Z Degree Mississippi

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What is Z Degree?

Z Degree is a plan to promote the use of Open Educational Resources in higher education.

Z Degree started at Tidewater Community College in Norfolk, Virginia, in 2013.
What is Z Degree?

Daniel DeMarté, VPAA, and Linda Williams, a faculty member in the School of Business, supported teams of teachers to redesign their curriculum. Using funding from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, they hired Lumen Learning, a consulting group with OER expertise.
What is Z Degree?

Faculty worked in teams to reflect on course content and revise student learning outcomes. Then, with Lumen, they reviewed openly-licensed content in their disciplines. They took some content, edited some content, and authored some content.
What is Z Degree?

The result were courses with much greater alignment between the content and the outcomes.

And of course, student textbook costs dropped from an average of $290 to $5.
What is Z Degree?

But the real innovation came when Tidewater listed courses which no longer had textbook costs on their course schedules as “Z Courses.”

Then they cobbled together enough Z courses so that students could earn a two-year business associate degree. Thus, “Z Degree.”
How does Z Degree Work?

Model

1. Faculty review curricula
2. Consultant reviews existing OER with faculty
3. Faculty curate and publish OER texts
4. Course is marked as Z Degree
5. Students enroll in Z Degree courses until they achieve their degree
What is Z Degree?

Results:

• Student retention improved.
• Student success improved.
• Student evaluation of teaching improved.
• Student evaluation of course materials improved.
• Z Degree went state-wide.
What is Z Degree Mississippi?

A three-year plan to expand adoption of Open Educational Resources (OER) in Mississippi public higher education.
What is Z Degree Mississippi?

Invited participants include

**Eight public universities:**
- University of Mississippi
- Alcorn State University
- Delta State University
- Jackson State University
- Mississippi State University
- Mississippi University for Women
- Mississippi Valley State University
- University of Southern Mississippi

**Four community colleges:**
- East Mississippi Community College
- Itawamba Community College
- Northwest Mississippi Community College
What is Z Degree Mississippi?  
Cohort 1: Six Institutions, 22 Faculty, 15 subjects

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty Member</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Institution</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heather J Allen</td>
<td>Modern Languages</td>
<td>University of Mississippi</td>
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<td>Tara Blansett</td>
<td>Speech</td>
<td>Northeast Mississippi Community College</td>
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<td>Susan Grayzel</td>
<td>Sarah Isom Center for Women &amp; Gender Studies</td>
<td>University of Mississippi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rachel Johnson</td>
<td>Writing &amp; Rhetoric</td>
<td>University of Mississippi</td>
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<td>Rhona Justice-Malloy</td>
<td>Theatre Arts</td>
<td>University of Mississippi</td>
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<td>Claire Kimberly</td>
<td>Child and Family Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nicole Leach</td>
<td>Counseling, Education Psychology and Foundations</td>
<td>Mississippi State University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maureen Meyers</td>
<td>Sociology &amp; Anthropology</td>
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<td>Brittany Moore</td>
<td>English</td>
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<td>Amy Pardo</td>
<td>Languages, Literature &amp; Philosophy</td>
<td>Mississippi University for Women</td>
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<td>Paige Sasser</td>
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<td>Donna Spell</td>
<td>Language &amp; Literature</td>
<td>Delta State University</td>
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<td>Jason Solinger</td>
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<td>Leslie Stratyner</td>
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<td>Marc Watkins</td>
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<td>Brooke C White</td>
<td>Art &amp; Art History</td>
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<td>Ross Whitwam</td>
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<td>Amanda Williams</td>
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<td>John Yarber</td>
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Goals:

• **Degree Mississippi will unfold in three phases**
  - **Phase 1 (through June 2016)** Establish at least one OER course at each of 12 public institutions.
  - **Phase 2 (July 2016 – June 2017)** Expand OER adoptions at four universities and two community colleges, focusing on those schools with the most faculty champions and momentum. Develop new OER courses to achieve 50% completion of general education/associate’s degree pathway.
  - **Phase 3 (July 2017 – June 2018)** Complete the OER general education/associate’s degree pathway at two Mississippi schools, and continue expanding pathway at others. Create a plan to achieve a 4-year Z-degree pathway by 2020.
What is Z Degree Mississippi?

Funding

Z-Degree Mississippi is funded by a $200,000 grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and $80,000 in grant from the University of Mississippi College of Liberal Arts. These funds pay faculty and consultants. Once they are exhausted, faculty can choose to create a $5 course fee for future consulting.
Z Degree: What are They Saying?

Students

• “Z Courses”
• During my academic experience thus far, textbooks are a waste of money for most classes. There is just too much material that is not needed, I think the Z-course approach is much better because we were being administered only the relevant materials for that course. I wasn’t wasting time trying to decipher which material I needed to study for each exam. It also provided different learning styles. I was able to read, watch videos, and listen to the professor on blackboard to learn my course materials. I think that textbooks should be done away with. A professor that teaches solely out of the textbook is a bad professor in my opinion, because anyone can stay home and read out of the textbook.

Faculty

• “Some of the best teaching I have ever done”
• “Students are much more engaged”
• “I didn’t believe it at first. Then I went to the [Open Ed] conference.”
Z-Degree Mississippi
What will we learn?

• Will it work in the university environment?
• Will the course fee model be accepted?
• Will we be able to establish a true degree pathway – in the university or community college?
• Will our efforts be co-opted?