2025 OER Champion Awards include first student recipient[1]

The Office of Academic Affairs and the Open CU Committee recently honored five outstanding individuals with the 2025 OER Champion Awards, recognizing their commitment to creating and using open educational resources (OER) to improve student learning and reduce costs.

Each honoree received a $1,200 award and was recognized by President Todd Saliman at the awards presentation March 17 at 1800 Grant St.

This year also marked a significant milestone with the introduction of a Student OER Champion Award, highlighting the role students play in advancing open education.

In addition to celebrating the winners, the event also recognized the five years of continued state funding of the Open CU Initiative through the Colorado OER Grant Program. Since 2018, these grants have yielded a more than tenfold return in student savings, demonstrating the cumulative impact of OER on affordability and accessibility.

2025 CU OER Champions

CU Denver

Susan Stirrup, Instructor, Chemistry

Susan Stirrup was recognized for adopting an OpenStax OER textbook for a required Chemistry for Engineers course, eliminating the need for students to purchase a $200 commercial textbook. This benefits mechanical, civil and electrical engineering majors who likely won't need a chemistry textbook beyond the course. By integrating the OER text into Canvas, Stirrup provided students with assessment tools and bilingual (English and Spanish) access to the material. She also serves as co-chair of the campus OER committee and is a vocal advocate for open education at CU Denver.

CU Anschutz Medical Campus

Kim Paxton, Associate Professor, College of Nursing

A pioneer in OER, Kim Paxton has not only adopted and created open resources but also conducted a study on their effectiveness. In a controlled comparison of commercial vs. OER textbooks in a health promotion class, 66% of students preferred the OER version, citing it as more essential to their learning. Paxton authored an OER textbook after years of dedicated effort, saving each student $160. Accepting Paxton's award was Catherine Jankowski, a nursing colleague and contributing OER author.

UCCS

Dan Driscoll, Associate Professor, School of Business

Since 2018, Dan Driscoll has been a driving force behind OER at UCCS, adopting OpenStax's Macroeconomics textbook and developing Measuring the Macroeconomy, shared on Canvas Commons. A founding member of OpenCU who is celebrating five years of participation, Driscoll inspired his department to adopt OER for all macroeconomics courses at UCCS. Survey data from the OER SUCCESS Program showed a 95% approval rating from students, who appreciated the cost savings, accessibility and clarity of the materials.

CU Boulder

Michael Klymkowsky, Associate Professor, Biology

Michael Klymkowsky was recognized for co-creating the CLUE (Chemistry, Life, the Universe and Everything) curriculum, an OER-based learning framework that promotes reasoning over memorization. CLUE, which incorporates AI-driven learning tools to assess student understanding and enhance engagement, has had a national impact, improving learning and inclusivity for students from diverse backgrounds. Besides being implemented in CU Boulder's MCDB courses, CLUE has been used at Michigan State (4,500 students annually) and the University of Minnesota (3,400 students annually).

Student OER Champion

Jamie Cronin, Medical Student, CU Anschutz

The inaugural Student OER Champion Award was given to Jamie Cronin for developing a 3D model of the brain, providing an innovative, free study tool for medical and dental students and, as with all OER, openly accessible to anyone. The model[2] is downloadable and 3D-printable, increasing access to anatomy education for low-income schools. Cronin's creation, which enhances student learning by visualizing complex 3D anatomical relationships, has been integrated into four courses across CU Anschutz's medical, dental and graduate programs.

The Colorado OER Grant Program remains state-funded through 2027, ensuring ongoing support for the development and implementation of open resources.

For more information on how to get involved in OER, visit the Academic Innovation Programs Open CU website[3]. [4]

Sundance selects Boulder for film festival – beginning in 2027 [5]

UCCS earns First Generation-Serving Institution Designation[6]

CU Denver hosts event on the impact of W.E.B. Du Bois [7]

4:3 intermittent fasting outperforms daily calorie restriction in weight-loss study[8]

Rifkind appointed dean of the College of Architecture and Planning [9]

Javernick-Will receives ASCE Peurifoy Construction Research Award [10]

Krakowiak on the psychological and social effects of media [11]

Medical breakthrough: UCHealth patient first in the US to receive groundbreaking Parkinson's treatment[12]

BRT construction has made Colfax a mess. But early data shows it's safer, too[13]

'You can't stop this work or you go backwards,' Colorado HIV researchers whose federal funding is canceled say AIDS deaths will increase[14]

Links
[1] https://connections.cu.edu/spotlights/2025-oer-champion-awards-include-first-student-recipient[2] https://sketchfab.com/3d-models/brainstem-nuclei-with-cerebral-vasculature-9074d860374e458c9537260a475270ca[3] https://www.cu.edu/open-cu[4] https://connections.cu.edu/sites/default/files/2025_04-03_oer_info-graphic.png[5] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/sundance-selects-boulder-film-festival-beginning-2027[6] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/uccs-earns-first-generation-serving-institution-designation[7] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/cu-denver-hosts-event-impact-web-du-bois[8] https://connections.cu.edu/stories/43-intermittent-fasting-outperforms-daily-calorie-restriction-weight-loss-study[9] https://connections.cu.edu/people/rifkind-appointed-dean-college-architecture-and-planning[10] https://connections.cu.edu/people/javernick-will-receives-asce-peurifoy-construction-research-award[11] https://connections.cu.edu/people/krakowiak-psychological-and-social-effects-media[12] https://connections.cu.edu/itn/medical-breakthrough-uchealth-patient-first-us-receive-groundbreaking-parkinson-s-treatment[13] https://connections.cu.edu/itn/brt-construction-has-made-colfax-mess-early-data-shows-it-s-safer-too[14] https://connections.cu.edu/itn/you-can-t-stop-work-or-you-go-backwards-colorado-hiv-researchers-whose-federal-funding-canceled