**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Lowering the Cost of Course Materials with Free & Open Educational Resources**

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LAURA CASERTANO: With that I'm going to move us into today's presentation. Again, I want to welcome everyone to today's webinar, and I'm going to turn things over to your moderator today, Cheryl Martin. She's a TAACCCT program manager with the Division of Strategic Investments for the Employment and Training Administration with the U.S. Department of Labor. Cheryl, take it away.

CHERYL MARTIN: Thank you, Laura. And thank you, everybody, for joining us today. It's really exciting to see the number of people who have jumped on the call or on the webinar and from all over the country, from the far west in Hawaii to far east where we are here in Washington, D.C.

We are pleased today to – I'm pleased today to be co-moderating with Erin Berg from the Department of Education, and I'm going to turn it over to Erin to introduce herself and say a few things right now, and then I'll be back to keep us going. Erin.

ERIN BERG: Thanks, Cheryl. Good afternoon to everyone, and thank you also for joining our webinar today. As Cheryl mentioned, I'm Erin Berg with the U.S. Department of Education with the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, otherwise known as our acronym, which is OCTAE.

And it's my pleasure to serve as a liaison to all of the community colleges in the United States. Since the inception of TAACCCT, the Departments of Labor and Education have been working to support TAACCCT applicants, grantees, and then now through SkillsCommons the greater workforce development community.

In my role I'm able to hear about many successes and innovations at community colleges. However, I'm also asked to – often asked what resources might be available for colleges who are facing challenges or those who are seeking to improve and update their curriculum and instruction methods.

Today's webinar addresses one of the challenges that I hear often about regarding quality free and open education resources. The lack of availability of such resources and the high cost of textbooks are frequently barriers to student access and completion. Today we'll hear about these incredible resources on the topics of affordable learning solutions and open educational resources that are available in the TAACCCT repository SkillsCommons.org.

My co-moderator, Cheryl, will talk a little bit more about what SkillsCommons has to offer, but I just wanted to let you all know that we at Ed are just excited to be a part of SkillsCommons, to be a part of this webinar, and we'll offer at least one more opportunity in the next couple of months to learn more about what the resources in SkillsCommons, what some of the best ones that they have to offer.

And I just want to say thank you to our colleagues at the Department of Labor for hosting this webinar on their platform today, as well as our excellent presenter Gerry Hanley and his staff from California State University. Cheryl?

MS. MARTIN: Thank you, Erin. So I'm just going to take a minute to explain what TAACCCT is, that long acronym, in case anybody is not familiar with it because it's behind all of the resources that you're going to hear about today. So TAACCCT stands for Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training grant program.

It is a $2 billion grant wrapping up in September 2018 that is being implemented by the U.S. Department of Labor in partnership with the U.S. Department of Education. And this has been a little bit of a different kind of a grant because it provided funds for capacity building for community colleges to support changes that would make it easier for adult learners to obtain industry-recognized credentials to improve their job prospects.

TAACCCT grantees, as part of that capacity building, have developed 2,678 new or revised programs of study at their colleges, along with implementing many other strategies to support the – to support those courses. And you'll hear about some of those today. Many of the products from those programs of study are on SkillsCommons.org because we required grantees to put them there and share them with the rest of you so that we can leverage that investment in the grant and share them broadly, share those products.

So Gerry's going to talk a little bit more about one piece of that today. We're part of a series here today, but I just wanted to say that, if after hearing about this you'd like to easily share information about SkillsCommons with your colleagues, there's a flyer in that box called – of course you can just send them to the web link, but sometimes it's helpful to have a little bit more information. So there's a flyer in that file share box called SkillsCommons that you can use.

I wanted to mention that, as I said, today's webinar is part of a series, and we've been through a few of them. Today's is the fourth, "Lowering the Cost of Course Materials with Free and Open Educational Resources."

Any of the webinars that you see previous to this, the first one about training experts to be good teachers, the second one about career pathways, the third one about resources for developmental education using competency-based education, all of those can be listened to or you can download the slides, that kind of thing by clicking on those links. And we have two more coming up, and possibly we'll extend the series as well. So you can see all about them on this slide and doing those kind of links.

So I'm going to turn it back over to Erin now to go back to our polling questions. Erin.

MS. BERG: Thanks, Cheryl. We have the first question opened for you all to answer as you were logging on. Just curious to see where folks are calling in from. It looks like we have about a 30/30 split between – 30/30/30 split between community and technical colleges, workforce system offices, and other, and I see a lot of sort of youth and family non-profits kind of rolling through the chat there but also a handful of folks from secondary career and technical programs and the four-year systems.

So that's great to see kind of a varied group of folks that are probably all working in partnership, or if you aren't already, there's a lot of resources in SkillsCommons that can help you get something started.

But we have a couple other poll questions for you as well. Can we go to number two? OK. What best describes your experience using free or low-cost course materials at your organization? If you want to go ahead and give us an answer there, and it looks like they're opening question number three as well. So you can answer that at the same time. That is asking, do you use open educational resources at your organization? Give you guys just a second to answer.

MS. MARTIN: Yeah. And you may have to scroll down on your screen to get all the options there. If you see a scroll bar on the poll number two, for instance, depending on the size of the screen.

MS. BERG: Yeah. And so the moderator – I think question number two isn't formatted quite right.

MS. MARTIN: Yeah. So we only –

MS. BERG: And for our audience it looks like –

MS. CASERTANO: I'll fix that right now.

MS. BERG: Thanks, Laura.

MS. MARTIN: But we can go on, Erin.

MS. BERG: Yeah. We can skip ahead to number three. It looks like it's about another kind of somewhat even split between half of you just starting to explore and the other half are our experts and our complete – (inaudible).

So we've got about half of you that are really interested in starting to use OER at your organization. Then we've got about 20 percent that are probably we're going to be preaching to the choir, but lots of tips for using SkillsCommons for you to expand your repertoire, if you already. And then what is OER? Well, you'll get to find out just – in just a few minutes.

And then looks like we're getting some results then into the reformatted question number two. So what is your experience using free or low-cost course materials at your organization? Yeah. About half of you or more than half of you are – well, it's still coming in here. About half have very little experience. About 20 percent are in the process, and about 20 percent are already providing students access to a broad range of free or low-cost materials. So that's great. Nice mix of folks here today.

So with knowing about who we're talking to here today, we'll move on to – I'll introduce you to our presenter, Gerry. Gerry is the director of SkillsCommons and also the executive director of the Cal State University MERLOT system, which is sort of a broader – gosh, everything that you could possibly think about with OER, MERLOT probably has to offer. So he's assistant vice chancellor for the academic technology services in the office – Cal State University Office of the Chancellor. So Gerry's going to talk to you about lowering the cost of course materials using open educational resources, and I'll turn it over to him. Thanks, Gerry.

GERRY HANLEY: Well, thank you, Erin, and thank you, Cheryl. And I greatly appreciate the leadership of the Department of Ed and the Department of Labor in really facilitating us providing this resource that's free and open for everyone. Wherever you are in the world with an internet connection, you'll have free access to these materials.

And with the TAACCCT program that Cheryl described, with 700 community colleges developing curriculum to create – build capacity and create some innovative curriculum in a whole range of workforce development areas, we've been invited to create an open library where all these community colleges could then put these resources so they provide you a one-stop shop to finding workforce development materials that are free of cost and also give you the freedom to use those materials in any way you wish.

So you can modify them, rebrand them, and that's really what a key element of what open educational resources are. It's free of cost, and it's free from restrictions for how you can use those materials.

The slide right here just talks about – a little bit about the workforce development project SkillsCommons and being able to make over these materials that have what's called a Creative Commons license.

So that's the license, the CC BY, and that – the CC where you attribute those materials BY someone allows you to make it over in – with a branding or a reorganization and also allows you to retain it for yourselves on your own laptops or your own servers for your use. And that's I think is one of the really important elements of the Department of Labor's TAACCCT program is creating this community service and open public library for these workforce development materials.

And what we'll do today is talk a little bit about how you can have access to all these and how you can use it to support the goals of your own program. And what we try to do in SkillsCommons is first, with all these 700 community colleges that produced all these open education resources, how do we capture and preserve it so you have access to it?

How do we make it easy for you to find these materials so you can then spend your time thinking about how to use it and sustain this community of both colleges, businesses, WIBs, and national organizations to use these quality materials to advance the development of workforce for the 21st century.

Now, I think what's important to understand too is what's the institutional context for why this is so important to find free and no-cost materials. And I'm going to begin with our own context in the California State University, and I – hopefully, many of these – this information that I'm going to provide you really applies to you. In the Cal State system we have a mission to provide access to an excellent education.

We offer almost 1800 different degree programs, and when we look at who we're serving, we have one of the most diverse institutions. We have almost 500,000 students from all economic, social, and educational backgrounds. And when we look at the cost of our tuition, it's about $5700 per year, and when we look at this, 80 percent of our students are receiving some financial aid.

So that tells you the cost of education is still beyond the capabilities of many of our students, and so how we can make our education more affordable so all students have access to the quality educational experience that can advance their careers.

And so when we begin to look at does the cost of education affect our ability to help our students graduate, my guess many of you in your community colleges are also looking at how do I improve the graduation rates and how do we eliminate the equity gap? One of the things we find in the Cal State system that students who have a lower economic environment have – take longer to graduate and are less likely to graduate. And if our job is to ensure all students have that ability to complete their degree, what can we do to eliminate those equity gaps?

Well, when you look at the cost of education, textbook affordability makes a big difference. And this is work done out of the Florida virtual campus. They've been doing this for a number of years, and it is really excellent information. Just give you a sense. When you ask students, what's the impact of the high cost of textbooks, they say – 47 percent of our students are taking fewer units per semester because of the cost of textbooks.

And if you're trying to graduate your students in a timely manner, that means they need to take, honestly, more units per semester, and the cost of textbooks becomes a barrier for them. A quarter of our students are saying they drop a course because of the cost of textbooks, and that's because, if they don't have access to the materials, how can they effectively succeed in those courses when they don't have access to those required materials?

And another 20 percent are saying I've failed a course because I haven't been able to successfully prepare because of the high cost of textbooks. So understanding how the affordable – affordability of your content for your courses impacts the success of your students, that connection can be a very significant one. So what can you do as an institution to really make a difference?

And in California every student in California's public higher education system, imagine if we save them $170 per semester. So that's about the cost of one new relatively expensive textbook. So just one textbook per semester, and we have three million students. We could save students $1 billion a year. $1 billion a year. Now, what are students doing with that savings? Are they putting it in a savings account? No. What they're doing, they're spending it on living, on supporting their academic endeavors as well.

So this is like $1 billion annual financial aid package for our students, when they're able to successfully complete their degrees because they have access to it. And now, what can you do to ensure your students have access to these materials? Well, this is where SkillsCommons has created kind of a one-stop shop for you to find all types of learning solutions. This is what's important is that these are curriculum that have been evaluated by experts in the field, especially in the area from the TAACCCT grants, that can produce solutions for students learning that is very affordable.

And here's the website. It's Affordable Learning Solutions by SkillsCommons. The URL is up there, and what we're going to do right now in – maybe in 30 seconds is I'll go do a show and tell of the website. But the website has a lot of curriculum material, and it also has materials that can help you figure out how to use these materials within your programs.

So these are the different boxes there that provide you support services to ensure – for example, on the top right how do you ensure that all your students, including those with disabilities, have access to these materials as well? The other aspect we have too in the center box at the lower one, what are all the other people who are using these resources, and how can you learn from one another? So we've tried to organize all this information to provide you easy access to these materials because, when we look at our goal here, our goal is to give you a gift and not a burden.

So next, I'll – what I'll go through here is let's take a little tour of the Affordable Learning Solutions at SkillsCommons. And give me a second, and I'll share my screen. And hopefully, you see the screen share. So thank you. And now, let's just do a little tour here, and so what we have is that navigation bar.

If you want, you can find all types of free textbooks that are available, course modules, course curriculum for whole courses, open access to journal articles. So we provide, again, a one-stop shop, and what I'm going to begin with is career and technical education. And this is where the – all the work that had been produced by the TAACCCT grantees, you can find this information here.

So I just clicked on that navigation bar there, and we've tried to organize this for those people who might be just getting started. We've created a showcase of some areas to highlight some full open courses, and let me just begin with one. I'll say in business management and human resources. And so here is – and when we call this open courseware, this is like the curriculum for an entire course that would be available for you to use. Free and online. So I'll pick one, financial management online course, and so, again, this is like – think of this as you're just walking, browsing through a library of materials and you've walked down the business aisle.

And now, you see, oh, here's financial management. And if I wanted to look at – take a look at a module about financial management, I click on this, and you notice I opened it up right away. Here's stuff about the course outcomes, and let me just pick – I'll go to section three, methods for financial statement analysis.

And you can see how this material provides you some text. It provides you some simple questions, whether you can check whether you know things or not. So these are all – I just want to give you a flavor of the types of materials that you can have freely available for you to use whenever you want here available on SkillsCommons. Again, think of it as your local public library for workforce development resources.

Now, let me just show you some other things, a little broader collection of materials. So we've kind of highlighted a showcase of materials in business, and you can see we also have energy, IT, healthcare. Let me just show you one in healthcare so you get a sense. Here's a little something different. So here is – if you're looking for a little healthcare skill bites, what if you need to – for people to brush up? They're preparing for the healthcare area.

So here are little modules around specific areas about lower extremities, medical coding, transport change. So these are materials that, again, we've organized to make it really easy. You can download them, and let me just show you for that.

So if you want to download them, here is the PDF to give you that information, and here's a 5 MB download. You can see that. So this is the library that helps you find these materials, and when you download them, they're there on your computer where you have access to them and then you can modify them as you want because it has a Creative Commons license.

The next part I'll show you in workforce development areas is here are – we've organized full online course curriculum and hybrid and blended course curriculum according to the Standard Occupational Classification or SOC code. And so those people in workforce investment boards or workforce areas, you might be looking at all the different type of jobs that are out there according to your occupational codes.

And let's say you're interested in manufacturing, and you can go to click on what are the online course curriculum that's available in production occupations? And so you can see here we've opened up the website where there's 40 different online courses, and there – you can see the different industry sectors that we have here, and I'm just scrolling down. And let's say you want something in digital circuits.

So I can click on that digital circuits, and you can see right here here's the course outlines, the content, interactive resources, assessments, and subject matter expert reviews. So within that one package you can download those materials and get all this information for you to use and edit as you wish. So hopefully, you get a little sense of what's available in the workforce development areas that we have in the Affordable Learning Solutions.

The other aspect we also have is the broader general education area. Now, in this area what we've done is we've identified high enrollment general education courses, and so it – for those in the community colleges, these might be particularly useful. And so let's say – I'll just pick business again, for example. We've talked a little bit about that.

So here's a financial accounting, and what are all the free e-textbooks that are available for you, for your faculty, and your students for teaching financial accounting? And so I'll just pick one here. If I click on this principles of financial accounting, now it opens it up into the library of MERLOT, which stands for Multimedia Educational Resources for Learning and Online Teaching. It's also great to have a glass of wine while you're having fun with the library.

And if I wanted to, in a sense, go to this material about principles of financial accounting and I can look at, oh, it's been peer reviewed. You see the little box about quality. People have done ratings on it, and I can simply click on that button there. And what this is going to do, it will now open up the principles of financial accounting and here's a book, chapters one through four, and I can just have immediate access to information processing. And here's I'm – problems, goals, fill in the blanks, multiple choice. Lots of information there. Freely available for you to use in your courses.

And other aspects here, what we've also done, if you want to know how good is this book, in this program that we've worked in MERLOT we've also had faculty conduct evaluations of these. And so I've just clicked on one. This was done by something from the Cal State University system, and they've evaluated the quality, the subject matter, the instructional design, editorial aspects, and usability. And this got pretty good ratings; right?

So when you begin to look for free materials that you have the permission to use as you wish, is it good stuff too as well? So we've tried to make it easy for you to find all these materials and provide you information about the quality of those materials so when you adopt it for your own use.

The next thing I'll show you too is – in Affordable Learning Solutions is – we call it the faculty showcase. You can say, Gerry, you've given me all these informations in the library, but can you show me how people are actually adopting these free materials in their own courses? And so this is what we've done in the faculty showcase. We put together. So we have, again, you can click on whatever discipline you'd like to do, and again, I'll just pick on one in business as we're going through a theme here.

So here's someone from Cal State Bakersfield. He uses a free OpenStax. This is really an open education resources publisher out there, OpenStax, and then if you click on this little blue button, you can say, oh, now, we're going to learn how did this person, this faculty member use it in their own course. Here's the book they use.

Here's the course that they teach, and here's some information about what he's asked his students and why he adopted the book. And at the bottom of this teaching e-portfolio you can actually download this person's syllabus. And notice it has a Creative Commons license on it. So if you want to use any of this information, you have the freedom to use this information for your own purposes.

So I hope that gave you kind of a quick overview of the materials that you can find in the Affordable Learning Solutions website here, and now, what I'd like to do, Laura, is we'll – let's just head back to the presentation. And of course, everyone on the line, if you have questions, feel free to pop those into the chat, and we'll certainly be answering those questions down the road.

Now, so here's a resource. Here's a library of materials that you might definitely want to explore. Now, the question is, how do you take this library, and then what can you do with it; right? Now that you know you have general education materials. You have career and technical education. You have e-textbooks. You have full open courseware, and you have licenses that allows you to customize it and all the type of support.

Now, the question we have is how do you incorporate it into your own institution? If you want to – if I can give you a gift and not a burden, the gift has to be brought home and be effectively used within your own culture, within your own faculty and your own staff or within your own organization as you're doing professional workforce development. How can you really do this?

And so the next part of this presentation I'm going to talk about the strategy that we have used not only in the California State University but with many partners that we have across our community colleges and also with other industry sector organizations.

And this pyramid here begins with some basic principles of at the bottom of that pyramid you say, well, if I'm going to bring this into my own institution or my own organization, we can provide a lot of information but also think about the other resources that you have available.

Bring in your open education resources, but in our community colleges we also have our library materials, and publishers can also bring low-cost materials to the table too as well and faculty are authoring. So don't just think about OER as the only solution, but you can think about also the low-cost materials that are also available.

And then what you then do is say, now that I have – give people a choice of those materials that can serve their instructional needs, the next part is how do you make it really easy. How do you make it very convenient for people to really discover these and adopt the materials?

And for those in higher education institutions or if you're in K-12 link learning programs where you have your own school websites, bringing those – these resources into those environments where people are already working makes it much – that's how you create capacity in your institution to adopt the open education resources. Make it easy for people to find that material.

The next layer, the yellow layer is you want people to say, oh, I want that. I want those resources. I want to try those out. I want to explore those resources. And this is the developing the demand; right? In any sort of supply and demand economy, the bottom part is the supply side.

How do you bring a lot of education materials and make it easy for people to provide it, and now, through your communication plans, your outreach, your marketing, the professional development, how do you explain to people? How do they understand how to adopt materials, about how to download it, and how do they use it? So you want that professional development program and training to occur.

And finally, at the top of the pyramid there you have to enable this whole ecosystem, the supply and demand ecosystem. And I would say the most important element is your leadership.

When you bring your vision, when you bring your passion, when you bring your strength of why this is so important to provide access to a quality education to your constituents to they can get better jobs, bring in better income, and have happier lives, that leadership, the voice that leadership brings to the table is essential.

And then, often, how you sustain that leadership is through the implementations of policies. So this is the model. When you're thinking about how do I bring affordable learning solutions into your organization, think about all these different levels that are important to plan for and to support in this process. So this is our California state's Affordable Learning Solutions and our implementation strategy. What does it take to do this?

Now, I'm going to show you some examples of what we've done to help kind of develop the demand is this next set of slides. In a sense, the Affordable Learning Solutions website is the way we've aggregated materials to make it easy and convenient for you.

So if you want to use your Affordable Learning Solutions website, now, how do you develop the demand? So one of the things we've done here is working with the almost 100,000 faculty members between our three state institutions. We put on a simple one-day conference that says, learn from one another. Spend some time thinking about how we can make things more affordable.

And we would break it down into different topic areas of innovations and how do you deal with the different policy issues we have? How do you sustain these capabilities? How do you keep faculty finding and exploring? And what are some outcomes that are important for you to achieve? And let me just give you one example.

Last year in the California state system, we saved students over $39 million in their course materials. And so those are some of the metrics that you can begin to look at, and here's an example of also make sure you enable discussions where people can figure out how can they prepare for strategies to support their affordable learning solutions initiative.

This next slide gives you, again, some of the implementation strategies that are important for you to plan. So to enable your ecosystem, how are you going to explain to other people in your department or in your college or in your office what is open education resources and why this is so beneficial? What's the training that you can provide them?

How do you do the one-on-one hands-on experience? Go explore the library. Take a walk down the digital stacks of materials. How do you provide help? And in our community colleges your reference librarians can be outstanding resources for supporting faculty finding things. In your own workforce areas, if you're in a workforce investment board, finding someone who in a sense will become your champion, who will be the go-to person to help answer those questions, and so we look at some of these other elements around providing print copies.

Just so you know, those OpenStax textbook, you can get those often between $25 and $45, a nice hard copy print version of those. And I mentioned the librarians already help you find those materials can be very helpful. And the last person at the bottom there, your campus coordinator or your organizational coordinator, they are really critical. They are the point of contact. They are the leader. They're going to be the person to really help make that project be successful.

So again, just looking at who are all the players that could be part of your organization's change? Your librarians and your bookstores, helping them think using about open education – open education resources can help bring a value to both the faculty and the students. How presidents and provosts can become your advocates where they talk about the visibility of this, and one of the things we do in California is at the end of the year we celebrate the faculty who made choices that saved students money.

You put on a little party, have a little food, and hand out certificates. And this is where your presidents and your provosts communicate the value of what those – what the faculty have done because the faculty are going to become the champions that can really make the difference, and the students become beneficiaries.

OK. Now, what we're getting to next – we're coming to the end of the presentation – is you can customize your own affordable learning solutions program. And we provide these tools for you. One, MERLOT is free and open for you to use at any time.

OK. And just so you know what that is, MERLOT has been around for 21 years. We have over 150,000 members throughout the world who actually continue to build the collection of materials. In the last month 300 new free and open online materials has been added to the MERLOT library. And we have now over 80,000 materials that are available across all disciplines, and we're a consortium of organizations who work together to provide anyone at any time free access to these educational resources.

And here's an example of what we've done in California. You can think about the – what you saw as Affordable Learning Solutions that SkillsCommons put together. So if you look at this website, it looks a lot like ours because it's, in a sense, modeled after the same template.

And so you can go have fun looking at what we've done in California, the COOL4Ed.org website, and we've kind of put together an area to help people put together proposals on how to design their own affordable learning solutions. A lot of that could be very useful for you folks.

Next, here's another one. We're working with Southern University and HBCUs on how they can create derivative sites. And again, you notice there's a lot of similarity between what we've done in SkillsCommons, California, and Louisiana. And this helps make it easy and quick for you to get your affordable learning solutions initiative moving quickly, and what's also important, you can do this inexpensively.

So SkillsCommons is always open, and as I mentioned before, our job, give you a gift and not a burden. And that means a gift is something that serves your needs, and it's something that you needed that you haven't been able to do all by yourself. And a friend gives you that gift to make your life better, and that's really what we want to try to do and what we spent our time thinking about in SkillsCommons. How can we provide you with SUPPORT Center with all resources to help you develop those capabilities to implement your affordable learning solutions?

The CONNECT Center to to help you find other people and technology companies that can even help you modify and make over the materials so they're really what you need. And the SHOWCASE Center to give you examples. If you're just getting started, go explore the showcase and begin to get an idea of what are all the potential things that you can do. And of course there's always about us. We're happy to have a conversation with you, to see what we can do to help you succeed in implementing your own affordable learning solutions initiative.

So here's my contact information, support@skillscommons.org. We'll provide you – that's our e-mail. You contact us. Give us your information, how we can contact you, and we'll be happy to have the next conversation for you.

OK. So with that I wanted to make sure I gave time for questions and answers, and, Laura – or Cheryl and Erin or Laura, I'll be happy to answer questions next.

MS. MARTIN: Great. Thank you, Gerry. Thank you so much. So I'm going to first review the question that actually came in first, and that question is one that I'm sure everyone will be interested in. "Will the SkillsCommons resources go away once the grant sunsets in 2018?" Gerry, what's the answer?

MR. HANLEY: They will still be there after all the grants go away. OK. SkillsCommons is – we are – it's part of the California State University's library system. It's built on the technology that we've been using for the 10 years.

And guess what? California State University is not going away. So that's one kind of pillar in the ground. The other one is SkillsCommons is really wrapped within the strategy of the MERLOT project. MERLOT has been around 21 years. We've been able to provide that type of support worldwide for all this time. And so SkillsCommons is now part of the family. It's open education for workforce development, and so we're going to be here.

MS. MARTIN: Great. Thank you, Gerry. Somebody online asked the question about if there are materials available for educating young adults on the autism spectrum, and I gave a partial response to that in the thread. This is Cheryl. But one of my colleagues here in the room said, if you put in the word disability in the search for – on SkillsCommons.org, you will find some resources that are specifically for and about that. And obviously, not all of them will be relevant, but that's another way to look at that. So I just wanted to add that.

Gerry, I'm going to go to a question about, "Are faculty required to use these books for their classwork, or can they still choose their own books?"

MR. HANLEY: We don't – we do not require – so I'll speak – now, I'll put on my California State University hat, and as a professor of psychology in years gone past, we do not require faculty to use open education resources.

All right. Academic freedom is essential for the quality of education for students where faculty bring their expertise to the table and choose the content that's right for their students. Now, what we do is how do you help faculty make the choice to choose more affordable content? And so there's a number of things that we do to help inform the faculty decision.

And so one area that we do is, if you provide them training, professional development so now they can actually modify the materials that, in a sense, a publisher provides them when it's a Creative Commons license, now they can make the adjustments in the course curriculum that they always wanted to. So one of the reasons why they may want to choose an OpenStax textbook is because they can rearrange the chapters the way they want and then add the additional information. So that can be one reason why.

Second one is in California we've been providing some funding for faculty to explore the alternative options. And when a campus is saving students money, we provide some additional funds to that campus because they're helping more of our students graduate in a timely manner. OK. And I think this is where your campus culture becomes a very important element about how do you help faculty recognize the value of finding more affordable learning solutions. Many faculty just don't even know how much the textbooks are really costing their students.

OK. So providing this information around what the real cost is and the Florida survey for understanding that, if 25 percent of your students are dropping out of your course because of the cost of textbooks – OK – what can you do to keep those students in your class? And then how can I find a textbook or other materials that can help my students succeed in my class? So it's – I think how do you get faculty to make the change is you provide them the good reasons and let them make those choices.

And the last thing I'll say is, often, working with our academic senates, there are often policies that – or resolutions that really can say this is a good thing for faculty to choose to do, and we would want to support those faculty who do make those more affordable learning solution choices. So I hope that was helpful there for you.

MS. MARTIN: Thank you, Gerry. Let's go to another question. And for those of you who are pouring your questions in, if your question does not get answered here, you can always write to support@skillscommons.org, and you will get – you can get your questions answered that way as well, since we have limited time here today. But I wanted to come back to a few of these.

Gerry, if you'll take the question. Someone asked that we mentioned accessibility for students with disabilities, and this would be I think more in the context of courses that are available with -- (inaudible) -- accessibility and that kind of thing. And you said – is there – or she says, whoever it is, "Is there a way to search for materials that meet these criteria?" And I just wanted to – I know the answer to that, but I wanted to give you a chance to talk a little bit about the – about that in terms of SkillsCommons.

MR. HANLEY: Great. OK. So the – great question, and here – what we've done in SkillsCommons, we've developed a set of resources and checklists that we've provided the TAACCCT grantees to help them evaluate and give them resources to remediate the materials because all the TAACCCT grantees had the requirement for their curriculum to be 508 compliant.

And I know we've moved to the WK 2.0 AA standard, but 508 is – I'll say still has many advantages, even though it's a little old standard from the previous – from the earlier grant. So job one is the TAACCCT grantees were required to make those materials accessible, and we provided those tools to ensure that that's the case.

Now, if you're in the area of accessibility, I have the accessible technology initiative in the California State University. It's – I'll say it's impossible for everything to always be accessible for every person. And so what we do try to provide is help you have the capabilities to know when is the material not accessible for this person with this particular disability using this type of technology? So those are the resources that are often in that accessibility area on the ALS, Affordable Learning Solutions website.

So now, we also have – you can metadata fields or -- (inaudible) -- information in the SkillsCommons library about specific accessibility features. So if you're looking for materials and if a grantee put that information in there, then you can search for materials that are accessible in those particular areas that you're looking for. So I hope that was helpful in answering that question there.

MS. MARTIN: Great. Thank you. So here's a question that I'm actually delighted that somebody asked. "Is this available to employers to use for their related technical instruction for their apprenticeship program?" Ding. Ding. Ding. Yes.

MR. HANLEY: Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. And actually, if – I'm just thinking, Laura, if you can get me to share my screen again, I can do a real quick show and tell for what we have for apprenticeships.

MS. MARTIN: Yeah. And while he's doing that, I'll just say that these materials are really available for anybody. So your aunt could use them. Your colleagues can use them. You can use them. A company can use them. We have a major company that's using some of these materials to train their own employees. So yes, they can definitely be used for that, and Gerry is pulling up something that we just did recently.

So it's pretty hot off the press in terms of apprenticeship, and these will be just a few samples, I want to say, of things that could be used for related technical instruction for apprenticeship. Really anything on the website could be used for that. If you're doing an apprenticeship on any topic that's covered on here, the training might be relevant for that. So it's not limited to the things that Gerry's about to show you, but, Gerry, let's show them what we do have for apprenticeship.

MR. HANLEY: Great. OK. So now, I'm at the broader SkillsCommons website, and then we – here's the showcases. And so I just click on that, and here's the apprenticeship showcase. OK. And so you can look at that, and here what we just try to do is say, when you're trying to support apprenticeship programs, before someone goes into the field how can they become familiar with concepts and terms and the vocabulary that their mentors and managers are going to be talking?

How do they become familiar with the safety regulations; right? So there's lots of things that you can do to help your apprentice become more successful when they now have the – really the mentorship and the skills development in those work-based learning environments.

And guess what. Your mentors can also use some benefit from these materials. So what we've done is we've just highlighted a few of these different areas, and I'll just pick one, welding, the first one here. And so we've said, what are some materials we have in SkillsCommons that I might want to – how do I design an apprenticeship program?

And so there's apprenticeship – so this is a course in – from Colorado that you can go look at. I can simply click on that, and so here's a 1 MB PDF about the pre-apprenticeship welding certificate program. And so if you want to start one of those, well, guess what. You don't have to start with a blank sheet. You can start with a materials that have already been developed.

Now, here's one. Before your apprentice goes into the workshop, you may want to say, you know what, you may want to look at the safety regulations for these materials. So here's – someone asked before, here's the disability services handbook for welding, and then here's a common course – a course itself that you can download about safety.

So I'm just doing real quick here, but to give you a sense of that we've – kind of looking at all these materials that can be used to support your apprenticeship strategies and programs in your own institutions there.

MS. MARTIN: Thank you, Gerry.

MR. HANLEY: You're welcome.

MS. MARTIN: And we'll be gladly adding to and expanding that. Like I said, those are a few samples there.

MR. HANLEY: Right.

MS. MARTIN: I wanted to also address the question about, "Is there material there that prepares individuals for certification and licensure exams?"

And the answer is yes. There is because really all the programs of study that TAACCCT grantees were developing with this funding and then, therefore, the stuff that you're finding on this website all had to be leading students to an industry-recognized credential of some kind. So I was just doing a little search on the side, and I put in Cisco and I found some courses there that came up and I was talking to some Cisco guys today actually at another event and they said, oh, yeah. That's our stuff there.

So, I mean, there's not going to be proprietary training on here. If a school has bought training from a vendor or something like that, you're not going to find that kind of training on here because they can't; right? They can't share that. They can only share what they develop themselves.

But there will still be material – so I put in LPN. Yes. That would be a kind of license exam that you would want to – or a nursing exam. So yes. You can find materials here that would prepare individuals for certification and licensure exams.

Let's move to – I think this is probably a quick question. Gerry, "Can the textbooks be downloaded for print, or do we need to go to OpenStax always?"

MR. HANLEY: No. The textbooks are available for you to download. If you're looking for print versions, it's actually cheaper to just go to OpenStax. You can also buy it off of Amazon, buy the print versions because, if you're paying on a copier, it will cost you less or on your printer, it will probably cost you more in ink than – and you get a quality – better quality product if you just buy it off of OpenStax. But yes. Any way you can have access to those materials. If you want to print it yourself, you can do that too.

MS. MARTIN: OK. We are running out of time here, and there are definitely more questions that I know were not getting answered. Prerequisite and co-requisite materials, many of the colleges did develop their courses like that. So there may be things in here that relate to that.

Gerry, let's end with question – the question, "Is there a way to connect to other instructors who have found great content? Is there a discussion forum, that kind of thing?"

MR. HANLEY: OK. All right. So I'll say this is something that we are – you've heard the saying building the plane while you're flying it. OK. So we – this is – the CONNECT Center connects with communities, and so what we've tried to put here is what are all the different ways that you can try to find connections with other people doing these things?

OK. So one, just so you know, you can connect with our social media. So you can find what else is going on within SkillsCommons and our Facebook, et cetera, like that, and that's how you can connect with people. OK. We are also at conferences, lots of events and conferences. So you can go here. We have particular – we call them impact communities, and so these are people who are specifically looking at how do I tell the story on the impact of my workforce development or Cheryl mentioned before how do we train industry experts to become expert teachers.

And let me just give you an example of what we set up is I'm clicking on this community – how do you have a community conversation? We just click on that. And so these are things called MERLOT Voices. So this is a online discussion forum where we have people who are interested in this free course about how do you help an industry expert become an expert teacher, and so this is where you can connect to these other people.

And so here's 18 people who are in this community who are interested in that. And we have these just other ones, and I know we're running out of time. Real quick I'll just point out that we've started building these for the different industry sectors too as well. So real quick.

MS. MARTIN: Gerry, you're not actually screen sharing right now.

MR. HANLEY: Oh, I'm not screen sharing? Oh, OK. So imagine online website. Laura, is it – let me just see. I'm not screen – well, we're out of time. I'll just say we do have mechanisms, and so if you just send me a note on support@skillscommons.org, we'll get back to you, and we can give you the URLs for how to connect with other people.

MS. MARTIN: Thank you, Gerry. And I will say that that e-mail address will be useful for all the rest of you who had questions that we could not get to today because there were quite a few, and I apologize for that. But it's great to see the enthusiasm, and we're so glad you joined us today.

Thank you, Erin, for co-hosting with me. Thank you so much, Gerry, for walking us through this, and thank you, all of you, for joining us. Back to you, Laura.

(END)