**Affordable Learning Georgia Textbook Transformation Grants**

**Final Report**

**Date:** 01/03/2017

**Grant Number:** 268

**Institution Name(s):** Georgia Highlands College

**Team Members (Name, Title, Department, Institutions if different, and email address for each):**

* Mr. Scott Flynn, Physical Education Department, sflynn@highlands.edu
* Ms. Lisa Jellum, Physical Education Department, ljellum@highlands.edu
* Mr. Jonathan Howard, Physical Education Department, jhoward@highlands.edu
* Ms. Althea Moser, Physical Education Department, amoser@highlands.edu
* Mr. David Mathis, Physical Education and Athletics Department, dmathis@highlands.edu
* Ms. Christin Collins, Library, ccollins@highlands.edu
* Mrs. Sharryse Henderson, Department of Physical Science, shenders@highlands.edu
* Mrs. Connie Watjen, English Department, cwatjen@highlands.edu

**Project Lead:** Scott Flynn

**Course Name(s) and Course Numbers:** PHED 1010-Concepts of Fitness and Wellness, PHED 1130-Walking and Jogging for Fitness

**Semester Project Began:** Fall 2016

**Semester(s) of Implementation:** Fall 2017

**Average Number of Students Per Course Section:** 24

**Number of Course Sections Affected by Implementation:** 24

**Total Number of Students Affected by Implementation:** 648

**1. Narrative**

The excitement of this project was generated from the opportunity to genuinely help make our student’s education more affordable by creating a free textbook. Throughout the process of creating the textbook, we feel like we’ve been able to keep much of the same material as traditional textbooks, present it in an understandable way, and offer it in a format that students could easily access. During that process, there were multiple challenges that came up, both large and small.

One of the initial challenges was trying to determine the current textbook experience of our students. As a team, we knew the cost but otherwise assumed the current textbook experience to be mostly positive. After our initial survey, our assumptions were correct. Most students (about 75% of those who responded to the survey) were satisfied with the textbook and a very few were using the online versions of the text (averaged about 9-10%). Interestingly, nearly half of the students wanted access to both a hardcopy and digital copy of the textbook. With the “free” option needing to be primarily online, we saw this as a challenge. Despite the limited use of the online text, most students (about 77%) were willing to use an online textbook if it were free. As a result of the desire to use both hardcopy and online textbooks, we created a textbook that could be easily accessed by mobile devices, laptops and even printed if desired. This gave students the option of a “hardcopy” or digital version, or both. During the implementation phase, instructors saw students who had printed out the textbook with highlighted paragraphs and also students who would follow along with materials on tablets.

The biggest challenge was gathering the material itself. Unlike a few other transformation projects, there was no textbook or grouping of subject-specific materials already written that could be adopted. We ended up having to gather materials ourselves from various sources or simply write them outright. Because a good portion of the material was written by us, we decided we would need some assistance in making sure the material was grammatically sound, citations formatted correctly, and uniform in its layout to assist with comprehension. Fortunately, we were able to find an editor to help us in that regard with the PHED 1010 textbook.

In addition to the editing assistance, and because we were creating the material on our own, we wanted to assure accessibility for those who might have impairments. During the creation process, we asked for assistance with our disability specialist on how these documents would sound when being used with the software purchased by the College for assisting visually impaired students (ClaroRead). We found that we had created a textbook that could easily be used with that software.

In the classroom, the implementation process has also come with unique opportunities. Each team member was given 3-4 chapters to organize/create at the onset of the project. As expected, each of those chapters has the “style” of the instructor who wrote it. This has given the courses, as a whole, a good mixture of perspectives and insight on how other instructors go about presenting information in their sections.

In addition to the mixture of perspectives, we have also learned how to organize the materials in a way that students can understand. For traditional textbook publishers, this is something they have decades of experience doing. In organizing the master syllabus/course in D2L, we have learned that even a few extra clicks can mean the difference between a completed lab assignment or not. This was reflected in the post-survey results suggesting the students feel the new textbook is comparable to the traditional textbook.

For PHED 1130, along with a free textbook, we opted to purchase heart rate monitors to enhance the learning experience of our students. Use of the heart rate monitors along with the appropriate phone application would give them additional insight into technology available and how to use that technology to help in fitness programming. We feel this was accomplished. However, a major concern of giving students heart rate monitors was how we would be able to get them back to avoid the financial burden of replacing the monitors each semester. To help in that regard, we teamed up with the library. Students check the heart rate monitor out, like a library book, for the duration of the course. At the end of the course, they must return the monitors. The library has the ability to put a hold on student accounts making it much easier to incentivize students to return the equipment.

As the feedback from students has come in, we have determined the amount of information is difficult to manage when connecting to outside links. While many sources have exactly what we’d like for students to see, many others present the desired information along with large amounts of additional information. As a result, students must sift through large amounts of material without knowing if it is relevant to the course. While this was understood prior to linking the sites, copyright concerns and keeping the information updated were also challenges. This is something we will continue investigate to help prevent students from feeling overwhelmed with information.

**2. Quotes**

* From the post survey, most feedback was positive with a few good suggestions:
  + “The text book was well organized and easy to use and was well represented in class. I don’t think that any changes need to be made.”
  + “I found it difficult at times to know what information to focus on. There was a surplus of information attached to the links and at times was information overload.”
  + “I wish the website was laid out differently where you could actually flip through the pages as if it were a real book.”

**3. Quantitative and Qualitative Measures**

**3a. Overall Measurements**

**Student Opinion of Materials**

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

Total number of students affected in this project: 648 (during implementation semester)

* Positive: \_\_83\_\_\_\_\_ % of \_168\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ number of respondents
* Neutral: \_11\_\_\_\_\_\_ % of \_\_168\_\_\_\_\_\_ number of respondents
* Negative: \_\_\_\_6\_\_\_ % of \_\_168\_\_\_\_\_\_ number of respondents

**Student Learning Outcomes and Grades**

**Was the overall comparative impact on student performance in terms of learning outcomes and grades in the semester(s) of implementation over previous semesters positive, neutral, or negative?**

Choose One:

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

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

**Was the overall comparative impact on Drop/Fail/Withdraw (DFW) rates in the semester(s) of implementation over previous semesters positive, neutral, or negative?**

**Drop/Fail/Withdraw Rate:** PHED 1010/PHED 1130

\_\_19/13\_\_\_\_\_% of students, out of a total \_578/70\_\_\_\_\_\_ students affected, dropped/failed/withdrew from the course in the final semester of implementation.

Choose One:

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

**3b. Narrative**

* To measure impact, our focus was to measure changes in the DFW rate and also subjective feedback through surveys during the pre- and post implementation phases.
* The surveys gave us some interesting insights in to what students expected of a textbook based on what they were using at the time of the survey. There are 6 instructors who teach the PHED 1010 course with 3 different textbooks being used amongst the 6 instructors. We created a survey for each textbook but each survey had the same questions.
* When the cost of the book being paid was more expensive, more students elected to not purchase the book at all. For the Fit and Well, and Labs and Principles of Fitness and Wellness texts, a greater percentage of students paid in the higher cost brackets listed ($80-120, $120-160) and in both cases a greater percentage of students did not purchase a book at all (10.5% and 18%, respectively). While the exact impact of that based on student grades isn’t available (DFW rates were not filtered by instructor/book use), it seems reasonable to expect limited success for those students who do not purchase a book.
* The survey also drove the organization of the new textbook. Besides cost, student feedback indicated that the “presentation of the material” and the “pictures and graphs” were very important to them scoring 4.75 and 4.04 respectively. “Delivery method” (online vs. hardcopy) was also important with a score of 4.28. The post-survey revealed that most students felt the new textbook was either easy or very easy to understand (34%, 39% respectively) with an additional 14% responding as not hard to understand. They also felt the new textbook was very comparable (52%) or mostly comparable (37.5%) to the previous text they were using with only 10% saying it wasn’t comparable at all.
* The DFW rates seem to reflect the idea that the more expensive a book is the greater the number of students who don’t purchase a book and subsequent increase in DFW rates. Fall 2015 was the time frame in which all instructors were using the Fit and Well text and the cost of the text was at its highest point. The change in textbook, during spring 2016 and Fall of 2016 indicate a trend of improving DFW rates. The small increase in DFW rates in Fall of 2016 could be related to the new textbook and adaptation required by the instructor to present the material from a different text. This is also observed in the PHED 1130 class where the heart rate monitors were being used (students were being asked to purchase them) more widely.
* Students tended to use the new text book for longer periods of time compared to the previous textbook. Pre-survey results indicate only 5% of students used their book for 3 or more hours while post-survey results indicate a 38% use of the textbook for 3 or more hours. 36% of students reported a usage time of 1-2 hours in the pre-survey while 47% reported a usage time of 1-2 hours in the post-survey.
* The DFW rates were somewhat as expected. We honestly expected a slight increase in DFW percentage simply as a result of the new delivery method (primarily online) and the newness of the contents and style of the textbook. The new material not only requires adaptation by the students but also the instructors in terms of how to teach the materials and what to emphasize. For the PHED 1010 course, DFW rates remained basically the same at 19%. While long-term, the hopes are to decrease the DFW rates, this is a positive because it coincides with the previous low-mark from the past 4 semesters despite the adaptation phase. In PHED 1130, there was a slight increase in the DFW rate from 9% in Spring 2017 to 13% in Fall 2017. With a total of 70 students enrolled in three sections, this reflects a difference of 4 students.
* Factors that are difficult to determine are really the students themselves. GHC operates on multiple campuses with a wide variety of students at each campus. As any instructor can attest, despite the best efforts and the same teaching methods, grades will vary across different sections from semester to semester. Regardless, we feel positive that these textbooks and additional materials will help student success.

**4. Sustainability Plan**

* Continued equipment use for our PHED 1130 course will include the use of our library services to check the equipment out. This allows us to have a greater degree of assurance that we will get the equipment back. In addition, we will need to develop a maintenance program to make sure batteries can be replaced in monitors as needed and other parts of the equipment can be maintained.
* Within our textbook, multiple important webpages are linked. For many of those links, the information on the webpage is maintained by the organization in which the students are being directed. The information in those cases will be updated as new information comes out. However, we will be monitoring other links within the text to assure they work and direct the students to accurate and current information. These links can be updated in our master syllabus/page for easy transmission to each section.
* We also intend to apply for a mini-grant that will help us in the development of ancillary materials for the PHED 1010 textbook.

**5. Future Plans**

* We have certainly developed an appreciation for the amount of effort that goes into generating a textbook. There is certainly an abundance of information out there for everyone to see. How much of it is accurate? How much can be used without copyright infringement? How can this material be presented in a classroom setting? These were the tough questions that required hours and hours of sorting and sifting. Then, trying to organize that material into a simplified textbook added another layer of work on to the table. We believe this has helped us organize things in a way of cutting out unnecessary content and really sticking to what’s important.

Regardless, I believe the financial impact will be long lasting. From one semester alone, 607 students who would have normally spent $80-160 on textbooks will have saved $48,560-97,120. Projected for three semesters and that’s a staggering $145,680-291,360.

* There are currently no additional publications or presentations planned but we’ll welcome any opportunities that may arise.

**6. Description of Photograph**

Our photograph will be transmitted later in January when we can all get together.