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**1. Please introduce yourself – include pertinent background information relating to the topic of your research project. Include your project title.**

The researchers, Julian Prior (Educational Technology) and Lindsay Tripp (Library), are non-instructional faculty members and co-leads of Open Langara, the College's Open Education Advisory Committee. They commenced this research project, tentatively entitled Open Textbooks and International Student Success: A Canadian Case Study, in 2017. Its purpose is threefold: (1) investigate differences in the cost, quality, and distribution of learning materials in the participants' home country and Canada, (2) explore international students' definitions of academic success, and (3) explore the perceived impact of open textbooks on academic success.

**2. Please discuss your educational background and your work experience that led you to taking on this research project. If possible, include a quote that helps define your interest in this project.**

The researchers have Master degrees in the Social Sciences, with required training in research methods. Increasingly, international students report arriving on campus feeling unprepared for the cost of living and studying in Vancouver, one of North America's most expensive cities. In recent years, Langara Library staff have noticed a spike in the number of international students borrowing required textbooks from the library's Course Reserve collection. The researchers wanted to explore the underlying causes for this trend.

**3. Please explain the concept for your project in terms that others not in your field would understand, like an executive summary.**

International students are students enrolled in a Canadian educational institution, who hold a visa or refugee status but do not have permanent residency in Canada. Priority Four of Langara's 2014-2019 Academic Plan focuses on international student enrolment. However, many international and domestic students face considerable financial pressures while living and studying in Vancouver, one of North America's most expensive cities. Langara Library has seen a spike in international students seeking course reserves, while other students report foregoing readings all together. Studies have found that course completion rates, "C- or better" grades, and enrollment intensity are higher among students using free open textbooks versus commercial textbooks (Fischer, Hilton, Robinson, & Wiley, 2015). Unlike commercial textbooks, which are protected by traditional copyright, open textbooks are free to reuse, retain, revise, remix, and redistribute for educational purposes. Drawing on data collected through one-on-one interviews, the researchers explore the impact of open textbooks on academic success as defined by international students at Langara.

**4. Identify goals and objectives for the project, and how the results may be used, perhaps to solve a problem, or to inform further research in that field.**

A number of studies have explored the impact of open educational resources (OERs) on student retention and academic performance. However, very few focus on the Canadian context. To the researchers knowledge, only a few quantitative studies of textbook use among post-secondary students have coded for visible minority status among participants (Jhangiani & Jhangiani, 2017; Florida Virtual Campus, 2016). However, students who identify as visible minorities may hold either domestic or international status. International students encounter different barriers than their domestic counterparts (for example, employment limitations set out in study visas). This exploratory pilot study is the first of its kind to focus on international students exclusively and represents a novel contribution to the field of open education research.

**5. Briefly explain the steps taken to conduct the project research, and the results found.**

After procuring ethics approval, the researchers recruited research participants from classes known to be using open textbooks. International students who were interested in participating were invited to contact the researchers directly by email. The researchers collected demographic data via a short online questionnaire (e.g. country of origin, mother tongue, number of hours worked per week). This was followed by a 45-60 minute one-on-one interview. In total, the researchers interviewed six participants and are currently analyzing the transcribed interviews for the mes.

**6. Who else was involved in this project? How did their involvement help? Ie: other faculty, students, community partners**

Thanks to generous RSAF support, the researchers were able to hire a student research assistant for the Spring 2019 semester to assist with interview transcription and initial coding of qualitative data. The researchers called on a Langara instructor with deep experience conducting qualitative research and an open education expert at a neighbouring post-secondary institution for input on research design.

**7. What were/are you hoping to get from conducting this research?**

International students pay far higher tuition fees than their domestic counterparts. As such, there is a popular notion that all international students are well-off. The researchers aimed to devise a research study that allowed a more complex narrative to emerge. Similarly, rarely are students given the opportunity to offer measures of academic success that move beyond the letter grade. In asking research participants to define academic success in their own

words, the researchers acknowledge that students are multi-dimensional beings, with divergent experiences, values, and aspirations.

International student enrolment is a priority expressed in the College's Academic Plan 2014-2019. However, little is said about international student retention and success. According to BCcampus, open textbooks have saved Langara students over \$700,000 since 2013. Findings from this study might encourage College Administration to improve funding for open education initiatives on campus, thereby improving access to affordable and effective education for international and domestic students alike.

**8. Can you share any personal stories that made this research experience memorable/valuable?**

This study stoked our student research assistant's interest in open educational resources and the open education movement more broadly. So much so that she independently secured a student sponsorship to attend an open education conference in Vancouver and participated in Applied Research Day outside of her work hours. Her enthusiasm for the project was truly contagious.

**9. Do you have any tips/suggestions/ideas for applying this research in your field? Or for others in their fields? Or for conducting future research of this kind?**

We have found it difficult to maintain momentum with this research project, while carrying out our assigned duties for the College. We greatly appreciate the monetary support provided by the RSAF, but would advise others for whom research is not a part of their regular role to ensure they have the capacity to give an applied research project the time and energy it requires.

**10. Any final comments? What are the "next steps" for this project? And for you?**

Over the summer months we plan to meet with the College's Qualitative Research Consultant, finish analyzing our data, write up our research results, and submit a paper to a peer-reviewed open access journal for consideration. While we have no plans to undertake a larger research project at this time, the LREB suggested that we consider broadening the terms of our research to include a domestic group as a comparator, or designing a study that includes international and domestic students who are not using open texts, as an appropriate comparison. These are all excellent projects for further consideration.