

## OEGlobal 2021 – Open Education Influencers Extended Abstract

### Who are the OEIs at Nelson Mandela University?

OpenEdInfluencers are trained and strategically deployed student advocates in Open Education, active across multiple campuses at Nelson Mandela University. OEIs research student experiences with textbooks and with OER and assists educators with finding open materials to use in teaching and learning.

The main objective of an OEI is to increase awareness of Open Educational Resources (OpenEdInfluencers@MandelaUni, 2020). The OEIs have been working closely with the writing respondents of the Academic Literacies Writing Programme (ALWP) by setting activities to find Open resources for sharing with students who approach them for academic writing support. These activities encourage the Academic Literacies Writing Programme team to find and compile Open resources for addressing challenges students have with academic writing. In this manner, the OEIs can improve access to educational material while assisting others with their journey of sharing and engaging with Open Educational Resources.

### Becoming an Open Education Influencer (BOEI)

#### What is BOEI?

“BOEI is an informative and practical, fully online training course that supports influencers of and for Open Education. The BOEI course aims to support pathways for individuals and groups wishing to influence decision-makers, and who want to affect decision-making and practices through direct actions in Open Education” (OpenEdInfluencers@MandelaUni, 2020).

#### Taking BOEI online

In 2020 the OEIs shared their experience developing the BOEI course and how they succeeded with online collaboration, despite the difficulties presented by the national

lockdown. This year the Open Education team at Nelson Mandela University took BOEI online and started sharing the course at the university.

The ALWP team was the first to complete the course and provide feedback on the challenges they had completing BOEI. The course went under further review before being ready for users to engage. By the middle of February, the BOEI course was online, and the OEIs engaged with the first cohort.

The OEIs welcomed a new member to the team in 2021 who will share her experience in being introduced to Open and sharing OER. In addition, the 2021

OEI cohort will share how they have been sharing Open at their university. In this session, the OEIs will share the successes achieved and the challenges experienced in taking BOEI online. Participants can expect an interactive session where recommendations are welcome for further success in sharing Open.

### Peace Jam with BOEI

In March of 2021, the OEIs assisted the Peace Jam South African team in sourcing Open materials that would be best suited for a course currently under development. The course is aimed at peacebuilding within high-risk communities in South Africa. Once completed, the course will provide the participants with the tools they need to engage with and initiate high-impact work within high-risk communities to bring about change. Ultimately, the course is a call to action to address the roots of violence in schools and communities alike. The course will include the following themes:

- Conflict resolution
- Racial Equity
- Anti-bias education
- Peacebuilding Strategies
- Facilitation.

### Testimonials about BOEI

“I recently joined the OEIs, and I am a writing respondent with the ALWP. From assisting with the editing of the course and being one the first to complete it, I have seen first-hand how much effort and passion have been put into this course. I recently submitted my Master’s dissertation in public law dealing with the rights and entitlements and the challenges experienced by female asylum-seekers in South Africa. BOEI resonated so closely with my research, particularly Ubuntu and the Sustainable Development Goals, which articulated some of my research findings. I am so excited to be an OEI and to be part of a bigger purpose. I can’t wait for more people to learn about Open!”

- Molya

“I am part of the team who developed the BOEI course. My biggest role in the development of BOEI was sourcing openly licensed content and assisting with generating activities and assessments for our modules. Once the course was online, the OEIs were the first to complete the course while providing feedback on areas of improvement for content and technical glitches. Seeing the course online for the first time gave me a sense of accomplishment and pride in the work done since 2018 with our first OEI team. That sense of accomplishment grew as more people

took the course. I am so excited for BOEI to reach thousands as it has the potential to equip and empower so many people.”

- Kelly