

Editor's Preface by Guest Editor

Linda Clark Ashar, J.D.

It has been my privilege and pleasure to serve as editor of this issue of *Journal of Online Learning Research and Practice* (JOLRAP). Profound thanks to past editor, Dr. Kathleen J. Tate, for her advice, and for contributing her Reflections in this issue; and to Daniel I. Gutierrez-Sandoval, Dr. Rahima Schwenkbeck, and Yingjie Wu of Policy Studies Organization, for their excellent work in producing this issue! I am beyond grateful to you all!

The Importance of Online Learning, Research, & OER

One learning has brought education to every doorstep. Open educational resources (OER) are now universally adopted in higher education. It is not only about cost. While OER eliminates the cost of traditional texts, of equal importance, they also provide global access to knowledge and are customizable for individual courses and projects (Darad, 2025). Because OER are freely accessible, they are readily updated and lend themselves to innovations for student-faculty collaboration and unique adaptations to curriculum (Swain & Pathak, 2024).

As the volume of OER continues to expand across disciplines and global contexts, the need for reliable, rigorous, evidence-based analysis is increasingly important for the integrity of online research and learning. The peer review process offered by academic journals like JOLRAP is critical to ensure that research is methodologically sound and transparent and meaningfully expands existing knowledge. We appreciate the scholarly work presented in the eight articles in this issue, contributing to scholarly, credible OER.

In This Issue

Afascinating contribution to OER showcased in this issue is NYU's replacement of a traditional art history textbook with the NYU Liberal Studies Global Image Gallery. In this study, researchers Appert, Packard, Squillace, & Schaffer present an example of an exciting, creative OER alternative. In another interesting study, Jhangiani & Clyne reprise a British Columbia project, affirming that more dynamics than mere cost of a textbook are critical to OER's importance in promoting equity in education. This insight is confirmed by Nischal, Mascarenno, & Poon's positive study of the use of an original, free OER biology lab manual in place of a costly commercial text.

Clobes, Benedetti-Coomber, Jenkins, and Flores's study of student perceptions of OER at a Hispanic-serving Institution (HSI) in Southern California, af-

firms the value of OER's economic value to students and also provides important insights for how to improve institutional use of OER. Further valuable insight into student perspectives of dealing with textbook costs is gained from Connolly, Paxton, Centi, and Shiferaw's comparison of a textbook versus an OER alternative in graduate nursing courses.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is a clear and present challenge ubiquitous in online learning. AI offers great prospects as well as potential pitfalls for developing educational materials. Two articles in this issue address timely AI concerns. Parker tackles important points for faculty and research. Smith discusses ethical issues and document analysis. Their articles contribute to an important volume of knowledge for assimilating AI in higher education.

The rapid expanse of OER and AI increases the burden on educators—administrators and faculty alike—to keep up with the demands of this progress. Walton & Johnson's article in this issue recognizes the correlating proliferation of professional development courses. Their study examines the effectiveness of the Professional Learning Online Module (PLOM) framework in the design of professional development.

Sincere thanks to this issue's contributing authors for their work and dedication to scholarship represented in the articles in this issue, and to our peer reviewers for their time and expertise! Please watch for future issues of JOLRAP.

Linda C. Ashar, J.D.

Guest Editor

References

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Editor's Bio

Dr. Linda Clark Ashar is a Full Professor in the Dr. Wallace E. Boston School of Business, American Public University System, where she teaches courses in business, law, ethics, artificial intelligence, and crisis management. She is a recipient of the School's Graduate Excellence in Teaching Award. Dr. Ashar obtained her

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