Scenario 9 - The Case of the Algebraic OER

It's around noon, and you're cleaning up your lunch things in the staff lounge after a hard morning's work and a satisfying meal of riced with steamed vegetables. Nobody's around — apparently you eat earlier than your new colleagues — and so when your augment buzzes, you go ahead and accept the call.

It's from an adjunct faculty member in the math department named Luis Nunes, and they don't list pronouns or much other information on their public feed. "Hi Luis," you say. "What can I help you with?"

They speak, but no sound comes through.

"Sorry," you interrupt, "I think your mic is set to mute."

They frown, concentrate for a minute, then try again. "How's that?"

"Much better."

"Great. I was told you could help me find free textbooks for an algebra class I'm teaching next term. Is that correct?"

"OERs, you mean?"

They shrug. "Are those textbooks?"

"Sometimes! The acronym stands for Open Educational Resources. Basically, you can think of them as any kind of resource that can be used in a classroom setting — that includes textbooks, but there are other options, too. Anything from short chapters to videos with attached quizzes to, well, even educational games."

Luis looks skeptical. "And they're free? The department's supposed to be looking into reducing student costs for our basic classes, since they're required by so many majors and minors on campus."

"That makes sense," you say, trying to get back into their good graces. "And yes, OERs are definitely free. They're released under a special kind of license which gives people permission to read them."

That earns you a tight nod.

"But are they good quality? What if I can't find one that works the way I want? What if something in it is *wrong*?"

You smile. "They're written by professors and other experts, just like textbooks are. And if the way one approaches a subject is at odds with what you do in your class, you can usually modify it under the terms of the license. It depends, but..." You shrug, not wanting to overwhelm them with too much information. "There are lots of options for stuff like that, basically."

Another nod. "Okay, sounds good. So what now?"

What indeed?

Scenario 9 Resources

Cox, G., & Trotter, H. (2017). An OER framework, heuristic and lens: Tools for understanding lecturers' adoption of OER. *Open Praxis*, 151-171. https://www.learntechlib.org/p/181421/

Cox & Trotter discuss necessary factors for the adoption of OERs at any given institution, and by any given instructor. They suggest that approaching OER through a lens of institutional culture is the most

effective way to encourage faculty to adopt OERs for their courses if the infrastructure in the region supports their adoption.

OER Commons. (n.d.). *Open textbooks*. OER Commons. Retrieved November 25, 2020, from https://www.oercommons.org/hubs/open-textbooks

Hundreds of textbooks released to the public under an open license. The larger OER commons site also has other types of resources.

OpenStax. (n.d.). *OpenStax*. Retrieved November 25, 2020, from https://openstax.org/

OpenStax textbooks are free to use, and also include integrations with Blackboard, Canvas, and other popular learning management systems. OpenStax is run by Rice University, who also offers webinars on how to use their system.

University of Minnesota. (n.d.). *Open textbook library*. Retrieved November 25, 2020, from https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/

University of Minnesota's Open Textbook Library contains more than 800 openly licensable textbooks.