period.

In the 2018 grant period, eligible courses were restricted to courses within the Texas Core Curriculum (TCC). For fiscal years 2020 and 2021, a distinction was made between Development and Implementation grants. Development grants were awarded to faculty or teams of faculty to develop new OER or substantially improve existing OER for two or more high-enrollment TCC courses that account for most credits transferred among institutions. Implementation grants were awarded to faculty or teams of faculty to support the substantial redesign of one or more TCC courses to incorporate OER resources. Round 2 grantees submitted the first interim report in December 2021.

Review, Assessment, and Selection Process

Fiscal Years 2018-2019

The OER Grant Program is a competitive grant, and applications are reviewed by expert reviewers. To assist in the selection process during Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019, the THECB called for Texas public institutions of higher education to nominate faculty members who had the expertise to teach lower-division undergraduate courses offered within the TCC and/or were experts in the use of OER. Three expert reviewers evaluated each application, as required by TAC, Title 19, Rule 4.236.

Proposals were assessed based on criteria described in the Request for Applications (RFA), including the strength of the project design, the alignment to project goals, and the likelihood for success of the expected outcomes. Priority points were assigned in the 2018 round for applications that proposed to adopt, modify, or design OER for courses in the general education *Academic Course Guide Manual* (ACGM) or equivalent core curriculum courses with proven substantial enrollments offered on a recurring semester basis. The THECB staff compiled the assessment results and made recommendations for funding to the appropriate deputy commissioner, per TAC, Title 19, Rule 1.16. The deputy commissioner reviewed the information and made the final award selections.

Fiscal Years 2020-2021

The selection process for Fiscal Years 2020 and 2021 was similar to that of Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019, involving three external, expert reviewers. Reviewers were required to teach or have the expertise to teach lower-division undergraduate courses offered within the TCC or were experts in the use of OER.

The THECB awarded two categories of grant awards under this RFA, Development Grants and Implementation Grants. Development Grants awarded a maximum of \$25,000 to faculty or teams of faculty to develop new OER or substantially improve existing OER for one or more highenrollment TCC courses. These grants were matched with support from the institution employing that faculty member or faculty team. Implementation Grants awarded a maximum of \$5,000 to faculty or faculty teams to support the substantial redesign of one or more TCC courses to incorporate OER resources.

Proposals were assessed based on criteria described in the RFA, including the strength of the project design, the alignment to project goals, and the likelihood for success of the expected outcomes. Priority points were assigned in the 2020 round for applications that proposed to redesign a course or courses with high transfer rates. Courses in the state with the highest transfer rates since 2017 were determined using data reported to the THECB by institutions and the THECB Approved Core Course Inventory. A list of eligible courses was available to applicants on the OER Grant Program website.

For Development Grants, an applicant who proposed cross-institutional collaboration received up to five additional points during the application evaluation. THECB staff compiled the assessment results and made recommendations to the appropriate deputy commissioner, per TAC, Title 19, Rule 1.16. The deputy commissioner reviewed the information and made the final award selections.

Grant Awards

Fiscal Years 2018-2019

In Fiscal Years (FYs) 2018 and 2019, 41 eligible applications were received for the OER Grant Program. Grant awards in the total amount of \$152,000 were made to 15 faculty members at Texas public institutions of higher education. Faculty members who proposed to adopt, modify, redesign, or create one course using only open educational materials received \$8,000, and faculty members who proposed to adopt, modify, redesign, or create multiple courses received \$16,000. Materials developed under the OER Grant Program have been uploaded to the statewide OER repository, OERTX.

<u>Table 1</u> provides information about the 15 awards, which ended in August 2021. Course(s) funded by the OER Grant Program were taught four times during the grant cycle using only OER.

Table 1. OER Grant Program Fiscal Years 2018-2019 Awardees

Faculty Name	Institution	Course(s)	Grant Amount
Karl Aho	Tarleton State University	Introduction to Philosophy	\$8,000
Veronica Amaku	Houston Community College	General Biology for Majors	\$8,000
Megan Collins	Prairie View A&M University	Social Problems	\$8,000
Brandi Falley	Texas Woman's University	Elementary Statistics I & II	\$16,000
Brittney Gillespie-Porter	Texas Southmost College	College Algebra	\$8,000
Richard Gosselin	Houston Community College	Introduction to Macroeconomics, Introduction to Microeconomics	\$16,000
Joseph Locke	University of Houston – Victoria	U.S. History II	\$8,000
Katherine Oser	Central Texas College	Introduction to Computing	\$8,000
Lamont Rodgers	Houston Community College	Introduction to Symbolic Logic	\$8,000
Amy Petros	University of North Texas	General Chemistry for Majors I & II	\$16,000
India Stewart	Eastfield College	Introduction to Sociology	\$8,000
Laura Villarreal	Texas Southmost College	Mathematics for Teachers	\$8,000
Virginia Villarreal Disraeli	Austin Community College	British Literature	\$8,000
Nicholas Webb	McLennan Community College	English Composition I &	\$16,000
Ben Wright	The University of Texas at Dallas	U.S. History I	\$8,000
Total			\$152,000

Fiscal Years 2020-2021

In FYs 2020 and 2021, 45 eligible applications were received for the OER Grant Program. Faculty members or teams were awarded a maximum of \$5,000 for Implementation Grants and a maximum of \$25,000 for Development Grants. 20 total grant awards totaling \$208,620 were awarded, six Development Grants and 14 Implementation Grants, to faculty members at Texas public institutions of higher education. Materials developed under the OER Grant Program were uploaded to the statewide OER repository, OERTX, in June 2021.

Table 2. OER Grant Program Fiscal Years 2020-2021 provides information about the 20 awards, which will continue through August 31, 2023. Course(s) funded by the OER Grant Program will be taught four times during the grant cycle using only OER.

Table 2. OER Grant Program Fiscal Years 2020-2021 Awardees

Faculty Name	Institution	Course(s)	Grant Amount
Sarah Alvanipour	Houston Community College	General Chemistry	\$24,624
Brenda Norton	Angelo State University	Texas Government	\$21,474
Fred Spaulding	Tarrant County Community College	Art Appreciation	\$25,000
Jesse Taylor	Angelo State University	Finite Mathematics	\$22,137
Erika M. Warnick	South Plains College	English Composition	\$20,500
Adam Weiss	West Texas A&M University	Learning Frameworks, Educational Foundations	\$25,000
Total Development Grants			\$138,735
Kimberley Breuer	University of Texas at Arlington	Technology and Science in American Society	\$5,000
Billye Cheek *	Grayson College	College Algebra, General Chemistry, Organic Chemistry	\$5,000
Jangsup Choi	Texas A&M University – Commerce	United States Government	\$5,000
Wade A. Cornelius	El Paso Community College	Public Speaking, Organizational and Professional Communication	\$5,000
Molly Wiant Cummins	University of Texas at Arlington	Fundamentals of Public Speaking	\$5,000
Jerrica Jordan	Tarrant County Community College	English Composition	\$4,936

Faculty Name	Institution	Course(s)	Grant Amount
Sarah Alvanipour	Houston Community College	General Chemistry	\$24,624
Minchul Kang	Texas A&M University- Commerce	Calculus I and II	\$5,000
Maura L. Krestar	Texas A&M University- Kingsville	Introduction to Psychology	\$5,000
Ming Lou	Lamar University	College Physics II	\$5,000
Rajone Lyman	Houston Community College	Learning Frameworks	\$5,000
Kristi Moore	Angelo State University	General Psychology	\$4,936
Creshema Murray	University of Houston- Downtown	Introduction to Communication	\$5,000
Sadaf Sajjad	Austin Community College	Introduction to Psychology	\$5,000
Anthony Zoccolillo	Texas A&M University- Corpus Christi	General Psychology	\$5,000
Total Implementation Grants			\$69,885
Total OER Grant Program Grants			\$208,620

^{*} Grant was terminated, as requested by grantee. Institution adopted Inclusive Access Program, and therefore the use of OER is no longer possible.

Data from Grantee Progress Reports

The 15 faculty members awarded grants in the 2018 round of the OER Grant Program completed their first progress reports in December 2019, second progress reports in October 2020, and a final report in September 2021. The 20 faculty members awarded grants in the 2020 round of the OER Grant Program submitted their first progress reports in December 2021.

Many of the 2018 awardees taught the course(s) using only OER for the first time during the fall 2019 term. Grantees reported for the spring 2020, summer 2020, fall 2020, spring 2021, and summer 2021 terms during the grant period. An estimated total of 6,918 students completed courses during this time using only OER adopted, modified, redesigned, or developed under the program, for a total estimated savings to students of \$1,014.416. This estimate includes students who took courses with faculty members other than the grantees (at the same institution) who also used the OER adopted, modified, redesigned, or developed under the grant program.

Awardees for the 2020 round of the OER Grant Program began teaching using OER in their courses in the fall 2020. An estimated total of 3,150 students completed courses using OER from the grant program between fall 2020 and fall 2021, with an estimated savings of \$300,550.

Table 3 provides information about the 2018 grantee outcomes for students served and money saved. As noted above, the grantees' colleagues may also be using OER created or curated for the grant program.

Table 3. OER Grant Program Fiscal 2018-2019 Award Impact

Term	Students served by grantee faculty member and colleagues	Total amount saved by students during the term*
Fall 2019	1,487	\$237,387
Spring 2020	1,502	\$251,109
Summer 2020	427	\$34,635
Fall 2020	1,502	\$251,109
Spring 2021	1,846	\$226,907
Summer 2021	154	\$13,269
Total	6,918	\$1,014.416

Source: OER Grant Program Progress Reports

Table 4 provides information about the 2020 grantee outcomes for students served and money saved. As noted above, the grantees' colleagues may also be using OER created or curated for the grant program.

Table 4. OER Grant Program Fiscal 2020-2021 Award Impact

Term	Students served by grantee faculty member and colleagues	Total amount saved by students during the term*
Fall 2020	534	\$48.750
Spring 2021	625	\$70,476
Summer 2021	344	\$24,871
Fall 2021	1647	\$156,453
Total	3,150	\$300,550

Source: OER Grant Program Progress Reports

^{*}Amount saved based on the number of students completing the course and the cost of course materials in the semester preceding OER use. Material costs ranged from \$43 to \$413 per student, per course.

^{*}Amount saved based on the number of students completing the course and the cost of course materials in the semester preceding OER use. Material costs ranged from \$19 to \$306 per student, per course.

Possible Future OER Opportunities

This report includes suggestions of subject areas that would benefit from the adoption, modification, or development of open educational resources and options for future steps for adopting, modifying, or developing open educational resources.

Subject Areas

In 2019 and 2021, the THECB partnered with the Digital Higher Education Consortium of Texas (DigiTex) and the Institute for the Study of Knowledge Management in Education (ISKME) to conduct landscape surveys of OER use and adoption in the state. A recommendation for subject areas to target for OER adoption was included in these survey reports.

The 2021 survey was administered to all 158 two- and four-year public and private institutions across the state. Growth in commitment to OER across the state is documented in the 2021 survey, with 45% of institutions having formal policies or programs in place to support OER, compared with 38% reported in 2019 (Jimes, C., et al., 2021). The report suggested the curation of OER in career and technical education, especially as those courses could be leveraged to support zero-textbook cost credentials in those fields (Jimes, C., et.al., 2019). The THECB is currently investigating the availability of OER for ACGM and workforce courses correlating with high-value credentials. In partnership with ISKME, analysis is underway of the OER availability for these courses.

Based on the analysis, the research team will propose curation and outreach strategies for including OER for these courses in the state OER repository, OERTX. In the future, the OER Grant Program could be targeted to TCC and workforce courses (or other transferable, high-enrollment courses), where few resources currently exist, to have the widest impact possible. While there are often OER textbooks available for introductory courses, such as English and history, through OpenStax or other publishers, a lack of ancillary materials can be a challenge for faculty. The gap analysis currently underway will provide insight into courses and subject areas where OER would have a high impact.

THECB is also currently engaged in a partnership with OpenStax at Rice University, which Is a well-known publisher of high-quality, peer-reviewed, openly licensed college textbooks that are free to use. THECB and OpenStax are working with nursing educators and institutional administrators to examine the feasibility of creating new OER for nursing courses. The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) recently led the restructuring and redesign of domains, competencies, and sub-competencies for various levels of nursing practice. Completion of this work was announced in April 2021 and planning for implementation of the new AACN *Essentials* curriculum is underway as of fall 2021. This new competency-based curriculum will impact the way nursing courses are taught in Texas and across the nation.

Materials for nursing courses, including textbooks and ancillaries, are typically very costly for students. Development of OER mapped to the AACN *Essentials* curriculum could decrease costs for students in a high-need field and allow instructors access to adaptable materials designed to directly address emerging methods of instruction and evaluation, as well as provide for course content. Facilitating access to high-value credentials is a goal of the state's higher education strategic plan, *Building a Talent Strong Texas*.

Future Steps

In 2017 and 2018, the THECB conducted a study on the feasibility of creating a digital repository for OER in Texas, and in 2019 and 2021, the agency conducted the landscape surveys mentioned above. The links for all reports can be found in the <u>References</u> section of this report. Several recommendations came out of these studies that will inform future programs and initiatives for increasing OER awareness, adoption, and use in Texas.

Governor Greg Abbott announced in 2020 that the state of Texas would invest \$175 million in Governor's Emergency Education Relief funding in higher education, originating from the U.S. Department of Education's administration of the Education Stabilization Fund in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act of 2020. A portion of this funding was dedicated to digital learning support, including OER initiatives, to build on the state's investment in this area.

The THECB launched the Division of Digital Learning (DDL) in November 2020. The DDL sustains existing OER programs and initiatives and will provide direction and support for innovative efforts in the future. Suggestions in this report were developed from the two OER landscape surveys, the experience the THECB now has with statewide OER initiatives, and the goals and work of the Division of Digital Learning.

Suggestions for OER Advancement

Continue commitment to state-level OER advocacy and collaboration with key stakeholders.

States that have documented success in expanding OER use and adoption use an ecosystem approach. This includes collaborating with stakeholders such as student government, bookstores, support services, librarians, administrators, and instructional designers. The THECB has established a strong foundation for this in the Learning Technology Advisory Committee (LTAC). LTAC members provide guidance and support for the THECB's OER initiatives as institutional representatives. The THECB also collaborates with other organizations and institutions. The THECB, DigiTex, and Texas Digital Library collaborate on the annual "Open Texas" OER conference. In addition, the OER Digital Ecosystem Series scheduled for fall 2022 will include a series of webinars to showcase how key stakeholders at institutions can support OER efforts. Such stakeholders include institution staff in enrollment management, marketing and communication offices, student affairs, admissions, and university development offices.

2. Continue to increase THECB-sponsored OER professional development opportunities and outreach initiatives.

In partnership with ISKME, THECB sponsored OER Core Elements training sessions for faculty, instructional designers, and librarians interested in using OER in June 2021 and October 2021. An OER Advanced Skills training was held in April-May 2022. Additional trainings will be held in the summer of 2022. These sessions offer foundational and advanced content about OER adoption and development, open licensing, strategies for using OERTX, and continuous improvement.

Individual faculty members are often the decision-makers when it comes to the educational materials used in the courses they teach (Seaman & Seaman, 2017). A recent study found that faculty cited trouble finding OER materials, quality of available OER materials, and lack of institutional support as significant reasons for not adopting OER (Seaman & Seaman, 2021). Only 18% of faculty noted providing OER in the fall 2020 term, despite the need for accessible digital materials during the pandemic pivot to remote learning. Even though respondents indicated an

increased awareness of OER from previous years, adoption of OER did not increase. According to open resource advocacy organization SPARC, "expanding OER at institutions can be as simple as offering encouragement and support the use and sharing of high-quality materials academics create" (SPARC, 2021, p. 2).

3. Develop OER Playbook.

In the 2021 OER landscape study, the authors identify an OER playbook, or guidebook, as a recommendation for supporting institutions as they build capacity and drive systemic change. A playbook would focus on resources for supporting institutions as they build cross-office support, engaging students and faculty as agents of change, and strategies for building external partnerships to advance OER. In addition, the landscape survey identified a need for increased training and understanding of open licensing policies, and this would be addressed in the playbook (Jimes, C., et al., 2021).

For example, SPARC's OER playbook "provides a set of ideas that state policymakers and institutional leaders can consider to harness the power of OER to tackle textbook costs and make higher education more affordable, effective, and flexible for all students. These ideas can be pursued separately or combined depending on local needs and opportunities" (SPARC, 2021, p. 2). As a result of the recommendation, the DDL is currently working with ISKME to develop a Texas OER playbook. A Texas OER playbook will offer institutions a guide for OER efforts unique to Texas policy. This work is being done by partnering with OER leaders, such as faculty, librarians, and administrators, at institutions across the state.

4. Continue OERTX awareness initiatives.

A repository for OER, customized for Texas institutions of higher education, was mandated by House Bill 3652, 86th Texas Legislature, Regular Session. All grantees are required to make their work available on OERTX, a digital library of OER, which launched on September 1, 2020. Funds were allocated to the repository for Fiscal Years 2020 and 2021, and additional resources have been dedicated for ongoing maintenance, support, and expansion in the General Appropriation Act of 2021. Currently, OERTX has over 132,000 users, over 9,000 resources have been added to the repository, and over 1,900 resources have been created using the Open Author tool.

In September 2021, OERTX marked its one-year anniversary. In celebration of this, the Division of Digital Learning sponsored programming about the repository and OER. This included a panel presentation with OERTX users, a session on landscape survey findings presented with DigiTex and ISKME, and OER community discussions. In addition, in partnership with OpenStax at Rice University, Creator Fest: OERTX Edition, a two-day virtual conference, was held in February 2022. The conference included "Create OER" and peer-review tracks, as well as keynote and panel presentation sessions and an OERTX Hub for the conference.

The most notable barrier to the adoption of OER, according to a 2016 survey, was that faculty found it difficult to find materials they needed (Seaman & Seaman, 2017). With the creation of the Texas OER repository, OERTX users can find, create, and use OER and adapt it to the needs of Texas institutions of higher education.

In addition, the THECB launched trainings for community institutional hubs in OERTX in April and June 2022. In partnership with ISKME, institutional teams attend a series of virtual

sessions to learn about how to create and use a hub on OERTX. These efforts will continue to increase awareness of the features of the repository and build capacity at institutions.

5. Continue to recognize exemplary work being done at institutions.

The THECB is in a unique position to bring attention to Texas institutions and faculty already striving for excellence in OER use. Inviting faculty and administrators to serve as guest speakers or facilitators for webinars, highlighting best practices through OERTX, and awarding commendable projects with grant funding are means by which the THECB spotlight these exemplars. For example, during the one-year celebration of OERTX, faculty with experience publishing their resources and using the repository shared their experiences in a panel discussion. The Digital Learning Summit, scheduled for two days in July 2022, will showcase how stakeholders use the repository and highlight the exemplary work being done at institutions.

The THECB maintains information about the OER Grant Program online at http://www.highered.texas.gov/oergp

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Appendix A: Resources

OER Grant Program in statute (TEC, Section 61.0668): https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/ED/httm/ED.61.htm#61.0668

OERTX Repository: https://oertx.highered.texas.gov/

OpenStax: https://openstax.org/



This document is available on the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board website: http://highered.texas.gov.

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