

The 5Ps of OER Adoption

A Change Management Guide for Higher Education Campuses and Systems

October 2018

Summary

The adoption of Open Educational Resources (OER) is a disruptive innovation that can be a catalyst for many higher education priorities. Disruptive innovations **require support** to succeed. To adopt OER, higher education institutions need to invest in supports such as training, instructional design support, information technology, vendor management, senior leadership alignment, and marketing. These supports must be **integrated** so they work smoothly together.

Higher education institutions can meet the challenges of OER adoption through **change management**. The “5Ps” framework outlines the change management steps needed to build OER supports:

- **Prepare** by building a fact base
- **Plan** for change
- **Prioritize** early wins to build momentum
- **Persuade** stakeholders
- **Produce** results with strong teams

This paper explains each of these steps and provides advice on how to execute them. There is one section with examples for campus leaders, and another section with examples for leaders in higher education systems.

Deep Consulting is publishing this paper as CC-BY-SA to help higher education institutions adopt OER. If institutions want additional support, Deep Consulting also provides change management consulting services.



I. Why OER Adoption Requires Change Management

The adoption of Open Educational Resources (OER) increasingly seems to be at a **tipping point**. The federal government recently invested \$5m in an OER grant, New York has invested \$8m two years in a row, and Virginia passed an OER policy requirement, to name a few recent examples. The quantity and quality of OER available is increasing. OER's time to grow has come.

OER is a disruptive innovation. That is what makes it so exciting. OER can be a catalyst for priorities of many higher education campuses and systems: equitable access for a more diverse student body; raising levels of completion; enhancing the quality of teaching and learning; and enhancing innovation.

First Generation
iPhone



The very things that make OER exciting also make it hard to implement across a campus, and even more so across multi-campus higher education systems. **Disruptive innovations, even incredibly desirable ones, require support to succeed.** When Apple released the iPhone, it was also a disruptive innovation—users fell in love with the prospect of the world in their pocket. But as smart phones moved from the realm of early adopters to the majority, there were scale problems. The cell networks were not ready for the increased data load. This hampered the technology from truly flourishing until the infrastructure was built up.

OER in the News

“OER for Higher Ed Gets a Boost with a \$5 Million Pilot Program”

“\$8M for OER Accompanies NY’s Tuition Plan”

“New Virginia Law Mandates Creation of OER Guidelines”

In the realm of OER adoption, the “infrastructure” needed is **campus-level supports for OER growth**. OER early adopters show tremendous grit and perseverance to adopt OER without much support. However, we cannot expect the innovation of OER to spread to the majority without building further structural support. At the right is a list titled “Some of the campus level supports needed for OER adoption.” **The list is substantial, and requires investing resources** such as time, money, and leadership attention. For these

SOME OF THE CAMPUS LEVEL SUPPORTS NEEDED FOR OER ADOPTION

- Train faculty in OER
- Increase instructional design support
- Train librarians to source OER
- Integrate third party platforms with LMSs
- Procure and manage vendors
- Align senior leadership
- Market OER
- IT changes for registration and data collection

supports to be effective, they also need to be **integrated**. The organizational culture of most higher education institutions is largely decentralized. Successful OER adoption, however, requires **coordinating efforts across departments as diverse as faculty development, IT, library, budget, policy, and procurement**. Preparing a campus or higher education system for OER adoption is a complex task. How can higher education institutions do it?

At its root, the OER adoption problem is a change management problem. *Change management* is systematic approach from the field of management consulting that was developed to guide large, complex organizations through substantial, often transformative changes. The 5Ps framework in this paper is our adaptation of change management approaches to the challenge of OER adoption in higher education. The 5Ps are:

- **Prepare** by building a fact base
- **Plan** for change
- **Prioritize** early wins to build momentum
- **Persuade** stakeholders
- **Produce** results with strong teams

The next section explains the 5Ps with examples for campus leaders. The section after that explains the 5Ps with examples for higher education system leaders. The disguised client examples in this document are based on Deep Consulting’s experience supporting more than 40 campuses with OER adoption.

II. The 5Ps For Campuses

PREPARE
by building a fact base

Challenge: Preparing for an OER change management initiative requires a fact base. It takes time and effort to gather information. What are the most important questions to answer first?

Recommended Approach: Focus information gathering in four areas: faculty members, OER adoption support, information technology, and leadership/policy.

CAMPUS PREPAREDNESS QUESTIONS			
Faculty Members	OER Adoption Support	Information Technology	Leadership and Policy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many faculty are aware of OER? • How many faculty have been trained to work with OER? • How effective are incentives for adopting OER (e.g., release time, funding, tenure and promotion support)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the faculty development center support OER? • How many librarians are trained to find OER materials and answer licensing questions? • How many instructional designers are ready to support OER adoption? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there tech support for integrating OER into the campus LMS? • Can campus systems report OER registration and student performance in OER courses? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are senior leaders aware of and supportive of OER adoption? • Are there policies (e.g., textbook adoption, intellectual property) that need to be changed to support OER?

PLAN for change

Challenges: What is a reasonable goal for OER adoption? What projects are needed to make the goal a reality? How should a campus prioritize among the many possible options?

Recommended Approach: The **Plan** step has five parts: (1) set goals (2) identify the most urgent problems (3) brainstorm project ideas (4) analyze the potential projects, and (5) make choices and invest. The end product of the **Plan** step is a robust change management plan.

(1) Set Goals. Change management benefits from setting concrete goals. Concrete goals help measure whether the strategy is working. They also help make the case for resources (both internally and with external funders).

There are **many ways to arrive at an OER adoption goal**. Some institutions set student savings goals. Some have focused on specific topical areas. Some have focused on zero-textbook-cost degree programs. Whatever the focus, campuses benefit if they can translate those broader goals into **two important numbers**: Approximately how many course sections will be using OER, and approximately how many faculty need to be brought on board with the OER effort? These numbers are important because they will help a campus estimate how much investment is needed.

To illustrate this approach, we have created **a simple online tool** that translates one possible type of OER goal, a textbook savings goal, into a number of sections and faculty using OER. It can be accessed at www.deep-consulting.net/oer-resource-estimator. Enter a few general characteristics of a campus, like averages for net savings per student from OER, course section size, and teaching load. The tool projects an estimate of sections and faculty that need to adopt OER. Use the tool to create “what-if” scenarios (e.g., the impact of doubling the savings goal).

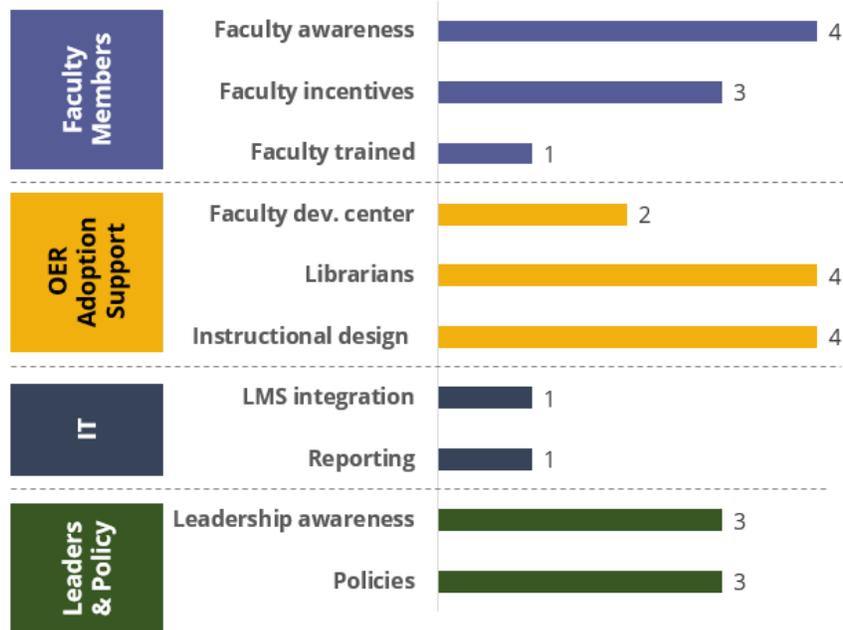
EXHIBIT 1: OER RESOURCE ESTIMATOR



We appreciate that not every higher education institution is thinking about OER from a textbook savings perspective, so this tool is not universally applicable. Whatever lens a campus uses to set OER adoption goals, being able to estimate the number of sections and faculty using OER is important. Many decisions in the change management process will be impacted by those two numbers.

(2) Identify the Most Urgent Problems. Look at the answers to the “Campus Preparedness Questions” in the *Prepare* step above. Score the answer to each question from 1 to 5 (1 = very poor, 2 = poor, 3 = neutral, 4 = strong, 5 = very strong). Looking at the experiences of other similar campuses is helpful to understand what “strong” is for each of the question. Here is a disguised client example:

EXHIBIT 2: EXAMPLE OER READINESS ASSESSMENT



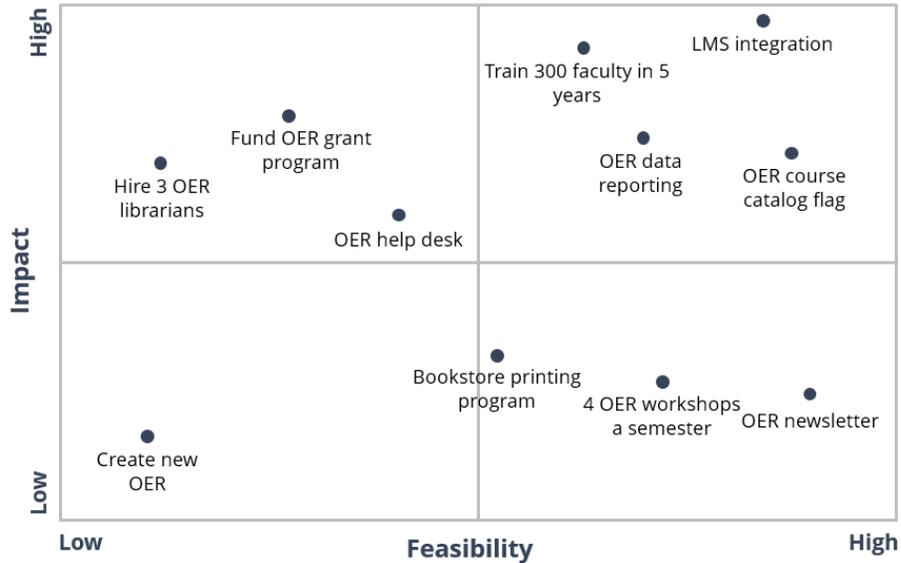
(3) Brainstorm Potential Projects. Thinks of ways to address the most serious barriers to OER adoption. In the case of this example campus, the two highest priority problems are faculty training and the two IT systems issues, so this campus will need to launch projects to address those. When brainstorming projects, it is very helpful **to be specific**. For example, in the case of faculty training, how many faculty are going to be trained? By when? Being specific will make for a much more actionable change management plan.

(4) Analyze the Potential Projects. We recommend scoring the possible projects in two different ways:

- **Impact** – How much of a difference will the project make to reach the OER adoption goal?
- **Feasibility** – How likely is it that the campus will successfully implement the project idea? Consider factors like budget, political support, project complexity, and experience.

Most teams find that a workshop with participants present from multiple functions across the campus is a useful way to quickly rank the projects. After ranking projects, visually represent them on a matrix, like in this disguised client example:

EXHIBIT 3: EXAMPLE PROJECT RANKINGS



(5) Make Choices and Invest. We recommend:

- In year 1, spend 80% of effort on high-impact, high feasibility efforts
- If a campus is very far behind in an OER support area (e.g., a 1 out of 5) spend additional effort on it
- As much as possible, learn from others who have done similar projects

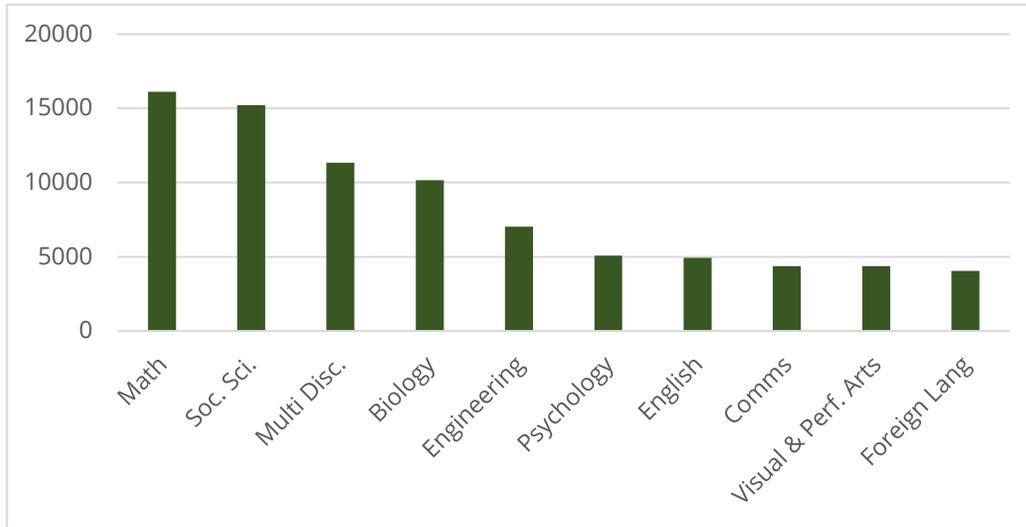
Write up the choices, with deadlines and assigned responsibilities, into a comprehensive change management plan.

PRIORITIZE
early wins to build momentum

Challenge: Sometimes OER, like other innovations, is initially viewed with skepticism. How can campuses build momentum for OER adoption?

Recommended Approach: It is hard to change the culture of a campus all at once. Finding early success is incredibly helpful to build momentum. One approach we recommend is to **start by identifying large introductory or general education courses**. This is a disguised client example:

EXHIBIT 4: EXAMPLE GENERAL EDUCATION ENROLLMENTS BY TOPIC AREA



In this example, there are seven topic areas with at least 5,000 general education seats a semester at this campus, representing large opportunities for OER.

The next step is to see **which of the largest courses in those topic areas have relevant, quality OER**. For example, there are a good number of quality mathematics materials available, which are highly relevant to the example campus above. Look at sources like OpenStax, OER Commons, and MERLOT to see where there is good OER. Talk to faculty members teaching those courses, and help them find and evaluate the materials. Those conversations are also an excellent opportunity to gauge interest on the part of faculty members to serve as OER champions (the OER champion role is explained in the **Perform** section below).

We also recommend growing OER at a pace where quality can be maintained. The reputation of early courses will influence administrators, faculty members, and students down the line. Rushing to adopt OER when faculty are not ready carries risks. The long-term success of OER adoption requires balancing speed with quality.

PERSUADE stakeholders

Challenge: Senior stakeholders or other influencers may be unfamiliar with OER and its benefits. How can they become OER allies?

Recommended Approach: Working with stakeholders is so important for the survival and success of an OER adoption initiative that it has its own “P” in the framework. OER adoption challenges some long-held assumptions and habits in academic communities, some of which can be hard to change. Furthermore, it is sometimes a challenge to grasp the potential of OER right away, especially among the dizzying array of initiatives, expectations, and priorities which occupy senior leaders. OER adoption requires spending time and energy to persuade stakeholders.

During a busy change management effort, with potentially a half-dozen or more different projects running in parallel, it is all too easy to lose sight of stakeholder management unintentionally. One of the best ways to reduce the risk of neglecting this step is to have a **written stakeholder management plan**. We recommend returning to it **at least once a month** to see if it is on track.

To build such a plan, create a prioritized list of stakeholders that can affect the success of the OER adoption effort. For each stakeholder, answer these questions in writing:

- What is their current posture towards OER?
- Where do they need to be regarding OER in 6 months?
- How and when will the OER team reach out to them?
- Who is the best messenger?

There are **a few pieces of communications material** it helps have on hand early on in a change management effort. With minimal editing, they can be repurposed for different stakeholder meetings. Some types of materials we recommend creating are:

- A short (1-3) page **document** that summarizes the connection between OER and campus priorities
- A short (3-8) **slide deck** that explains the OER change management plan and its expected benefits
- An **infographic** (which can be used for meetings as well as for email marketing) that shows OER accomplishments and/or general positive OER facts
- **Testimonial videos** from students and faculty members who have used OER.

PRODUCE
results with a strong team

Challenge: The first 4 P's are a lot of work! How is all this work going to get done?

Recommended Approach: Build an effective OER change management team. The most critical thing about the members of this team is that they have **the disposition and skills to be change agents**. Though it may seem counter-intuitive, in our experience strong change management traits are *much* more important than passion for OER, experience using OER, or seniority.

The **three roles** the team needs are a senior sponsor, a lead OER champion, and other OER champions. Here is a summary of the skills needed for each role and some typical members:

OER TEAM ROLE	NEEDED SKILLS	POSSIBLY FILLED BY
Senior OER Sponsor	Building political support Finding budget Influencing stakeholders	President's office Provost's office
Lead OER Champion	Managing the initiative Managing the team Solving coordination problems Influencing stakeholders	Anyone with the right skills and the time to lean in, though generally it works best to have a faculty member in this role
OER Champions	Managing projects Marketing OER Mentoring peers Solving technical issues	Faculty members Library eLearning Faculty development

Sometimes in change management efforts, it is hard to assemble a team with *all* the necessary skills. If a team has capability gaps, it is **critical to provide coaching support** to the team.

III. The 5Ps For Higher Education Systems

Multi-campus OER adoption is a large challenge. Everything described in the sections above needs to happen at many campuses in parallel. And campuses may not necessarily appreciate anything that seems “imposed” by the system office (imagine that!) Driving OER adoption across a multi-campus system depends upon the quality and dedication of campus teams. Fortunately, in each of the 5Ps, there are practical things system leaders can do to help each campus deliver its share of a collective goal.

PREPARE by building a fact base

Challenge: How can the system office assess the readiness of the entire system for OER?

Recommended Approach: In the campus *Prepare* section above, we laid out important questions to ask for each campus. The system should survey or interview campuses to get those answers and aggregate them.

PLAN for change

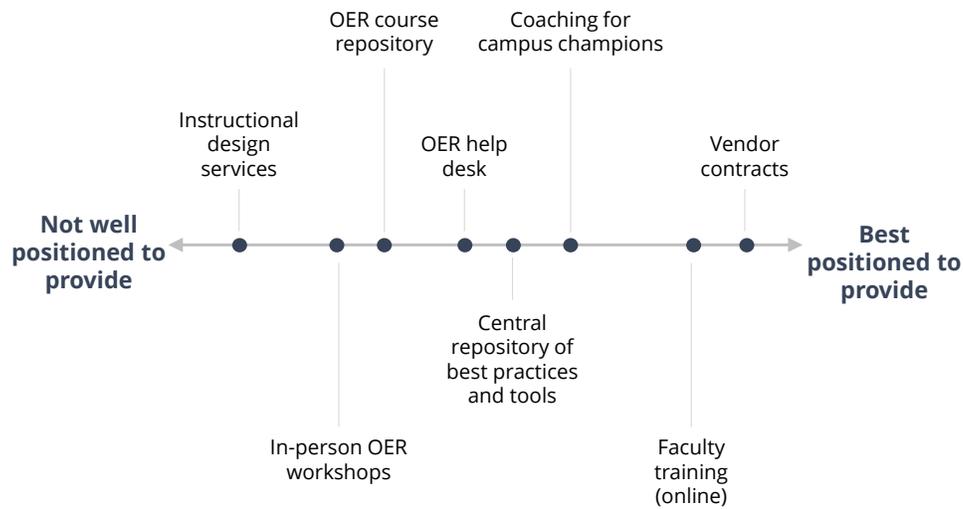
Challenge: What should system growth targets be? What OER functions be kept at the system level, and what should campuses be responsible for?

Recommended Approach: Goal setting for a system is similar to the approach described in the campus *Plan* step above. The most important thing is to be specific enough to be able to estimate numbers of sections and numbers faculty using OER. If a system is using the textbook savings lens as a focusing mechanism, it can use our online tool (access it at www.deep-consulting.net/oer-resource-estimator). The resulting sections and trained faculty member numbers need to be proportionally divided among campuses. Campus enrollment sizes are a reasonable way to divide the goals up.

The system office will also have to decide how many of the supports it will build for campuses, if any. One way to filter the many options (and requests from campuses) is to **evaluate which services the system office is best positioned to provide**. One consideration is budget—can the system office afford to provide, say, training support? Another consideration is capabilities—can the system provide the service from a technical standpoint? A third is economies of scale for procurement—does the system have more purchasing power and expertise in working with vendors? A fourth is shared service infrastructure—does the system office have a mechanism to recoup expenses from campuses?

After thinking through the different service needs, it is helpful to arrange them visually in a line, from those the system is least well positioned to provide, to those that it is best positioned to provide. Place the services along the line relative to each other, as in this example:

EXHIBIT 5: EXAMPLE RANKING OF POTENTIAL SHARED SERVICES



PRIORITIZE
early wins to build momentum

Challenge: Different campuses view OER differently. How can they be motivated to participate in a system-wide adoption effort?

Recommended Approach: Within large multi-campus systems, the peer group dynamic can be negative or positive. This as an example of a negative dynamic: In the system, some community colleges are far ahead of four-year campuses in terms of OER, and four-year campuses start to paint OER as “a community college thing” that is not for them. A positive peer group dynamic, by contrast, would look like this: if there were a four-year campus in the system that became good at OER early on, it would provide a role-model to campuses that look at it as a peer.

Peer groupings may be formal or informal. An example of **a formal peer grouping** is the State University of New York (SUNY) system. In SUNY, there is a formal designation of four types of campuses: University Centers and Doctoral Degree Granting Institutions, University Colleges, Technology Colleges, and Community Colleges. It is formalized on the website for their system using four colors:

EXHIBIT 6: SUNY PEER GROUPINGS



In the case of SUNY, it is helpful for OER adoption to be able to have at least one highly successful campus in each of those four peer groups. If a system does not have formal peer groupings, consider if there are any **informal peer groupings**. For example, consider groupings like:

- 2 year vs. 4 year
- College vs. university
- Technical vs. liberal arts
- Low vs. high Pell Enrollment
- Rural vs. urban
- Large vs. small

As with formal groupings, an OER change management plan can be built to ensure that there is at least one example in each informal peer group that has substantial early OER success.

PERSUADE
stakeholders

The approach for this is the same as the campus-level *Persuade* step – please see that section above.

PRODUCE
results with strong teams

Challenge: Campus teams do not directly report to the system office. How can the system help campus teams succeed?

Recommended Approach: There are ways a system office can influence campus teams positively, both in terms of **selecting the right members** and **ensuring they have the right supports**.

To help campuses pick the best possible lead OER champion, consider creating a version of the chart of roles and skills in the campus *Produce* section above. Circulate it with the decision-makers on campus who will pick the lead champion and other team members.

The system office can support campus teams in many ways. Some of the interventions we recommend are:

- **Provide coaching** – Help champions get better at change management. They do not need to become experts, but providing coaching can help them have greater impact.
- **Archive tools** – There is no need for each campus to reinvent tools. Gather what each is doing (e.g., campus policies) and share it back electronically in a place that is easy to find (and, ideally, where users can upload new content on their own).
- **Host convenings** – While virtual networking is good, an occasional and well-designed gathering of champions across the system can give a powerful boost to morale and networking.
- **Connect mentors to one another** – As campuses start scaling OER, keeping track of who is working on what across the system becomes increasingly difficult. Using a technology tool like a robust collaboration space to track expertise and ongoing adoption projects will enable OER adopters to support each other across the entire system.