Affordable Learning Georgia Affordable Materials Grants  
Transformation Grants Final Report

Once you have completed this template, to submit your Final Report, go to the [Final Report submission](https://survey.zohopublic.com/zs/xTCCvG) form.

The final report submission form allows you to submit the following:

* This completed narrative document (required)
* Syllabus or syllabi (required)

*If multiple files, compress into one .zip folder*

* Qualitative/Quantitative Measures data files (optional, as needed)

*If multiple files, compress into one .zip folder*

* Photo of your team or a class of your students for future ALG promotions (optional)
* Invoice for the second half of the grant’s award amount (optional)

Follow the instructions on the webpage for uploading your documents. Based on receipt of this report, ALG will process the final payment for your grant. ALG will follow up in the future with post-project grantee surveys and may also request your participation in a publication, presentation, or other event.

# General Information

**Date:** May 16, 2025

**Grant Round:** Spring 2024

**Grant Number:** 702

**Institution Name(s):** Georgia Southern University

**Project Lead: Amy Potter**

**Team Members: Helen Rosko, Assistant Professor of Geography, School of Earth, Environment, and Sustainability** [**hrosko@georgiasouthern.edu**](mailto:hrosko@georgiasouthern.edu)

**Rob Yarbrough, Associate Professor of Geography, School of Earth, Environment, and Sustainability** [**ryarbrough@georgiasouthern.edu**](mailto:ryarbrough@georgiasouthern.edu)

**Course Name(s) and Course Numbers:** GEOG 1130 World Regional Geography

**Semester Project Began:** Spring 2025

**Final Semester of Implementation:** Spring 2025

**Total Number of Students Affected During Project:** 292

**-** Rosko: WRG A: 157; WRG D: (minimester): 59

-Potter: WRG (online): 76

# Narrative

* 1. *Describe the key outcomes, whether positive, negative, or interesting, of your project. Include:*

Overall, we view the first semester implementation of our transformation experience as a success. We base this assessment on multiple analyses, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative data, including a survey of student experiences taken by over 230 respondents. Moreover, we saw positive results in the area of DFW rates (decreasing overall during the implementation semester) and improved outcomes of the assessment tool used for this Core IMPACTS course for the past several years. Of course, we experienced some challenges, as is always the case when re-designing a course. Most challenges related to devising and implementing new materials in support of the open access textbook we used. Positive outcomes far outweighed these challenges, however, and we elaborate on both our successes and challenges in subsequent sections of the report.

The student survey noted above (and described in greater detail in section 3B) highlights the overall positive transformative impacts on students. Specifically, students overwhelming appreciated the cost savings they incurred, while some also noted that these cost savings had positive cascading psychological effects (e.g., feeling relief to not have to purchase an expensive book for once). Transformative impacts on student performance were indicated by improved (i.e., decreased) DFW rates compared to previous terms and through higher average scores on post-test. As this pre/post test has been used for several years to assess this courses Core IMPACTS learning outcomes, we were particularly pleased to see notable improvement on this measure of student success in the course. We elaborate on these measures and results below in section 3B.

* 1. *Describe lessons learned, including any things you would do differently next time.*

The main lesson and plan for improvement relates to reviewing and revising the plan for implementing UN Data Sheets into class (specifically in large face-to-face courses). The in-class time spent on having students work though these data sheets was greater than anticipated and may not be the best use of class time going forward. The team members plan to meet prior to the fall 2025 semester to brainstorm and design new ways of incorporating the UN Data Sheets into class, focusing on active learning strategies and possibly requiring students to spend more time outside of class preparing worksheets. This would free up some class time to allow students more opportunities for interactive engagement with each other to discuss what these data mean and how to apply them to a more comprehensive, critical analysis of people’s lived experiences and opportunities across the world’s regions.

* 1. *Describe any materials you created or revised/remixed that will be shared with the public. Include the* [*open license your materials will be shared under*](https://creativecommons.org/share-your-work/)*—for most materials, this will be an Attribution 4.0 License (CC BY) as required in the Grants Request for Proposals.*

We created two types of materials that will be made publicly available under an open license:

1. **UN Data Sheets**:  
   We developed a series of curated data sheets that draw on up-to-date United Nations datasets. These sheets are designed to align with course content and offer students a consistent, authoritative source for exploring global indicators and trends.
2. **Informational Guide for Textbook Chapters**:  
   We also created an informational guide to accompany each chapter of the primary textbook. This guide provides additional context, key discussion points, and suggestions for engaging with real-world data sources, enhancing both independent learning and instructor facilitation.

All materials will be shared under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0). This license allows others to copy, distribute, remix, and build upon the materials, even for commercial purposes, provided appropriate credit is given to the original creators.

The open licensing approach ensures that these resources will be accessible to a broad audience and can be adapted or expanded for use in a variety of educational settings.

# Quotes

*Provide three quotes from students evaluating their experience with the no-cost learning materials.*

* I do believe it would be easier to have the open-source course materials online than just the textbook, because you could easily forget to bring your book one day, or even leave it somewhere from studying. With the course materials being online, it helps to access the information when needed, as long as you have internet.
* It was nice not having to pay for a textbook and it was a different but good kind of learning. Students associate textbooks with learning or class work and using various articles felt more like research, which I find more intriguing.
* As someone who has parents that pays for school related things it feels good to not have them spend what could've been $100 on a book. Having open access released some of the financial burden that would have been present.
* Open-source course materials have significantly improved both the accessibility and affordability of my learning experience compared to traditional textbooks. Unlike traditional textbooks, which can be costly and often require physical purchase, open-source materials are freely available and easy to access online, allowing me to engage with the content without financial strain. This has made it much easier to stay on track with the course, as I don’t have to worry about the cost of materials. Additionally, the ability to access these resources from multiple devices has increased my flexibility in studying. The affordability and convenience of open-source materials have positively influenced my perception of the course, as I feel that the professor values making education accessible to all students, which enhances my overall learning experience.

# Quantitative and Qualitative Measures

## Uniform Measurements Questions

*The following are uniform questions asked to all grant teams. Please answer these to the best of your knowledge.*

**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: 292

* Positive: \_\_87\_\_\_\_\_ % of \_\_\_237\_\_\_\_\_ number of respondents
* Neutral: \_\_\_12.2%\_\_\_\_ % of \_\_\_237\_\_\_\_\_ number of respondents
* Negative: \_\_\_.08\_\_\_\_ % of \_\_237\_\_\_\_\_\_ 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?**

*Student outcomes should be described in detail in Section 3b.*

Choose One:

* \_X\_\_ Positive: Higher performance outcomes measured over previous semester(s)
* \_\_\_ 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?**

*Depending on what you and your institution can measure, this may also be known as a drop/failure rate or a withdraw/failure rate.*

15 % of students, out of a total 292 students affected, dropped/failed/withdrew from the course in the final semester of implementation.

Choose One:

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

## Measures Narrative

*In this section, summarize the supporting impact data that you are submitting, including all quantitative and qualitative measures of impact on student success and experience. Include all measures as described in your proposal, along with any measures developed after the proposal submission.*

*[When submitting your final report, as noted above, you will also need to provide the separate file (or .zip with multiple files) of supporting data on the impact of your Textbook Transformation, such as surveys, analyzed data collected, etc.]*

The survey collected responses from students regarding their course experience, demographics, and perceptions of open-access course materials.

Most students attended the course fully in-person (133 students), followed by fully online (76 students) and hybrid formats (29 students). Students were fairly evenly distributed between first-year (78 students) and second-year (86 students) standings, with smaller groups in third year (39 students) and fourth year or higher (34 students).

In terms of prior coursework, the majority (145 students) reported that they had taken no previous geography or regional studies courses, while 87 students had taken 1–2 courses. A very small number had taken 3–4 courses, and none had taken more than that.

Regarding first-generation status, 57 students identified as first-generation college students, while 175 did not. Most students anticipated earning an A (141 students) or B (78 students) in the course, with very few expecting lower grades.

The transition to open-access materials was well-received:

* A majority of students felt very well or extremely well informed about the transition.
* Most students agreed or strongly agreed with the decision to adopt open-access materials.
* Students rated the quality of open-access materials mostly as "good" or "excellent."
* Frequency of textbook use varied, with most students using it at least weekly.
* Technical difficulties were minimal, with the vast majority reporting no or only minor difficulties.
* Students found the materials easy or very easy to navigate.

Cost savings were highly appreciated:

* Most students were satisfied or very satisfied with the cost savings.
* The materials were seen as well-aligned with the course curriculum.
* A significant portion of students felt their learning experience improved due to the transition.

Faculty support was rated highly, with students feeling that the professor provided strong guidance in using the open-access materials. Many indicated they were likely or very likely to recommend courses using open-access materials to peers. Finally, students overwhelmingly believed that the transition positively impacted educational accessibility for students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.

Overall, the move to open-access materials was perceived as a success, offering benefits in terms of affordability, accessibility, and quality of learning experience.

In addition to the survey, we analyzed DFW rate data from spring 2025 and compared it to a previous semester (fall 2024 for one team member and spring 2024 for another). Results indicate that one team member’s DFW rate was significantly lower the semester of OER implementation (spring 2025) compared to spring 2024, while the other team member’s DFW rate remained relatively unchanged. Thus the first team member's significant decline in DFW rate accounts for the overall decline in DFW rates when all sections were combined (i.e., the positive impact reported above).

Lastly, we analyzed results of a 20 question pre-test/post-test that has been administered for the course for several years prior to the semester of implementation. As the primary assessment tool for this Core IMPACTS course, the same 20 question, multiple choice quiz is given the first and last week of the term, with faculty providing some type of incentive to encourage participation (e.g., making them part of the course grade or extra credit). For simplicity and comparability, we focused the analysis on comparing pre/post test results from the implementation semester to the last semester each team member taught the same course (i.e. the same semesters we used in the DFW rate comparison). For one team member, the average pre-test score was very similar (55-56) across the two semesters, while the post-test score was 5 points higher (90) for the implementation semester (spring 2025) compared to the previous semester (fall 2024). Thus the improvement from pre to post test was notable in the implementation semester and this improvement is entirely attributable to a higher post-test score in spring 2025 (as opposed to a lower pre-test score or a combination of both).

# Sustainability Plan

*Describe how your project team or department will offer the materials in the course(s) in the future, including the maintenance and updating of course materials.*

Given that our course content relies primarily on dynamic, publicly available data sources—such as regularly updated United Nations measures and other online materials—our team is well-positioned to ensure that the course materials remain current and relevant without the need for frequent manual revisions.

Moving forward, the project team will continue to offer the materials in their current digital format, drawing from these automatically maintained external resources. Updates to core datasets, indicators, and references will be seamlessly integrated into the course experience as the original sources are updated. This ensures that students engage with the most recent information without disruption.

The department will periodically review course links and resource pathways to ensure accessibility and functionality but anticipates minimal need for large-scale overhauls. Any structural or pedagogical enhancements to the course will focus on improving student engagement and learning outcomes, rather than updating the core content itself.

# Future Affordable Materials Plans

The positive reception of this transformation has led us to consider implementing open access materials in other courses, particularly because of the significant size of Georgia Southern’s first generation college students. In addition, survey results indicate that cost savings are not the only notable benefit that students gained from this OER transformation. Indeed, many students commented on the ensuing psychological benefit (i.e., relief) that accompanied the cost savings, which allowed them to focus better on the course requirements. Considering the prevalence of mental health challenges among today’s college students, including, but not limited to anxiety, we argue that concomitant psychological benefits of adopting open access materials should be considered.

# Future Scholarship Plans

*Describe any planned or actual papers, presentations, publications, or other professional activities that you expect to produce that reflect your work on this project.*

To further disseminate the outcomes and insights from this project, we are planning several professional activities:

**Presentation at the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) Conference**:  
We intend to present our project findings, focusing on the development and integration of open access materials to enhance student engagement and learning. The SoTL conference provides an ideal platform to share best practices and lessons learned with the broader academic community.

**Collaborative Publication**:  
We are working on a publication in collaboration with Dr. Meimei Lin, a colleague from our department who has developed open access resources for Physical Geography. This joint paper will highlight interdisciplinary approaches to creating and implementing open educational resources (OER) across different fields within the geography discipline.

**Possible Collaboration with Caitlyn Finlayson**:  
We also plan to approach Caitlyn Finlayson, the author of the open access textbook we utilized in this project, to explore the possibility of co-authoring an updated edition. This collaboration would ensure the textbook remains current and continues to integrate innovative OER-based teaching practices informed by our recent project work.

# Description of Photograph (optional)

*This is where a team can list the names of the people shown in this separately uploaded photograph, along with their roles, if applicable.*

*Team members in the photo (L-R): Dr. Amy Potter, Dr. Rob Yarbrough, and Dr. Helen Rosko*