



January 13, 2021

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## Z-Degrees Report to the Legislature

MINNESOTA STATE

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2019 Higher Education Appropriations Act (2019 Minnesota Session Law, Chapter 64, Article 2, Section 39) included the following requirements for the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system:

*Subd. 2. **Requirement.** Three additional colleges must offer the opportunity to earn a Z-degree by the academic year 2020-2021. A college's course offerings for its Z-degree program must include at least two distinct courses in each transfer curriculum goal area and at least enough credits in each transfer curriculum goal area to complete the transfer curriculum package.*

*Subd. 3. **Open educational resource development.** (a) The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities must develop a program to offer a Z-degree at three additional colleges by expanding the use of open educational resources, including custom and open textbooks. The system office must provide opportunities for faculty to identify, review, adapt, author, and adopt open educational resources. The system office must develop incentives to academic departments to identify, review, adapt, author, or adopt open educational resources within their academic programs. (b) The programs and incentives developed under this subdivision must be implemented pursuant to faculty collective bargaining agreements.*

*Subd. 4. **Report.** The Board of Trustees of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities must submit reports by January 13, 2021, and January 12, 2022, to the chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative committees with jurisdiction over higher education. Each report must include (1) the number of courses transitioned to using an open textbook resulting from the programs in this section, and (2) the total amount of student textbook savings resulting from the transitions.*

Minnesota State created four additional zero-textbook-cost associate of arts degrees (Z-degrees) by the academic year 2020-2021 and thus achieved the legislative requirement to create at least three additional Z-degrees by the academic year 2020-2021.

## Fiscal Year 2020

Minnesota State offered six (6) colleges the opportunity to convert associate of arts degrees to Z-degrees to ensure compliance with [SF2415](#). Four colleges began offering Z-degrees in the fall of 2020, and two more will provide Z-degrees by the fall of 2021.

- (1) Anoka Ramsey Community College (Fall 2020)
- (2) Mesabi Range College (Fall 2020)
- (3) Northland Community and Technical College (Fall 2020)
- (4) Lake Superior College (Fall 2020)
- (5) Century College (Fall 2021)
- (6) Minneapolis Community and Technical College (Fall 2021)



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When all six colleges finalize their Z-degree portfolios, Minnesota State projects that students may save \$1,580,450 in textbook costs per year.

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The Z-degrees at these six colleges comprised unique courses, offered in a total of 718 course sections during 2020-2021. These courses require no textbooks or have zero-cost textbooks. The colleges converted some of these courses to zero-textbook cost courses before this mandate. However, the legislature's additional funding allowed each of the colleges to complete the remaining courses to offer Z-degrees. When all six colleges finalize their Z-degree portfolios, Minnesota State projects that students will save up to \$1,580,450 in textbook costs per year.

## Fiscal Year 2021

Three (3) more colleges are working on Z-degrees in fiscal year 2021. The completion of these Z-degrees will bring the total to ten Z-degrees by the fall of 2022. Two (2) additional colleges are exploring the opportunity to begin a Z-degree, and four (4) colleges are currently working on expanding their Z-degree offerings.

## System Office and Legislative Support

Through the collective work of the system office and the colleges, Minnesota State has successfully built upon existing efforts to expand the use of open educational resources (OER), paving the way for six additional Z-degrees to be offered by Fall 2021. During our OER expansion efforts, Minnesota State continued to prepare and support faculty, staff, libraries, etc., which proved instrumental in Z-degree development's success. Finally, the state legislature's financial support was critical to Z-degree development's success. Future financial support will ensure that Minnesota State colleges can continue to explore, implement new, sustain, and expand existing Z-degree opportunities. Minnesota State strongly believes this support is critical to ensuring equitable access, student success, and degree attainment.

In addition to the information included below, additional information about open educational resources and Z-degree for FY20 and FY21 can be found on <https://minnstate.edu/admissions/oer.html>. This video also shows the impact of Z-degrees on students: <https://youtu.be/Xfc5hRzZ1Sw>.

## Z-degree Efforts

Z-degrees are complete associate of arts degree programs that exclusively use open educational resources (OER), open textbooks, or zero-cost course materials. As a result, students can complete these programs without incurring any cost for textbooks.

Minnesota State has been building OER awareness, skills, and abilities across the system and at local campuses for six to seven years. These efforts have created a foundation for the use of OER and furthers readiness to accelerate OER creation, adaptation, and adoption (see Figure 1).

## Definitions

**Adaptation:** Faculty modify an existing OER for use in a course. Openly licensed materials allow faculty to modify OER to meet the needs of their course.

**Adoption:** Faculty adopt OER for use "as is." Adopting is the simplest way of including OER in a course, and the least time-intensive.

**Creation:** Faculty create and openly license course materials. Creating OER allows faculty to develop high-quality OER for a subject that does not exist or does not meet faculty needs.

**OER:** Teaching, learning, and research materials that are either (a) in the public domain or (b) licensed in a manner that provides everyone with free and perpetual permission to engage in the 5R activities – retaining, remixing, revising, reusing, and redistributing the resources.

**Openly licensed educational resources:** Teaching, learning, and research resources that reside in the public domain or have been released under a license that permits their free use, reuse, modification, and sharing with others. Digital openly licensed resources can include complete online courses, modular digital textbooks as well as more granular resources such as images, videos, and assessment items (<https://tech.ed.gov/open/>).

**Zero-cost course materials:** Zero-cost course materials constitute any variety of educational content that has no direct cost to students, removing barriers to access and improving students' opportunities for academic success (<https://digitalllearning.ucf.edu/ilab/aim/zero-cost-materials/>).

**New to OER? OEN Webinars**  
Open Education Network Webinars introduce OER, creative commons licensing, and the work with the Open Textbook Library. Minnesota State faculty and staff participating in these webinars may review an open textbook in the Open Textbook Library and receive a \$200 stipend once the review is completed.

Sept. 30, 2020	2:30 - 4:00 pm	<a href="#">Register</a>
Nov. 16, 2020	2:30 - 4:00 pm	<a href="#">Register</a>
Jan. 27, 2021	9:00 - 10:30 am	<a href="#">Register</a>
March 22, 2021	9:00 - 10:30 am	<a href="#">Register</a>
May 17, 2021	2:30 - 4:00 pm	<a href="#">Register</a>

**New!** All Minnesota State campuses are members of the Open Education Network as an **Allied Institution**.  
What does that mean for you?  
Membership is from July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021.

**OER Librarian's Workshop Day**  
The 4th Annual OER Librarian's Workshop Day has been reconfigured into a virtual format and presents two entry points for engagement based on background knowledge and experience in OER:

**New to OER?** **OER Discovery and Introduction to Advocacy**  
Friday, September 18, 2020 | 8:30 am – 12:00 pm  
[Register](#)

**OER Next Steps: Advocacy and Integration**  
Friday, October 9, 2020 | 8:30 am – 12:00 pm  
[Register](#)

**Creative Commons Certificate**  
Minnesota State will support 10 seats for the CC Certificate for Educator or Librarian track of the CC Certificate. **Deadline is September 7, 2020.**  
Already certified? Join the [Creative Commons Community](#)

**OER FAQ**  
Get answers to commonly asked OER questions.

Oct. 7, 2020	11:00 am - 12:00 pm	<a href="#">Register</a>
Nov. 23, 2020	11:00 am - 12:00 pm	<a href="#">Register</a>
Feb. 3, 2021	11:00 am - 12:00 pm	<a href="#">Register</a>
March 29, 2021	11:00 am - 12:00 pm	<a href="#">Register</a>
May 24, 2021	11:00 am - 12:00 pm	<a href="#">Register</a>

**Koffee with Karen**  
Koffee with Karen: OER Community Conversations are virtual conversations to share, discuss, and learn from colleagues in the OER community, focused around a topic of interest.

October 14, 2020	3:00 - 4:00 pm	<a href="#">Register</a>
★ Topic: What is an OEN Allied Institution?		
December 2, 2020	3:00 - 4:00 pm	<a href="#">Register</a>
February 24, 2021	3:00 - 4:00 pm	<a href="#">Register</a>
April 7, 2021	3:00 - 4:00 pm	<a href="#">Register</a>

**OER Learning Circles**  
Collaborate via facilitated weekly meetings and a D2L Brightspace Course with other Minnesota State faculty who are committed to redesigning courses around OER or creating OER materials to help eliminate textbook costs. The equivalent of .5 RCE is available to participating faculty.

<b>Fall 2020 Cohort</b>	<b>Spring 2021 Cohort</b>
Sept. 28 - Dec. 7, 2020	Feb. 22 - May 2, 2021
<a href="#">Apply by August 26, 2020</a>	<a href="#">Apply by Jan. 22, 2021</a>
<b>Summer 2021 Cohort</b>	
May 17 - June 20, 2021	
<a href="#">Apply by April 16, 2021</a>	

**OER at Minnesota State**

- OER Community Site** - The location for Minnesota State faculty and staff to find OER resources, news, and information on Z-Degrees, Opendora, OER guides, and more!
- Opendora** - Access, load, and share OER materials.
- NED Events Calendar** - Find all these events and other OER opportunities added throughout the year, including [webinars!](#)
- Twitter** - Follow us @[MinnStateOER](#)

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Figure 1 - System Office Sponsored OER Activities

The State of Minnesota legislature provided \$500,000 in funding for at least three Minnesota State colleges to offer Z-degrees by academic year 2020-2021. This funding was split, awarding \$250,000 in fiscal year 2020 and \$250,000 in fiscal year 2021. The funding went toward faculty creating, adopting, or adapting OER textbooks in courses directly related to a Z-degree. There was strong interest in the Z-degree opportunity, so Minnesota State provided matching funds to expand the Z-degree efforts. The funds contributed by the Academic & Student Affairs (ASA) division totaled \$390,000 in fiscal year 2020 and \$175,000 in fiscal year 2021.

## Fiscal Year 2020 (Z-degree FY20)

The Minnesota State system office invited colleges within the system to submit an interest application as the first step to participation in the Minnesota State Z-degree FY20 project. The system office selected participating campuses from the pool of ten (10) applicants based upon responses provided in the following readiness categories:

- The Readiness of Campus Personnel
- Structural Readiness
- Cultural Readiness
- Current Open / Zero-Cost Textbook (ZTC) inventory
- Proposed Z-degree and Course Sequence

### Z-degree Large Grant Awards

Minnesota State awarded six colleges \$100,000 each to fund and support college completion of a Z-degree.

1. Anoka-Ramsey Community College
2. Century College
3. Lake Superior College
4. Mesabi Range College
5. Minneapolis College
6. Northland Community and Technical College

### Z-degree Small Grant Awards

Funding did not allow for all colleges that applied to receive the large grant award. However, Minnesota State also wanted to ensure that remaining colleges maintained momentum in working toward Z-degrees. The four colleges not receiving the large grant received \$10,000 each to continue foundational work toward a Z-degree.

1. Central Lakes College
2. Hibbing Community College
3. Inver Hills Community College
4. Minnesota West Community and Technical College



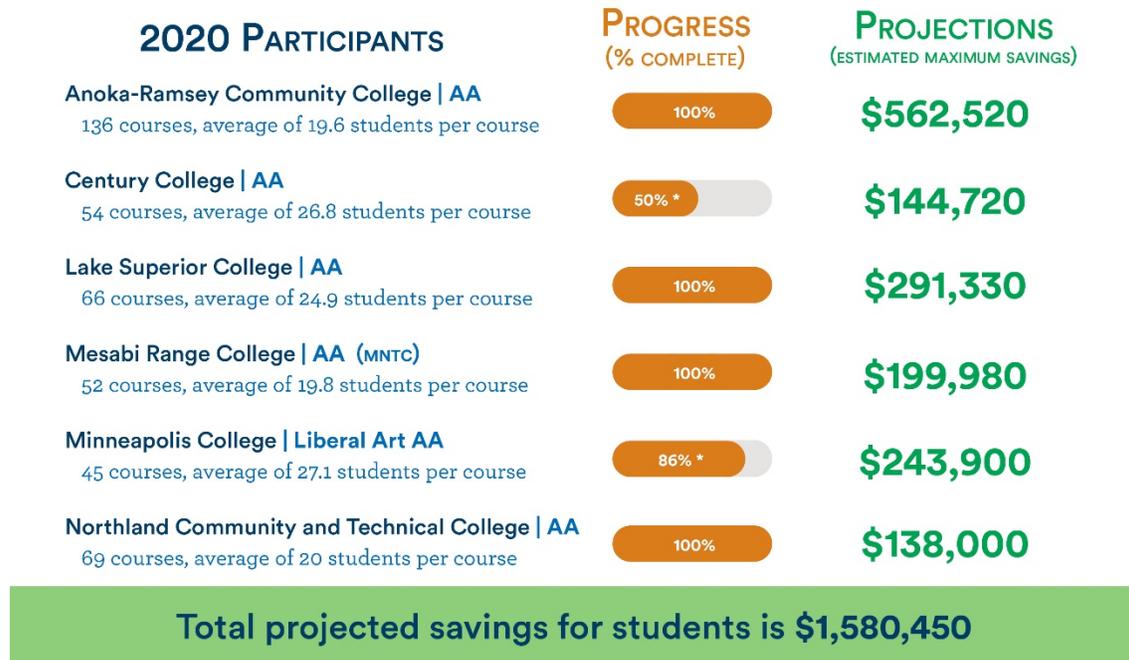
Figure 2: FY20 colleges and campuses funded for Z-degree (large grant) or preserving OER momentum (small grant)

## Status

Four of the six colleges began offering Z-degrees in the fall of 2020. The remaining two colleges are on target to offer a complete Z-degree by the fall of 2021.

# Z-DEGREE PROJECT

## ZERO TEXTBOOK COST DEGREES



\*Z-degree will be offered in Fall 2021 | Updated: 12/16/2020 | [www.MinnState.edu/OER](http://www.MinnState.edu/OER)

**Table 1 - Number of courses and sections offered in the Z-degrees**

Institution	Z-degree	# of courses	Sections	Courses Converted	Avg Students per Course	Projected Yearly Cost Savings
Anoka-Ramsey Community College	AA	136	287	108	19.6	\$562,520
Century College	AA	54	54	0	26.8	\$144,720
Lake Superior College	AA	66	117	66	24.9	\$291,330
Mesabi Range College	AA (MNTC)	52	101	52	19.8	\$199,980
Minneapolis College	Liberal Arts AA	45	90	39	27.1	\$243,900
Northland Community and Technical College	AA	69	69	68	20	\$138,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>422</b>	<b>718</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>23.0</b>	<b>\$1,580,450</b>

The "courses converted" column includes the courses that the college needed to convert to zero-textbook cost courses in order to offer a complete Z-degree.

## Fiscal Year 2021 (Z-degree FY21)

To create additional Z-degree offerings and expand current Z-degrees, the Minnesota State system office also invited colleges within the system to submit an interest application to receive fiscal year 2021 funding. The system office selected participating campuses from the pool of nine (9) applicants based upon responses provided in the following readiness categories:

- The Readiness of Campus Personnel
- Structural Readiness
- Cultural Readiness
- Current Open / zero-cost textbook inventory
- Proposed Z-degree and Course Sequence

Z-degree FY21 provided the opportunity for campuses to explore, implement, or expand existing Z-degree efforts:

1. **Explore** – Prepare a foundation for Z-degree development. Activities may include:
  - Faculty development
  - Open textbook exploration and review
  - Building open textbook capacity in the transfer curriculum
  - **Funding up to \$25,000**
2. **Implement** – Create, finalize, and implement a *new* Z-degree. Activities may include:
  - Course development for Z-degree with at least two distinct courses in each transfer curriculum goal area and at least enough credits in each transfer curriculum goal area to complete the transfer curriculum package
  - Ability to offer a Z-degree for Fall of 2022
  - **Funding up to \$100,000**
3. **Expand** – Increase the number and type of courses offered in an *existing* Z-degree. Activities may include:
  - Add courses or course sections
  - Increase the number of faculty using zero textbook cost materials in a course already part of an existing Z-degree
  - **Funding up to \$25,000**

## Z-degree Exploration Awards

1. Minnesota West Community and Technical College
2. Saint Paul College

## Z-degree Implementation Awards

1. Hibbing Community College
2. Minnesota State Community and Technical College
3. St. Cloud Technical and Community College

## Z-degree Expansion Awards

1. Century College
2. Lake Superior College
3. Mesabi Range College
4. Northland Community and Technical College

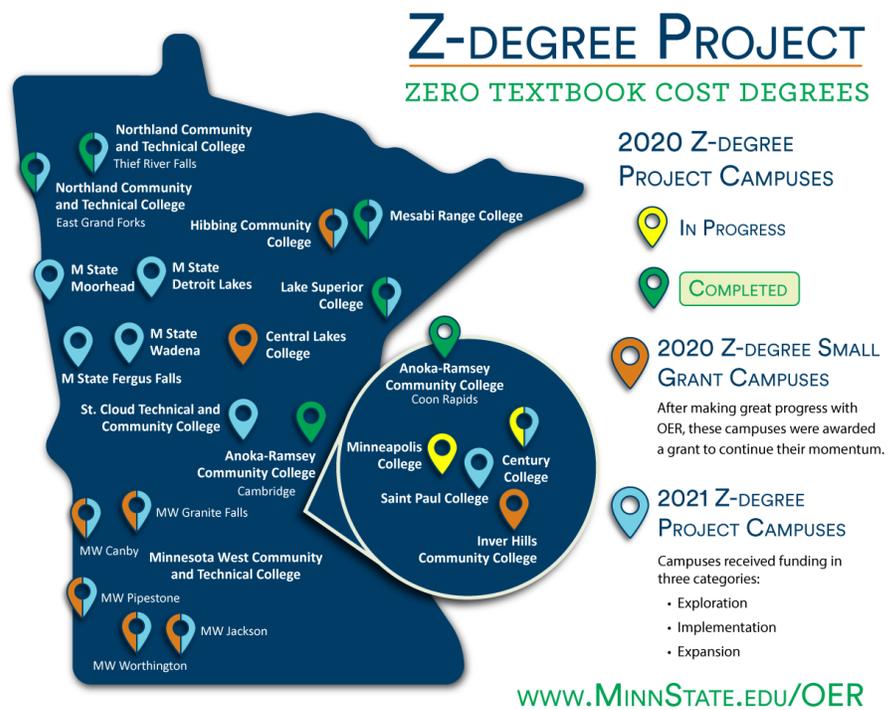


Figure 4 - Expanding Z-degrees in fiscal year 2021

## Conclusion

Minnesota State achieved and surpassed the legislative requirement to create at least three additional Z-degrees by the academic year 2020-2021. The process allowed Minnesota State to build upon existing OER efforts, and resulted in the implementation of four new Z-degrees in the fall of 2020, with two additional Z-degrees being added in the fall of 2021. Minnesota State efforts to prepare and support faculty, staff, libraries, etc., during earlier OER efforts proved instrumental in the success of Z-degree development. Finally, the state legislature's financial support was critical to the success of Z-degree implementation. Future financial support will ensure that Minnesota State colleges can continue to explore, implement new, sustain, and expand existing Z-degree opportunities. Minnesota State strongly believes this support is critical to ensuring equitable access, student success, and degree attainment.