



For Immediate Release

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## **ISKME Calls on White House to Open Up Access to Federally Funded Educational Resources**

*Joins broad coalition in urging Administration to make OER part of next Open Government National Action Plan*

Half Moon Bay, Calif. — Today, the Institute for the Study of Knowledge Management in Education (ISKME), along with a broad coalition of more than 90 education, library, technology, public interest, and legal organizations, called on the White House to take administrative action to ensure federally funded educational materials are made available as Open Educational Resources (OER) that are free to use, share, and improve.

The call comes in response to the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy's (OSTP) request for ideas to strengthen the U.S. Open Government National Action Plan, which is currently under development. The executive action envisioned by the coalition would build upon the Administration's strong leadership in advancing public access to publicly funded resources with a strong Executive Branch-wide policy for the open licensing of educational, training, and instructional materials created with federal funds.

“Open educational resources are an increasingly essential part of learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century classroom, which require that students have unlimited access to knowledge and can apply what they learn,” said Lisa Petrides, CEO of the Institute for the Study of Knowledge Management in Education (ISKME), which manages OER Commons, one of the nation's largest libraries of open education resources. “Generous public investment and more OER-friendly policies can help OER become more integral to learning, improve teaching, and ensure that all students can meet more their learning goals.”

The coalition has outlined five core principles for Administration policy on this issue:

1. Adopt a broad definition of educational materials;
2. Provide free access via the Internet;
3. Create conditions for resources that enable reuse;
4. Require prompt implementation; and
5. Regular reporting of progress and results.

Members of the public can join the call for opening up taxpayer funded educational materials by tweeting with hashtag #OERUSA. The full letter can be found at <http://www.oerusa.org>.

### Background

The Federal Government currently invests billions of taxpayer dollars each year in programs that include the creation of educational, training, and instructional materials through grants, contracts, and other cooperative agreements. This investment produces educational resources ranging from innovative curricular resources to workforce training materials to English language learning tools. While these materials are created for the public good, they are generally not open to the members of the public who paid for them. At a time when educational opportunity, workforce development and access to knowledge are critical to America's future, these valuable publicly-funded resources should be openly available to students, teachers, businesses, workers and the public to use in new and innovative ways.

The availability of publicly funded educational and training materials could address key challenges facing our educational and job training systems. Currently, student outcomes suffer as school districts struggle to provide up-to-date textbooks, and require students to share books and materials. In higher education, where textbook costs are borne directly by students, the rapid rise in prices too often forces students to skip required materials, alter their course of study, or even drop out because it is the straw that breaks the camel's back. This burden is particularly significant for community college students, where textbook costs comprise a larger portion of overall expenses. Ensuring that educational materials that taxpayers have already paid for are available for free could directly expand educational opportunities.

In issuing this statement, this coalition hopes to ensure that educational materials arising from programs funded with billions of taxpayer dollars are freely open to the members of the public that invested in them. The Administration has both an educational and economic imperative to increase access to learning and workforce development opportunities. Further, it has the opportunity to spur innovation through opening access to a wealth of resources that can be improved and built upon.

### **About ISKME**

ISKME is an independent education nonprofit whose mission is to improve the practice of continuous learning, collaboration, and change in the education sector. Established in 2002, ISKME supports innovative teaching and learning practices throughout the globe and is well known for its pioneering open education initiatives. ISKME also assists policy makers, foundations, and education institutions in designing, assessing, and bringing continuous improvement to education policies, programs, and practice.