Transcript:   
Tennessee Open Education Presentation, “The Z-Degree!”   
March 8, 2022: 10:00 AM

Presenter: Tracey Lee

(Ryan Korstange)

All right, we're going to begin. Uh, my name is Ryan Korstange, I'm a director of academic affairs here at, uh, THEC. Uh, and first of all let me just say thank you so much for taking the time out of your day to join us. We know everything is busy right now, uh, and we appreciate your interest and commitment to open education. Uh, Open Education Week is an annual celebration that's organized by OE Global, and it provides an opportunity for actively sharing and learning about the latest achievements in open education worldwide. Uh, at THEC we're really interested, and we're committed to increasing the number of Tennesseans with a post-secondary credential. We recognize that high textbook costs pose significant barriers to students, and that Open Education and Open Educational Resources remove those barriers and create student-centered, uh, current, and relevant, learning environments. And so, it's something that we're very interested in learning about and sharing throughout the state. Today we have the opportunity to learn about a Z-degree program at Motlow State Community College, and I'm not going to say anything more about it, because I don't - I don't want to steal our speaker's thunder. But there are 10 events this week. We had two yesterday, two today, and two each of the following days this week. Uh, 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. central, we're hosting webinars on a variety of open education or Open Educational Resources topics. I will post a link into the chat - just, uh, well I'll just do it right now, uh, that uh, includes information about the whole schedule, um, including uh the presentations that were yesterday. Uh, recordings of these events will come out next week sometime, and we'll distribute them um through various channels. You can find out more about open education and textbook affordability in Tennessee by joining our listserv - um that, uh - to join our listserv, email the address academic.programs.tn.gov. It's in the chat that I just posted. Um, and we'll add you to the listserv.

You can also keep track of open happenings in Tennessee by creating an account on the Tennessee Open Education hub, and there's a link to a document that leads you through the process of creating an account and joining the group, um, you need to join the group that's called 'Tennessee Open Education Information," and that will help you stay up to date with what we're doing. Okay, one final matter of logistics. Uh, this is a webinar format, uh, so when you have questions, please just feel free to type them in the chat. We don't have a Q&A for this proposal, we try - or this presentation, we kept everything together in the chat. Uh - we have, uh -I'll be monitoring the chat along with my colleague Julie Roberts. Uh, and so, we'll have time for questions at the end of the presentation, but as we're going feel free to type questions that you have into the chat. We'll notice those and we'll bring those up at the end, uh, during the question-and-answer period.

So, with that, I'm gonna mute my video and turn it over to Tracey for the rest of our presentation.

Thank you for being here.

(Tracey Lee)

All right. Good morning, everybody. I'm gonna share my screen here.

One second.

All right.

All right, I hope everybody can see this. My name is Tracy Lee and I'm an Assistant Professor of Business and Technology at Motlow State Community College.

And today we're going to talk about the Z-degree. So, OER at Motlow is not a new idea, um, we approx-- we currently have approximately 50 courses in OER, and I really think that that number has gone up a little bit. Uh, we had a big push, gosh, in the summer of '20, and a lot of our instructors across disciplines started to create OER courses. Especially in our general education courses. During that time, we created around 16 general education courses. So, this is not new at Motlow, and it's still growing, and we're looking forward to more OER courses being offered.

So, what is a Z-degree? Simply stated a program that has no additional cost for course materials. So, of course, that's textbooks and/or any type of software.

Uh, the idea of the Z-degree started around 2018, and we finalized it around 2019.

So, it's - it's still a concept for us that we're tweaking and trying to make better. But again, finalized around 2019.

So currently, uh we offer the Z-degree in two concentrations under the AAS in Business.

And the concentrations are the business office and entrepreneurship.

So, as with anything, uh, there is a little bit of a twist to the Z-degree, because we can only offer the Z-degree in the Adult College Express program - so, at Motlow we call this program ACE.

So, what is ACE? ACE is geared towards our adult learners and, uh, that's for 24 years and up. They do have to apply to get into ACE.

Now, we do make exceptions. And I put rare there because, uh - you know, we don't get a lot but every now and then we do have students that may not meet that age requirement, but they could be a good fit for the program. So, we do coordinate with the ACE coordinator to see - you know - if, if the student is, is a good fit or not. Um, but for those who are 24 years and up, when they go online and they, they apply they can be sent an automatic, uh, application, whereas - you know - if, if you don't meet that age requirement there is a conversation that has to be had with the student to make sure they are a good fit. Um, the population is mostly our busy, working adults.

So, the ACE courses are accelerated. Uh, it's an accelerated program, right.

So, the course is run in five weeks. Which of course, is different than our 15 - a full 15-week semester. Uh, the classes are a lot smaller. And uh - so pre-COVID, right -- we do pre- and post- COVID now.

Pre-COVID, uh, we were on-ground one night. Typically, I think it was like, five to nine-thirty.

Um, and I remember my classes, uh, see the last time I taught one on ground, I had like five in one room and then we had another campus that could zoom in, so we could all zoom in together. And so, overall, I think I had about six or seven students, um. So now, of course, um, we stay on-ground, but um, on ground, online too, so uh, we are trying to, of course, get our traffic back to be back on-ground a little bit more. Especially for the ACE courses. Uh, classes run in a two-year rotation and that's a very important um factor into the Z-degree.

Uh, the classes are pre-built, or the schedules are pre-built. And, if the student is able to follow the pre-built schedule, they will be able to graduate in two years.

So, when students are entered into ACE, they are considered to be in what we would call a cohort - right. But, uh, the cohorts are flexible, uh, because sometimes we do have students that may be allowed to enter into ACE, but maybe they just want to take a couple of classes. So, we will allow that to happen. Sometimes cohorts may be a group of three students and maybe they're all from a particular business and they want to stay together and kind of you know go through the program together. Um, but there is definitely some flexibility as to when, um, especially in fall and spring depending on when we're offering the courses. Uh, but the goal is for the students to stay on track. Again, so that they do meet uh the two-year graduation, uh, from the pre-built schedule.

Um, I want to show you, uh - or I need to go back for a second. So, I'm going to show you the next cohort schedule, but I'll probably do that at the end. But what I'm going to do is I'm going to show you, uh, the schedule that's been built starting for the group that comes in in 2022 and they should of course finish in 2024. But all of this of course is, is on the Motlow State website. Uh, if anybody would ever like to go out there and take a peek. But I'll come back to that again because I'll have to share my window on that.

So, how are materials kept Z? And I always say, the "Z" equals "zero." So, we're able to do that uh, in two ways. So, remember this is only for the ACE program, not the full 15-week uh, program. So, one way is the creation of the OER courses. So, those courses, of course, are created by faculty, uh, free ... free accessible materials within the course shell and they can use many different things as you know: articles, videos, open books podcasts, etc. The other way is that we work with our publishers and the publishers will provide, uh, the resource free of charge. So, that's why it was important -- uh that the, the two-year rotation, uh, is, is very important because they're only willing to do it, uh, for the one free -- for the one section for free, every two years. And that source could be a physical textbook, a digital book, or, or software.

So, course enrollment sizes of course, um ... So, a course for ACE, we typically call it block scheduling, and you'll see that when I share, uh, that schedule there. Uh they -- we do blocks, block one, block two, block three. Now just like any other schedule, the courses do have to make. So, there are times when, um, a course may not make. So, a minimum cap size for, um, an ACE course may depend on the discipline. So, for example, English - I believe it's around six students, and then for B &T [Business and Technology], it's typically eight to ten. And what happens is, uh, we may split the -- the coordinator may split the, the blocks up a little bit. Um and it just makes it a little bit easier for her to schedule. Um, a maximum cohort size would be 25, which is about the same size of a full 15-week course in a B&T course. So, in the B&T classes it now it can depend on the course the classroom but typically, a course cap is 25.

So, here's an example of, uh, my keyboarding course in 2020 compared to 2021. So, in fall 2020, uh, this was the blocks -- this is the cohort for ACE. And so, my first block of students I had six, second block seven, and block three was four. Now, in fall 2021, we didn't offer, uh, the ACE keyboarding, but we had two, uh, 15 -- full 15-week sections. Uh, they both - um they both - I should have said they were both full. One, one was full with 25, and the other one I think had 26 in it. So um, but still, you know - those sections were both larger than, um, the one ACE block.

So, some of the challenges, um, to the Z-degree. So, we talked yesterday about um faculty buy-in right (laughing).

Um, I like using this quote, "if it's not broke don't fix it," because as fa... as a faculty member, you know I could certainly, certainly understand why someone would not, uh, want to take the time to create an OER course. Especially if, you know, their class is going well, they don't have any complaints about the course materials, their pass rates are high, um, you know, why would I want to take that time if the only thing you can tell me and offer me is, "well, it's going to be a value to your students because they won't be charged any course materials"? You know, for some faculty that may not be enough - you know, may not be enough. It's not mandatory, there are other options out there, so you have all of these things you have to contend with, uh, with faculty. And I will say this, when I came in in 2018, um, the big push then was the [TBR] Digital Engagement Initiative (DEI). So, the courses under medical office were created using, um, DEI materials. Okay, so that's like your McGraw-Hill connect, uh, your Cengage MindTap. And we also had another program under our cyber defense that also really took on to the Digital Engagement, because it fit our programs.

So, you fast forward a little bit and we have to even bring in HIPs into the conversation - the High Impact Practices - because some of our classes were coded because we were using those digital tools. So, if I decide that I want to change some of those courses to, uh, an OER format here, you know, how is that going to impact you know what I've done under HIP? So, those are some of the considerations, um, that faculty across the campus have to consider, but definitely uh under the business and and tech side here. Um, so then, right after the DEI - uh you know - push, we had the OER push. So even - OER was still being talked about in 2018, it was almost like that was that new concept. But it was kind of quiet, right. And then we had that big push over the summer of [20]20, uh that really, um, started to pique a lot of interest. Um, now yesterday, I think the librarians mentioned in their, uh, session about money. Well, there - there's some money out there, um, at Motlow to develop OER.

So, there is a little bit of incentive, right. And then, of course, um, there's another grant out there.

Uh, but of course, with grants, you have to apply, you have to be able to, uh, meet whatever deadlines -you know - those experts... you know whatever they're expecting you to do, you know you have to meet those, uh, hurdles there. So, there is a little bit of money. Um, so I can't really say that that may be a challenge for us, but certainly, that is a thought that a faculty member would you know bring up.

Um, another challenge is just department collaboration, uh, to ensure that those resources remain free. Um, typically this conversation would be with the department chairs, uh, it may be the dean, and then also the publisher, uh, book reps. And that's important because you know the chair position is not a permanent position. You know this is a temporary assignment and, uh, you know, when I leave - I'm the current department chair for business and tech - so when I leave,

you know, someone else is going to come in you know - when - you know, the humanities chair leaves, someone else is going to come in. So, you have that revolving door there and if those conversations are, are not taking place, then you know the ball could potentially drop, and then you have the "oh my gosh, we - you know - we may have charged the students something and we should not have." So, uh, we just have to make sure that all of those boxes are checked um, you know, as the program of the Z-degree.

When students enter the... these programs, uh, that we're - you know - doing, you know, what we said we were going to do - telling them what we said we were going to do. Um, the ACE coordinator, she does a really good job, um, of again building those schedules and confirming with the departments that, uh, we will be able to have coverage for those courses. Uh, and when we do confirm, of course, um, you know, again, if that course does not make then, she has to go back to the drawing board and go back into the schedules to see when - you know - the students will be able to uh take those courses. Um, the book reps, uh, you have to be able to have a relationship, uh, with the book reps. And I know in business and tech, we - we do. Uh, but you know you still have to remind them sometimes about what's going on, and hope that you know when the courses roll around, it's that same book rep because that they will have - you know - an idea and remember, uh, what's going on. And then, of course, the other challenge is, again, we don't, um, we don't offer it in the full 15 week, and one of the reasons is because, of course, we wouldn't be able to, to comp, uh, you know a 25, we had three sections you know almost 75 to 100 students. That's a lot of money (laugh). So, we can't do that. And then, of course, another reason is because - we don't have - all of the full 15-week courses are not in the OER format.

Another challenge is time. Uh, if a faculty member decides they want to create the course in the OER format, you know, it's not a snap your finger, overnight, magical process. Uh, they have to - and if they're doing this, you know, solo, you know, they do have to go out and, and find the material that they're gonna put in the course shell. Now, you know there are other pieces to that because department chairs are charged with the book deadline. So uh, we have to be able to tell, um, you know, the academic side of the house and the bookstore - right - what books we're using, what format, etc. Uh, depending on when faculty decide they want to do the OER, you know, is, is really a key decision because you don't want them running into a situation where, you know, here comes fall and they have not finished their creation, and now they're forced to use whatever they used, you know, last fall (laugh). And now, you're into the new school year, how likely are you going to be switching the book in the spring? Uh, probably not.

So, it definitely takes planning on their side as well, so they're - they're not you know backing themselves into a corner. Because once they finish OER development, or any type of course development, us, it still has to be audited by them, uh, and then by the chair, and then by another dean, and another dean. So, you know, there's that rigmarole there. And then, finally they get, you know, payment and then we can release that - type of - that course shell. So, - it's, you know, it's, you know - it takes time. You know, everybody has, um, you know, there's no mandated schedule there, so I think, uh, the ownership is definitely on the faculty member as to hitting, you know, what they determine are those key deadlines.

So, our future plans. So obviously, we still want to continue to convert courses into the OER format.

But again. as time permits. Two, I think is really one of the most important ones. We need to continue to strengthen the collaborations, especially between the chairs and, and even the deans, uh, about the Z-degree and what needs to happen, uh, when these courses are coming around. Uh, for business and tech, I know one of the courses that's not currently OER, um, but falls into the Z-degree and also in our full 15 weeks - are - is ADMIN 1308, which is Office Procedure. So that is a course that, um, that's one of mine (laugh), that I definitely want to convert, um, to OER.

So, any questions? Uh - I want to - I actually want to share, um, I'm going to stop sharing, but I want to share again. I want to share the, um, ACE schedule real quick, so that you guys can get a look at it.

Let's see.

I want to share this.

All right, can you guys see the, the ACE schedule?

(Ryan Korstange)

Yeah, we sure can.

(Tracey Lee)

Okay, thank you. So, this is for the next cohort,

okay. And we use the term cohort a little bit loosely because, yes, the students can come in together. However, we know things happen, uh, and so who you started with may not be who you finish with, so to speak. So, this is the next, uh, starting in the summer semester of 2022. And so, this is where it gets a little bit challenging when you get into the courses, for, for the business side of the house, when you get into courses that are not, um, you know under business, because you know you are at the mercy of, you know, whoever the chair is or the departments, um, here in the other disciplines. And so, I'll just kind of scroll down so you can see.

But, look at the format here you have different formats, all of them are not you know zooming, the ones online, um ...So quite a - quite a few of the business are already developed in OER and then some of the Gen Eds are again also OER. But there are still some little outliers here. So, just to give you an idea.

And again, this is also on our website. Um, and also want to give you another example - this is a good example. So, you see this course here, ADMIN 2390 Capstone? So, the students that are in the AAS programs all have to take that course, right? So um, the course is only offered in the spring, in the full 15-week version, or courses programs. So, we know we get students that sometimes miss that course. So, an ACE [section], of course, is offered every two [years]. So, if the ACE, uh, rolls around in the summer and we have students that will need to graduate in the summer, or, they want to graduate in the fall.

If the ACE 2390 is available -- the coordinator will, um -- we will act with the coordinator to see if the students will be allowed to take it. So, this is a -- you know, again, one of those exception courses. Even though the student may not have ever been in the ACE program, we do allow things like that, of course, to serve the student and to make sure that they graduate on time.

(Ryan Korstange)

Okay, if you have any questions, feel free to type those in the chat. But, as you're thinking about the questions, the one that I - sort of - wanted to start with was, you mentioned that this zero textbook cost program is only in the ACE program, so can you talk more about -sort of - why you picked to only do the zero textbook cost, uh, program in the ACE program? And then also, sort of, how doing it in that in the ACE program has - sort of - bled over and changed, maybe, some of the offerings in the non-ACE part of the program?

(Tracey Lee)

So, we only do to the ACE, um, one because the class sizes are smaller.

Again, you may have a block of, you know, five (laugh), versus, uh, four sections of keyboarding that may have 75 students. So, if it's a course where we're going to have to approach the book rep and comp that cost, um -- they're, they're -- they're more willing to do it in our ACE program because they're not comping for, you know, as many students, versus, you know, again, 75 to 100 students in ECON 2100, you know (laughing), or so speak, like that. So it's -- it's, it's --easier on them if we have to go that route in ACE.

And then also, um, we have more, uh, our OER courses, um, we have a lot more under the ACE, than we do in the full 15 weeks.

(Ryan Korstange)

You mentioned, uh, time as one of the challenges to making OER conversion. Do you have a sense for what sort of the "average" time it takes to convert a course, uh, either in the five or the 15 weeks, from traditionally published materials to Open Educational Materials?

(Tracey Lee)

Well, it can all depend. Because, if there's already a source out there, um, that has, um, a book that the OER version ... that you can use, then that's going to be -- you can probably convert it a lot quicker than if you have to start from scratch and there's absolutely nothing. Um so, it - it depends definitely. You know, gosh. So, if you're -- if you're -- starting from scratch, you know that could probably take you a couple months, for sure. Something -- if you've already got a resource out there, you know the summer, maybe.

(Ryan Korstange)

Yeah, that makes sense. Uh yeah.

Okay, the last question that I have is, when you think about the ZTC program, do you have a sense for what percentage of the courses that are offered are OER courses versus, comped by the publisher courses?

(Tracey Lee)

That's a good question. Um, no. But I can find out. Yeah I can find that out.

So, if you can email me that one.

(Ryan Korstange)

Okay, yeah, no worries.

(Tracey Lee)

So then we can get that one. It's a good question.

(Ryan Korstange)

Okay, another question. Uh, so if you think about other institutions, Community Colleges, or other institutions adopting this model for similar programs, what do you think that would look like? Is it something that other schools could adopt? What would they need to do to make it happen? You know, how could other schools, sort of, make their own ZTC programs?

(Tracey Lee)

So, um, there are other Community Colleges that have it. I don't think there are any in Tennessee, but I did see some that are out there in other states. Um, man, you - you have to have some conversations with your deans, whoever's over the programs for sure. Um, you know, you are thinking about the time. What courses are you trying to convert to OER? Uh again, and you know - what all is needed when you teach that class? So, for example, I would love to convert keyboarding to OER, but one of the challenges that I find, is that, you know, how am I going to -- what tool are my students going to use, that I'm able to, kind of track -you know. So, those are the type of challenges that you may have, you know. Right now, I use a digital tool where I can go in look at the progress. But, you know, again, if I want to convert that to an OER version, I'm not sure how I would be able to do it and, and still have a quality course.

(Ryan Korstange)

You mentioned conversations with the dean. Um, what kind of things do you think would be worthwhile to bring up in that kind of a meeting?

(Tracey Lee)

First of all, the idea that you want to convert more courses. Again, course development is, uh is, on faculty. The dean's not going to do it for you (laughing). Um, but definitely that you're interested in, you know, converting more of your classes. One -- and one of the challenges there is that let's see you have OER format, you've got online format, and you also have on-ground format - so this is at Motlow. And not everybody is the same developer maintainer for those formats. So, Ryan, if you're, you, know the online developer and I'm the on-ground developer, you know, we may disagree on, you know, hey, well I like my textbook -- you say, hey, I want to do OER. Well,

it would be nice if we were on the same page because that would be a lot easier, you know. Of course, you know, once you do the conversion, you know, would either share ideas or at least agree on the resource and go from there.

(Ryan Korstange)

Yeah, that makes sense.

All right, there's a note in the chat ... uh  ...

(Tracey Lee)

And Julie has something I wanted to comment on, too. Um,

Oh, they could Julie. They could. Um ... Yeah, but of course, those conversations with the book rep would be, you know, important.

(Ryan Korstange)

Um, it's uh - Christine has a note in the chat that says, "the Z-degree, entrepreneurship emphasis, uh, is OER with the exception of two courses. So, it looks like -- three courses, sorry, including Intro to Business, so that's a - that's a - pretty good percentage.

Awesome, well, let me, uh, pause and give another - sort of - opportunity for folks to answer questions in the chat. Um so, if you have anything, uh, please post a question in the chat. But otherwise, let me just say - while you're, you're thinking - this has been a really interesting presentation, it's, it's, from my perspective it's interesting to think about the way that OER and um other free options joined together in a program, uh, a complete program, and to think about the benefits that provides to students.

Um, well maybe one other question that I had -- that I was thinking about -- is how do you guys market, uh, the zero textbook costs to students? Do you find that to be a significant, um, I don't know, marketing tool for students, to get them interested in the ACE version of your programs?

(Tracey Lee)

Um, maybe not necessarily just to get them into the ACE version, but -- we do when, they register for classes -- uh, we do -- there is a little note there, when they pick the classes, um, "zero textbook costs." I think that's what it says. And then, even for other class, "textbook required." So, they do see that, uh, when they go in to pick the, the course. And, and since the ACE coordinator would probably be the first point of contact for those students in the ACE Program, uh, that may be something that she says. Yeah.

(Ryan Korstange)

Awesome. Well, I think that is, sort of, the end of the questions that we have. So, uh, Tracey, just thank you so much for your time and for sharing your experience and expertise with us today. Uh, it's been, it's been, really fascinating to learn about this program and to think about how we might, uh, replicate stuff like this across Tennessee. Uh, just super interesting. So, thank you for your time. I think that I'll commit Tracey to this, uh on her behalf, but if you - if you - do have a question we'll hang out in the room here for another couple of minutes just to make sure we get all the questions answered. Uh, but otherwise I think that if you don't have any questions that remain, I think we're, uh, good to go. So, thank you all for attending. Thanks, Tracey.

(Tracey Lee)

Thank you. And please feel free to email me if you need me.

(Ryan Korstange)

Appreciate that.