

**Using OAKTrust Open Access Resources to Enhance Holistic Student Development:
A Case Study of Using the Women in International Development (WID) Modules**

Robert Stirling, Sophia Thery, Erica Daley, & Theresa Pesl Murphrey

Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications

Texas A&M University

600 John Kimbrough Blvd., 2116 TAMU

College Station, TX 77843

(979) 321-5724

robert.stirling@ag.tamu.edu

swegeng2@tamu.edu

ericadaley@tamu.edu

t-murphrey@tamu.edu

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Introduction

Faculty are expected to support holistic student development while managing heavy teaching loads and limited resources. Many students enter classrooms limited in cultural awareness and a narrow view of global challenges. Open-access resources provide an innovative and cost-effective way to introduce interdisciplinary and real-world perspectives into coursework (Winitzky-Stephens & Pickavance, 2017). However, many faculty members are unaware of how to integrate this material effectively. OAKTrust, an open-access digital repository at Texas A&M University offers a wealth of scholarly materials, including the Women in International Development (WID) modules. These modules focus on the critical roles women play in development efforts worldwide and provide a structured, research-based approach to incorporating gender, economic empowerment, and communication themes into various disciplines. This case study demonstrates how WID modules were successfully integrated into an instructional design course, enhancing student engagement while reinforcing core academic skills.

How It Works

The process began with a comprehensive review of OAKTrust repository identifying material aligning with course objectives. A needs assessment was conducted, and topics were identified. The WID modules, comprising 14 standalone modules, were selected for their relevance and depth. Each module addresses critical concepts and theories of development areas where women play essential roles, such as food security, natural resource management, and economic development. While each module is stand alone, the concepts presented are consistent across the modules, allowing for learners to build upon and apply concept. The content is enriched with active learning strategies, real-world case studies, and interdisciplinary perspectives, making it a valuable tool for fostering holistic student development.

To ensure the materials were effectively integrated, collaboration with subject matter experts and instructional designers was essential. This team worked together to adapt the modules, ensuring they met the course's learning objectives and were accessible to all students. The adapted materials were then incorporated into the curriculum through various methods, including asynchronous assignments, supplemental readings, and group projects. This multifaceted approach allowed students to engage with the content deeply and from multiple angles.

The development of the online learning modules was facilitated through Articulate Rise 360, a web-based platform that allows for the creation of interactive, mobile-responsive digital learning experiences (Articulate Rise 360, n.d.). This tool was instrumental in transforming text-based content into engaging, multimedia-rich modules, incorporating elements such as quizzes, interactive case studies, and scenario-based learning activities. By leveraging Articulate Rise 360, the modules are accessible across various devices and learning environments.

To enhance accessibility and usability, we partnered with institutional librarians to host the final curriculum packages within the OAKTrust open-access repository. The library team provided guidance on open-access publishing requirements, copyright considerations, and formatting

standards, ensuring that the modules were freely available for faculty and students. Throughout the content development process, faculty and instructional designers worked iteratively, testing module functionality, and collecting user feedback to refine content delivery and improve student engagement.

By integrating open-access resources, expert collaboration, and interactive instructional design, we developed a scalable, adaptable model for incorporating global perspectives into diverse academic disciplines. The structured yet flexible approach allowed faculty to embed WID modules into existing courses without major curriculum revisions, demonstrating the effectiveness of open-access educational materials in promoting interdisciplinary learning and holistic student development.

Results to Date

The Women in International Development (WID) modules will be made available through OAKTrust, providing open-access educational resources to a broad audience. Once the modules have been curated in repository we will be able to collect usage data on these modules, including downloads and global usage by location.

Advice to Others

Most institutions of higher education utilize digital repositories like Texas A&M University's OAKTrust to store and share scholarly work. If you are unfamiliar with your institution's repository, we recommend reaching out to a colleague or librarian to explore its advantages. Depositing work in an institutional repository increases research visibility, ensures long-term preservation, and provides secure archiving for future reference.

For large-scale curriculum development projects, assembling a collaborative team that is open to feedback is essential. Library experts should be involved early to navigate authorship, copyright, and open-access guidelines, ensuring proper archiving and accessibility. To avoid administrative delays, teams should monitor timelines, set realistic deadlines, and maintain clear communication. By integrating institutional repositories, structured workflows, and digital tools, teams can enhance accessibility, impact, and long-term usability of their work.

Costs/Resources Needed

A key advantage of open-access resources like OAKTrust is that they are freely available, eliminating the need for funding. The integration of OAKTrust materials required collaboration among faculty, subject matter experts, and instructional designers, with graduate and undergraduate students assisting in content review. While financial costs were minimal, the project relied on faculty time, institutional support, and access to technology. Tools like Microsoft Teams facilitated collaboration. By leveraging open-access repositories, institutions can enhance learning opportunities sustainably and affordably, making interdisciplinary education more accessible.

References

- Articulate Rise 360. (n.d.). *Rise 360 Overview*. Articulate. Retrieved from <https://rise.articulate.com>
- Winitzky-Stephens, J. R., & Pickavance, J. (2017). Open educational resources and student course outcomes: A multilevel analysis. *International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 18(4), 35-49.