

Dear [Receipient name],

I hope you're doing well. My name is [your name], I am a [Xth] year student studying [your program]. I am emailing you today to express my support for the creation of supports to help faculty switch their teaching materials to Open Educational Resources.

Now, more than ever, post-secondary students in Canada are facing financial hardship. Many of us have lost our incomes due to the COVID-19 pandemic, while those of us who did not work have been left out of government subsidies like the Canada Emergency Response Benefit. International students are especially vulnerable at this time due to their ineligibility for many of the government programs. Students are going to have to make some tough decisions in the coming months: whether to buy groceries or textbooks; going further into debt or putting our education on hold.

In the spring of 2021, StFX Students responded to a survey about how the cost of textbooks had impacted them. 1654 students engaged in the survey, and it found that 14% of students had not bought groceries or adapted what food they chose to buy because of the cost of textbooks. 10% of StFX students said they hadn't paid a bill, or paid it late, and 25% said that they chose to complete courses without the textbook because of the cost.

**The use of OER is important to me as a student because I don't think one in four students on StFX campus should have to forego a learning material essential to a course because of its cost.**

The fastest and least expensive way for post-secondary institutions to reduce students' financial barriers is to increase the usage of no- and low-cost course materials, including open educational resources (OERs). OERs are teaching, learning and research materials in any medium – digital or otherwise – that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits no-cost access, use, adaptation and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions. OERs are not limited to textbooks, and can take the form of workbooks, online teaching modules, articles, informational videos, and so on.

Students at StFX are urging faculty to consider switching to free or low-cost materials where possible. However, the switch to OER can be time consuming and require some knowledge about where to find them, and how to adapt them to their classes. Many professors across the Maritimes and Canada have already made the shift towards OERs, saving students hundreds of thousands of dollars and adding improved accessibility to post-secondary learning. Professors at StFX may start to do so more frequently, but StFX University needs to have more supports and incentive in place to encourage faculty to switch to OER.

StFX students would like to see StFX University promote the use of OER in any of the following ways:

- Raise awareness for Open Educational Resources among faculty and provide professional development and resources to faculty who would like more information about how to switch to OER.

- Fund the creation and adoption of open educational resources for courses. Many Universities in the Maritimes have begun internal grants to incentivize OER use, and we would like to see something similar on our campus.
- Establish a working group with stakeholders including students, administration, teaching and learning staff, librarians and faculty that can help identify OER related gaps on campus.

Open Educational Resources make classrooms more equitable and remove barriers for students across campus. The tuition at StFX is among the highest in the country, and we would like to see StFX take steps to mitigate that impact on its students. Thank you for your time, and please consider taking steps to increase supports and incentives for OER use at StFX.

Thank you,

[Your name]