How Much Do Faculty Think Students Should Pay for Course Materials? A Survey of Instructors' Use of Current Course Materials and OER Use

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How Much Do Faculty Think Students Should Pay for Course Materials?
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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Campus affordability initiatives promote the adoption of free, low-cost, and open educational materials. Coordinators first need to understand faculty usage of instructional course materials, textbook selection authority, and their price tolerance for, knowledge of, and use of open educational resources (OER).

Methods: Faculty at a medium-sized research university in the Midwest were invited to participate in an online survey about their current use of instructional course materials, their knowledge of material cost, and student purchasing habits. The survey had a completion rate of 128 responses, representing all teaching ranks on campus.

Results: Instructors assign a wide range of materials and rarely hear from students about their inability to purchase textbooks. The majority find US$100 or more an acceptable price and believe that more than 70% of students purchase all required items. Over half of respondents make the final decision about their materials, and factually accurate content is the top priority when making selections. Eighty percent have some awareness of OER, but OER use is low.

Discussion: Response rate was too low to make general assumptions but suggests areas for further exploration and provides base data when working with departments. A faculty member's selection authority could be limiting OER use and impacting students. Discussions need to take place about an acceptable price for department courses and how faculty decide to require materials.

Conclusion: Outreach to campus partners should promote high-quality materials as instructors consider this the most when selecting resources. Further examination of how selection authority impacts OER use and student success need to occur.

Keywords: textbook cost, faculty knowledge, awareness, tolerance, open educational resources

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

1. Faculty believe they are taking steps to control costs for students, but their cost tolerance for course materials remains high and exceeds the Affordable Course Materials Initiative (ACMI) cap of US$40.00. The ACMI team working with liaison librarians and campus partners should increase outreach efforts that communicate the effect of high textbook costs on students.

2. Faculty rarely hear from students and believe that most purchase all the required materials. The ACMI team should reengage Student Congress in speaking to their faculty about costs and impacts.

3. The threshold by which faculty would require an item for a course had a large variance. The number of items assigned impacts student spending, as does the assignment of items that are not fully utilized. Library liaisons can discuss options with faculty and help locate alternative methods for limited-use items.

4. Most faculty had already heard of open education resources (OER), but even those claiming to use OER in courses are not sure whether the items are OER. More library outreach focused specifically on distinguishing OER from free content is needed.

5. Current OER use is low, suggesting that instructors either are not ready or need more support to adopt OER as primary course materials. Faculty prioritize high-quality content; thus, outreach should emphasize the quality and widespread use of OER and continue to explore ways to support faculty with adoption.

INTRODUCTION

Program coordinators for campus affordability initiatives wish to assist instructors with adopting free, low-cost, and open (OER, or open educational resources) materials, but they first need to understand campus practices, policies, and norms that may impact or even obstruct the use of different course materials. OER can be defined as "teaching, learning, and research resources in any medium that reside in the public domain or are released under an intellectual property license that permits their free use and repurposing by others" (Creative Commons). This article reports on the findings of a study conducted by the campus Affordable Course Materials Initiative (ACMI) team at a medium-sized research university in the Midwest that investigated the types of course materials faculty assign, faculty's perception of an acceptable cost for these materials, how much a resource must be used during the course for the item to be listed as required, and faculty knowledge and use of OER. The survey closed about a week before the campus switched to completely remote work due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Although some faculty may now answer some of the questions differently, the data remain compelling and informative. In fact, a Bay View Analytics report found that the rapid switch to online teaching during the pandemic "did not significantly impact the proportion of faculty

that required a textbook for their course" (Seaman & Seaman, 2021, p. 16). This investigation builds on previously published research that explored what faculty assign as course materials and their knowledge and use of OER by concentrating on material selection practices, faculty price tolerance, and beliefs about student purchasing to reveal opportunities for education and outreach around textbook affordability and the use of OER.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Over 30 years ago, Sommer et al. (1988) conducted a study of faculty awareness of textbook prices and textbook selections. At that time, the average price of a textbook in their study was US$27.28. Their faculty were largely unaware of the textbook prices, and publishers made little effort to reveal prices. They concluded that the "lack of faculty concern with price allows publishers to avoid competing on the basis of price and thereby contributes to inflated textbook prices" (Sommer et al., 1988, p. 20). This contributed to the huge increase in prices reflected in the Bureau of Labor Statistics data showing a 1,041% increase in textbook prices since 1977, a rate three times higher than inflation (Popken, 2015).

By 2007, faculty awareness of textbook prices had grown to 63% (Zomer, 2007). An investigation by the University of Michigan Scholarly Publishing Office in 2009 reported even higher rates of faculty awareness, with 88% of faculty conscious of escalating textbook prices and 98% aware of the price of the textbook they assign (Nicholls, 2009). During this time, an amendment to the Higher Education Act of 1965 was passed, which requires universities to make available the retail price of textbooks at the time of registration (National Postsecondary Education Cooperative, 2009); this may have contributed to instructors' growing awareness of textbook prices.

Surprisingly, the literature investigating what faculty are currently using as course materials is fairly limited. Thus far, no study has asked faculty what they consider to be an acceptable cost for their course materials or studied how much a resource must be used for an instructor to make it required for a class. A white paper by Steven Bell (2018) reported findings from one of the largest studies to explore the types of content that faculty assign. It asked respondents to distinguish between commercial and "open" resources, without specifically defining OER. The majority of respondents (60%) claimed to use a mix of commercial and "open content," with only a small percentage (7%) using "open" materials exclusively. This study also looked at selection authority and what factors influence faculty decisions to choose materials. Ultimately, faculty were confused about what distinguishes actual OER material from free resources on the web or content they create (Bell, 2018).

The Bay View Analytics Group (formerly Babson Survey Group) has been tracking faculty use of educational materials and OER knowledge and use for over a decade. Their studies have

documented a shift toward digital tools, bundling of textbooks with online homework systems, and the use of a variety of required media. Looking at what materials were used during the recent COVID-19 pandemic and the swift move to online teaching, they found that over 90% of faculty reported using the same textbook they used the prior year (Seaman & Seaman, 2022). Their investigations also explore the cost to students. While they have not yet inquired about an acceptable price for course materials, they have tracked faculty concerns about price. Interestingly, the percentage of faculty who view price as important or very important has dropped since 2017 from 90% to 65% (Seaman & Seaman, 2017, 2022). There was a slight difference in how the data for these questions were gathered between the two studies, with the earlier study asking about price related to selection and the latter using a stand-alone question.

The growth in faculty awareness of OER has risen alongside the increase in knowledge about textbook costs and the impact of high prices on students. In the Bay View Analytics (Babson) 2015 report, a majority (58%) of faculty reported that they were generally unaware of OER (Allen & Seaman, 2016). The most recent study found that OER awareness has grown 7% since 2000, with 67% of faculty reporting some awareness (Seaman & Seaman, 2022). In another large study, Spilovoy et al. (2020) investigated awareness and use of OER and the impact of faculty selections at colleges and universities across the nation. Their research documents a steady growth in awareness among faculty, particularly in the last 5 years with 44% of faculty members reporting some awareness of OER. The study also investigated the impact of OER initiatives on adoption, suggesting there is some correlation between faculty knowledge of OER initiatives and OER adoptions. The use of OER as primary materials for faculty teaching introductory courses was 26% and 14% for faculty teaching other courses. The Bay View Analytics Group's recent report also explored faculty and administrator awareness of OER initiatives on their campus, revealing a 16% gap between administrators (43%) and faculty (27%). This difference is interesting because the faculty had a fairly high level of OER awareness but less awareness of their campus initiatives. Also, this group had higher awareness of OER than the faculty in the Spilovoy et al. (2020) study but lower rates (14%) of OER use as primary materials.

The explosion of literature investigating OER use, faculty and student perception, and the impact of OER and open textbook adoptions has warranted several literature reviews (Wiley et al., 2014; Bober, 2017; Clinton & Khan, 2019). A recent study (Hilton, 2020) reviewed 16 efficacy and 20 perceptions studies to conclude that faculty and students alike have positive experiences with OER and that the students have the same or better learning outcomes. Faculty knowledge of OER has steadily increased, but this knowledge has not always led to increased use. The biggest concern among faculty remains the quality of the resources (Cook & Florida Distance Learning Consortium, 2010; Fisher et al., 2020; Martin & Kimmons, 2020).

Considering past studies and the gap in the literature regarding current practices and cost tolerance, a survey was designed to better understand current practices and attitudes on campus.

METHODOLOGY

Members of the ACMI team reviewed survey instruments from previous studies (Nicholls, 2009; Allen & Seaman, 2016; Mayer, 2018; Spilovoy et al., 2020) that investigated faculty awareness of OER and the use of course materials. A 30-question survey was developed in the online Qualtrics system. Originally, questions about OER were not part of the survey because the team intended on conducting a second survey to explore OER specifically. However, it was decided that a follow-up survey might not be feasible because of timing and campus survey fatigue. Therefore, the OER questions were included, which resulted in the instrument being longer than initially intended. OER and open textbooks were defined before corresponding questions (see Appendix A). The goal was to gain an understanding of what practices are currently taking place on campus to better inform the ACMI team's work.

The instrument was pilot tested with a dozen faculty members, including several without previous knowledge of OER. Feedback about wording and length was considered, and minor changes were made. After receiving Institutional Review Board approval, the survey was released online. Recruitment took place via a weekly Friday newsletter from the Provost's Office, with information appearing 2 weeks in a row and again a week before the survey closed. The Provost's Office also sent an additional email message directly to all employed faculty along with a follow-up email 1 week before the survey closed. An announcement was made at a University Senate meeting, and information was posted on the news section of the university library's website for the entire 5 weeks the survey was open. Faculty members self-selected to participate, and no incentive was offered. The data were analyzed using Qualtrics and Excel. Due to the use of graphical dials and slides that inadvertently allowed respondents to choose any increment of a range, some questions required responses to be grouped to simplify the reporting.

RESULTS

The university faculty population at the time of the study consisted of roughly 497 full-time tenured professors, associates, and tenure-track assistant professors and an additional 556 instructors in a wide variety of positions, including special lecturers, adjuncts, and instructors. Population numbers were supplied by the Office of Institutional Research as estimates with the note that some faculty may have appointments in multiple schools and some employees counted may not have teaching responsibilities. The intention was to capture a sample of voices from across faculty ranks, which was achieved. The survey received 172 individual responses (approximately 16.3% response rate); not all respondents answered all the

questions, resulting in a full completion rate of 128 (12.1%). More than half of the respondents were tenured professors, associate professors, and tenure-track assistant professors (42.9% tenured, 17.5% tenure-track faculty), with the remaining 39.7% of respondents in the many different non-tenure-track instructor roles. Only 6.4% of the non-tenure-track group are instructors with some form of job security; the remaining have no job security.

The length of time at the university was widely represented; 47 was the maximum number of years, and 15.5 years was the mean. The majority of respondents teach undergraduate courses (75.9%) and are affiliated with the College of Arts and Sciences (57.0%), which is the school with the highest number of faculty ($n = 564$) at the university (see Table 1). Faculty and instructors teaching in the College of Arts and Sciences also represent the majority of courses with the highest enrollments and many of the courses with the highest DFWI (drop, fail, withdrawal, incomplete) rates.

School Affiliation	%	Count
College of Arts & Sciences	57.03%	73
School of Business Administration	8.59%	11
School of Education and Human Services	7.81%	10
School of Engineering and Computer Science	8.59%	11
School of Health Sciences	10.16%	13
School of Nursing	3.13%	4
School of Music, Theatre and Dance	2.34%	3
Honors College	0.78%	1
School of Medicine	1.56%	2
Total	100%	128

Table 1. Respondents by School

Types of materials being used

Faculty were asked to select the types of resources they use for their courses (see Table 2). They could choose as many from the list as were applicable. Hard copy textbooks (16.4%) were used more than e-books (11.4%). The second highest (*materials created by me*), third highest (*free resources found online*), and fourth highest (*library materials*) categories were materials that could be considered free resources to students. The survey didn't distinguish at this point between commercial and open textbooks; instead, the focus was on format.

All but one full professor indicated that they use hard copy textbooks, with 79.5% of associate professors and 85.0% of assistant professors selecting hard copy texts. Faculty teaching

What types of course materials do you use for your courses?
(Check all that apply)

	%	Count
Hard copy textbook	16.40%	111
Electronic e-book	11.37%	77
Loose-leaf textbook	3.69%	25
Lab guides	2.07%	14
Online platform (online homework, labs)	10.04%	68
Commercially produced ancillary materials	1.92%	13
Workbooks	0.44%	3
Public domain documents	9.45%	64
Library materials (journal articles, books, other)	12.85%	87
Free resources found online (such as TedTalk videos, government websites)	15.51%	105
Materials created by me	16.25%	110

Table 2. Types of course materials used

15–26 years have the highest rates of hard copy textbook use, nearly double that of any other group. They also utilize the most items on the list. Furthermore, faculty could indicate whether they used any supplemental materials, including clickers (classroom response system) or the iClicker app (12%), calculators (21%), data sets (7%), software (27%), supplies (laboratory, art, etc.) (10%), video/film (9%), and other (14%), which included such items as an internet-accessible device, case studies, and a web-hosting account.

Utilization of access methods

Respondents reported that they do allow the use of older textbook editions (27.3%), utilize free materials (24.5%), use library reserves (16.0%), supply their own readings (13.8%), ask for the textbook and online codes to be bundled (7.7%), and negotiate directly with the publisher (5.2%). Additional write-in comments showed that faculty loan out books, provide online resources they create, and encourage students to purchase materials online, and one faculty member indicated that they wrote their own textbook. The primary motivation for these practices was to reduce costs to students (68%), followed by "it was the best option for the course" (25.6%). The remaining group (6.4%) either considered both equally or felt that it was best practice for their teaching.

Students purchasing materials

When respondents were asked, "What percentage of your students do you believe purchase ALL of the required materials for your course?" 74.2% was the mean response chosen

(standard deviation 23.55%). Yet only 44.6% of those respondents were extremely confident or very confident in their estimate.

Percentage of materials used

Respondents indicated that students would need to use approximately 68.4% (standard deviation 20.79%) of a textbook in one semester for the respondent to list the item as required. The most popular range, chosen by 41.1% of respondents ($n = 55$), was 61%–80% of a textbook. The second most popular range was 81% of a textbook or higher, selected by 25.5% ($n = 35$) of respondents. The remaining 34.3% ($n = 47$) of respondents chose a range of less than 60% of a textbook.

Textbook selection

The data indicated that 62.3% ($n = 96$) of respondents make the final decision about their materials for all their courses, 17.5% ($n = 27$) choose "I do, for most of my courses," and the remaining 20.1% ($n = 31$) either relied on a committee, the entire department, the department chair, or only full-time faculty or were unsure.

When asked about the nature of their role for multi-section courses, 64.8% ($n = 79$) were able to provide input on textbook selections, 11.5% ($n = 14$) marked that they did not have a role, and 23.8% ($n = 29$) did not teach courses that have more than one section. The majority (63.3%, $n = 81$) of instructors teaching multi-section courses can choose to use different materials, or no textbook at all. However, 19.5% ($n = 25$) were not able to choose different materials, and 17.2% ($n = 22$) were unsure. When reviewing the answers by department, both Modern Languages and Physical Therapy had all respondents indicating that faculty were not able to choose different materials for multi-section courses. Other departments represented had some faculty choosing a positive answer.

A faculty member's decision-making ability may be related to rank, as over 80% of tenured and tenure-track faculty make the final decision for all of their classes, whereas only 50% of job-secure non–tenure-track and 56.4% of non–job-secure non–tenure-track faculty make final decisions for all their courses. This imbalance might also be correlated to the type of courses an instructor teaches. The data did not capture in detail whether non–tenure-track instructors tend to teach multi-section courses at higher rates. Some departments and schools had low participation; thus, the findings are not definitive, but this was noted for further exploration.

The most important factors for selecting required course materials were *high-quality factually accurate content* ($n = 97$), *cost to student* ($n = 69$), and c*omprehensive content* ($n = 63$). The least important factors were compatibility with the learning management system and whether the resources are adaptable/editable (see Table 3).

Factor	Extremely important	Very important	Moderately important	Slightly important	Not at all important
High-quality and factually accurate	97	19	2	0	0
Cost to the student	69	35	11	2	0
Comprehensive content	63	38	13	2	0
Includes all the materials I need	37	35	17	18	5
Available in digital format	31	25	25	15	16
Available in print format	29	28	27	15	11
Easy to find, includes supplemental materials (homework, quizzes, etc.)	23	29	23	22	14
Proven to improve student performance	17	39	27	19	7
Works with Moodle LMS[*]	10	6	20	24	48
Adaptable/editable	7	7	26	28	35
Recommended by other faculty members	4	13	46	35	10

[*]learning management system

Table 3. Importance of factors influencing course material selection

Most respondents, 79.2% ($n = 103$), are responsible for sending their textbook selections to the bookstore, whereas 8.5% ($n = 11$) rely on a department assistant. The remaining groups either did not know or did not use textbooks or used a combination of methods based on the course.

Acceptable textbook costs

Respondents were asked whether they knew the current price of their course materials; 78.4% ($n = 98$) responded "yes," and 21.6% ($n = 27$) responded "no." Professors (22.2%) and associate professors (25.9%) had the highest percentages of faculty who are unaware of their course materials costs, and 37% ($n = 10$) of faculty who were unaware have been teaching for 15–26 years.

Respondents were also asked what an acceptable course materials cost is for the courses they taught. The survey displayed a graphical dial from which they could choose any acceptable price from $0 to $600. The mean cost chosen was $98.25, with a maximum cost of $300. To further analyze the results, the data were grouped into price ranges (see Table 4).

What do you feel is an acceptable course materials cost for the courses you teach?	%	Count
≤$20 (Max cost)	4.0%	5
$21–$40 (Max cost)	8.8%	11
$41–$60 (Max cost)	16.8%	21
$61–$80 (Max cost)	13.6%	17
$81–$100 (Max cost)	15.2%	19
$101–$120 (Max cost)	16.8%	21
$121–$140 (Max cost)	4.0%	5
$141–$160 (Max cost)	11.2%	14
$161–$180 (Max cost)	0.8%	1
$181–$200 (Max cost)	7.2%	9
$201–$250 (Max cost)	0.8%	1
$251–$300 (Max cost)	0.8%	1

Table 4. Acceptable course materials cost

Cost tolerance by department

Of the 33 departments represented, faculty from Art History and Mechanical Engineering chose prices between $201 and $300. Twenty-one departments chose prices between $101 and $200, with 11 departments indicated that $40 or less was acceptable (Computer Science & Engineering, English, Exercise Science, Health Sciences, Modern Languages & Literatures, Organizational Leadership, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology, Social Work & Criminal Justice, and Writing & Rhetoric). Some departments had huge splits in acceptable prices, such as Modern Languages & Literatures, whose faculty chose below $40 and indicated $160 as the top acceptable cost. Math, Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology, Social Work, & Criminal Justice departments also had large variations of acceptable costs for course materials. Some of these departments already have faculty within specific programs using OER, which might explain their difference in cost tolerance.

Student purchasing of materials

Faculty overwhelmingly reported that they "rarely" (39.1%) or "never" (19.5%) heard from students regarding not being able to purchase a textbook (see Table 5).

Answer	%	Count
Always	2.34%	3
Often	10.16%	13
Sometimes	28.91%	37
Rarely	39.06%	50
Never	19.53%	25
Total	100%	128

Table 5. Faculty hearing from students about textbooks

The respondents who heard from their students about the cost of textbooks being an issue were from nine different departments:

- Always = Modern Languages & Literatures, Music
- Often = English, History, Modern Languages & Literatures, Physical Therapy, Sociology, Anthropology, Social Work & Criminal Justice, Psychology, Theatre, Writing & Rhetoric

Again, some of these departments have known faculty members who are already using OER or low-cost materials.

OER knowledge

Before each of the OER-related questions, a definition of OER and open textbooks was provided. Most respondents (86.7%) had some awareness of OER, with only 13.3% stating that they had no knowledge (see Table 6).

Answer	%	Count
I am not aware of OER	13.3%	17
I have heard of OER, but don't know much about them	29.7%	38
I am aware of OER and some of the ways in which they may be used	40.6%	52
I am aware of OER and have previously used them for teaching	5.5%	7
I am aware of OER and currently use them for teaching	10.9%	14
Total	100%	128

Table 6. Faculty awareness of OER

Exploring those with no knowledge of OER, 35% were associate professors, and 35% were special lecturers. The other groups had none or only a few respondents with no knowledge. The numbers differed slightly when respondents were asked specifically about open textbooks: 78% ($n = 99$) had some knowledge of open textbooks, and 22.1% ($n = 28$) were

unaware of them; of respondents, 7.1% ($n = 9$) were currently using an open textbook, and 2.4% ($n = 3$) had used one in the past.

OER use

Instructors are using OER most often as supplementary materials, with 70.2% having never used OER as primary materials (see Table 7). Of those using OER regularly as primary materials, seven were associate professors, one was an assistant professor, and the remaining six were non–job-secure non–tenure-track faculty. Supplemental use of OER was indicated across all faculty ranks.

Type of use	Never/NA	Count	Rarely	Count	Occasionally	Count	Regularly	Count
Primary course materials	70.16%	87	8.87%	11	9.68%	12	11.29%	14
Supplementary course materials	50.40%	63	8.80%	11	20.00%	25	20.80%	26

Table 7. Faculty use of OER

Respondents using OER were asked to choose which type of OER materials they used. Many faculty also indicated that they were not sure whether the resource was actually OER (see Table 8).

Material Type	OER	Count	Not Sure	Count
Videos	78.2%	43	21.8%	12
Audio podcasts	60.7%	17	39.3%	11
Images	73.3%	33	26.7%	12
Interactive games and simulations	52.2%	12	47.8%	11
Video lectures/tutorials	72.7%	24	27.3%	9
Tests and quizzes	30.8%	4	69.2%	9
Textbooks, chapters from textbooks	75.0%	30	25.0%	10
Homework exercises	60.9%	14	39.1%	9
Slides and class presentations	57.7%	15	42.3%	11
Whole courses	40.0%	6	60.0%	9
Elements of an existing course	47.4%	9	52.6%	10
Lesson plans	28.6%	4	71.4%	10
Any other type	50.0%	3	50.0%	3

Table 8. Type of OER used

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of current practices on campus related to course material use, faculty knowledge and tolerance of textbook price, and OER knowledge and use to inform the campus ACMI team as they develop strategies to promote OER and the use of free and low-cost materials.

Types of materials assigned

The types of materials being assigned are much more diverse now than when Sommer et al. (1988) completed their study. Faculty utilize a wide range of materials, from hard copy textbooks to a variety of free resources. Although this study did not specifically investigate the bundling of textbooks and homework systems, the data show that faculty are utilizing these materials. Recent studies have demonstrated the rapid growth in this area (Seaman & Seaman, 2022), and more exploration needs to be done on campus regarding the assignment of online courseware and additional supplementary materials that students are required to purchase. The number of items assigned impacts student spending, as does the assignment of items that are not fully utilized. The decision by faculty to mark an item required affects students' decision to purchase. The data revealed that the threshold by which faculty would require a textbook had a large variance. Requiring a textbook when only half of the content or less is being used could jeopardize a student's ability to purchase other materials. The survey attempted to further explore this question by inquiring into the reasons for marking an item required or recommended, but the question had to be discarded because respondents appeared to not understand the question as worded. There is no campus policy stating how much of a textbook or resource must be used before a faculty member can indicate it is required for their course. The ACMI anecdotally received comments about this issue from students and recognizes this as an area to target for more campus discussion. Library liaisons, as subject experts, could discuss options with faculty and help locate alternative access methods for limited-use items.

Knowledge of current price

This study revealed that a higher percentage of faculty (74.4%) know the current price of the course materials they assign than the 63% discovered in the Public Interest Research Group (PIRG) report (Zomer, 2007), but this number lags behind the 88% reported in the University of Michigan findings (Nicholls, 2009). However, the data suggest that perhaps the longer an instructor has been teaching and the higher their rank, the less likely they are to know the current price of their course materials. The survey response rate was too low to make a general assumption, yet the rate of faculty awareness is in line with past published studies and informs the ACMI team regarding where they can focus future outreach.

Cost to students

Despite rarely hearing from students, many faculty appear concerned about student spending on materials and indicated they were taking steps to help alleviate costs. However, at the same time, the majority of respondents (70.2%) were comfortable with their course materials costing above $60, and 41.4% were comfortable with their course materials costing above $100. This indicates that faculty price tolerance is higher than the goals of the ACMI team, which defines low-cost as $40 or less. This price cap is used for both the faculty stipend program and the newly implemented low-cost and no-cost course markings in the course registration system. Faculty with the highest cost tolerances were from Art History and Mechanical Engineering; neither department has received direct outreach from the ACMI team. Interestingly, the departments with wide variations in acceptable price are those with programs that have participated in several OER/textbook affordability outreach events and/or have known faculty already using OER and low-cost materials. A few of the departments include large and diverse programs such as Sociology and Anthropology, Social Work, and Criminal Justice. It would have been helpful to have collected more program-specific data; however, to do so would have jeopardized participants' confidentiality.

Student purchasing

The vast majority of respondents (80.2%) believe that at least 61% of their students purchase all the required materials for their course, although most are not extremely confident in their estimate. Yet the most recent Student PIRG report revealed that in 2020, 65% of students skipped purchasing a textbook because of cost (Nagle et al, 2021). The recent pandemic may have affected student purchasing in ways not yet documented, but the PIRG report did indicate that 79% of the students they surveyed were impacted by the pandemic. This number is assumed to be low because the data were collected in September of 2020 and did not include those students who may have already dropped out.

This study revealed that student voices and concerns about cost are not being heard by faculty. The Student Congress passed a resolution in support of OER in April 2018, which they presented to the Board of Trustees at the time. Since then, the level of engagement and outreach about textbook prices and OER by the different Student Congress leaders has varied greatly. The ACMI used this evidence to reengage with student leaders, which resulted in the Student Congress launching a new awareness campaign, passing an updated resolution in support of the initiative and providing funds for the stipend program.

Faculty selection authority

Not all faculty on campus can choose materials for all of their courses. When compared to the institutions represented in the multi-campus studies conducted by the National Association of

College Stores (NACS), the campus lags by 10% in faculty selection authority even after the NACS reported a recent drop from 81% in 2018 to 72% in 2021 (OnCampus Research, 2021. The university has no consistent policy on how materials are selected. Every department, program, and in some cases multi-section class is handled however the faculty involved chooses. The ACMI team has been contacted by several special instructors who are unable to select their own course materials but wish to do so. Their inability to make their own selection has now been captured in the data. The courses with the highest enrollments on campus are also large multi-section courses frequently taught by non–tenure-track instructors. The inability to choose their course materials despite their willingness to use free and affordable options negatively impacts students. This area needs further exploration, but the evidence provides insight into textbook selection authority on campus and will assist efforts to promote faculty choice in support of affordability efforts.

OER on campus

Most participants in this study (86.7%) had some knowledge of OER, with fewer participants aware of open textbooks specifically. This confirms that the ACMI outreach efforts—including the stipend program, the OER learning community, a textbook listening tour, and the many presentations to the University Senate and College Assembly—had some positive effects. Yet there is still much uncertainty when it comes to understanding whether the resources they are utilizing are in fact OER. This mirrors the Bell (2018) study and the Bond et al. (2021) findings, which showed strong interest and some use yet ongoing confusion about what content can be considered OER. This lack of understanding could be a result of the ACMI's focus, which has concentrated on a broad message of affordability with less emphasis on defining or specifically encouraging OER use. Despite the high level of awareness, current use is low (10.9%); however, many respondents reported they require materials that would be considered low-cost or free. In alignment with other studies (Seaman & Seaman, 2022), faculty are primarily using OER as supplemental materials, which may suggest they are not ready to switch or that they need more support to do so. Faculty concerns about quality could be hampering adoption. Similar to previous investigations (Nicholls, 2009; Bell, 2018), these data demonstrated again that quality is a top factor instructors consider when making a selection. Therefore, the ACMI outreach should focus on understanding how faculty judge quality, and additional efforts should be made to connect them with high-quality OER.

The ACMI team has begun to utilize these data to work more closely with liaison librarians and affordability partners to increase faculty knowledge and use of OER on campus. Outreach efforts now include discussions around what materials are required, the threshold for marking an item required, what is an acceptable cost that students should be expected to pay for one

course, and increasing flexibility for faculty interested in selecting their course materials. Faculty members' uncertainty about the types of materials they were using revealed a need for more targeted education and support about OER. The ACMI team continues to have a broad message of affordability but has increased educational efforts specifically defining and highlighting OER and open textbooks.

CONCLUSION

This study includes input from a small percentage of all instructors on campus, with some departments not represented or only represented by one member. As such, the findings are not definitive, and more exploration needs to occur. The study does provide a window into current practices on campus and can be utilized when working with departments to seek the best path for promoting low-cost and OER options to support student success. Learning about the different types of materials being assigned, how faculty make these decisions, what alternatives they are utilizing, and who is involved in the selection process assists the ACMI team as they speak with faculty and administrators on campus. The practice of marking an item required or recommended for a class and the threshold for use for making this determination appear to be under-investigated topics. Understanding institutional policies or norms that impact these practices could reduce the number of items students need to purchase. Also, the emerging trend of requiring students to purchase online course systems and textbook bundles to participate or submit homework needs to be addressed as a moral and ethical issue. Another knowledge gap is the investigation of courses that could utilize OER but are restricted by either university policy or department practices and the impact this has on the students. Not investigated by this study but worth exploring is how faculty discover their textbooks and course materials, whether they consider searching library resources or reaching out to their library liaison for assistance, and how selection choices may be impacted if faculty were provided assistance. Investigating broad barriers to OER adoption on one campus can lead others to ask similar questions about their institutions, ultimately increasing OER use and helping more students.

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APPENDIX A

How much do faculty think students should pay for course materials? A survey of instructors' use of current course materials

A. Materials

A.1 What types of course materials do you use for your courses? Check all that apply.

- Hard copy textbook
- Electronic e-book
- Loose-leaf textbook
- Lab guides
- Online platform (online homework, labs)
- Commercially produced ancillary materials
- Workbooks
- Public Domain documents
- Library materials (journal articles, books, other)
- Free resources found online (such as TedTalk videos, government websites)
- Materials created by me

A.2 What additional items do you require for your courses? (check all that apply)
- Clickers (Classroom response system) or iclicker app
- Calculators
- Data sets
- Software
- Supplies (laboratory, art, etc),
- Video/film
- None of the above

A.3 Approximately what percentage of a textbook do you think your students need to utilize in one semester for you to list the textbook as required?

0 -10-20-30-40-50-60-70-80-90-100

A.4 Removed

B. Selection

B.1 Who has a role in selecting required course materials (textbooks, online platforms, labs etc.) for use in the courses you teach? (select all that apply)

<div align="center">At the Course-level   At the Section-level</div>

- I am solely responsible for the selection
- I am a member of a committee/group that makes the selection
- A faculty committee of which I am not a member
- A full-time faculty member who has been assigned by the department
- Entire department
- Course developer
- Administrator
- Other

B.2 Who makes the final decision about course materials for the courses you teach? (select all that apply)

- I do, for all my courses
- I do, for most of my courses
- A full-time faculty member who has been assigned by the department
- Entire department
- A committee

B.3 For multi-section courses, can instructors in your department (incl. PT lecturers, special lecturers, special instructors, etc.) choose to use different materials, or no textbook at all?

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

B.4 What is the nature of **your** role when it comes to selecting the textbook for your sections?

- I do not have a role in textbook selection
- I am able to provide input for the textbook selection

B.5 When selecting required course materials for any course you teach, how important are the following factors in your selection? (Drag and drop items into boxes.)

Items

- Adaptable/editable
- Available in print format
- Available in digital format
- Cost to the student
- Comprehensive content
- Easy to find, includes supplemental materials (homework, quizzes, etc)
- High-quality and factually accurate
- Includes all the materials I need
- Proven to improve student performance
- Recommended by other faculty members
- Works with Moodle LMS

> ❖ Extremely important
> ❖ Very important
> ❖ Moderately important
> ❖ Slightly important
> ❖ Not at all important

B.6 Choose the top three factors that influence your choice. (Drag items into box on the right and place in rank order.)

Items

- Adaptable/editable
- Available in print format
- Available in digital format
- Cost to the student
- Comprehensive content
- Easy to find, includes supplemental materials (homework, quizzes, etc)
- High-quality and factually accurate
- Includes all the materials I need

> ❖ Rank Order

- Proven to improve student performance
- Recommended by other faculty members
- Works with Moodle LMS

C. Textbooks

C.1 How are your textbook selections sent to the bookstore?

- By me
- By department assistant
- I don't know
- Other

C.2 What percentage of your students do you believe purchase ALL of the **required** materials for your course?

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

C.3 How confident are you in your estimate above?

- Not at all confident
- Slightly confident
- Moderately confident
- Very confident
- Extremely confident

C.4 How often do you hear from your students regarding not being able to purchase a required textbook?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

D. Price

D.1 Do you know the current total price of course materials for your courses?
- Yes
- No

D.2 What do you feel is an acceptable course materials cost for the courses you teach?

Max cost

0 40 80 120 160 200 240 280 320 360 400 440 480 520 560 600

D.3.1 Have you utilized any of the following methods for making course materials available to students (check all that apply)

- Used library course reserves
- Negotiated directly with the textbook publisher
- Asked textbook & online codes to be bundled
- Allow use of older editions
- Only used readings I supplied
- Used freely available materials
- Other

D.3.2 What was your primary motivation?

- Reduce cost
- This was the best option for my course
- I was instructed to do so by another faculty member or administrator
- Other

OER

E.1 How aware are you of Open Educational Resources (OER)?

OER is defined as "teaching, learning, and research resources in any medium that reside in the public domain or are released under an intellectual property license that permits their free use and repurposing by others" (UNESCO/Hewlett Foundation).

OER are free of cost, and include built-in permission to retain, reuse, revise, remix, and redistribute the material which means users can edit, modify, customize and share them.

- ○ I am not aware of OER
- ○ I have heard of OER, but don't know much about them
- ○ I am aware of OER and some of the ways in which they may be used
- ○ I am aware of OER and have previously used them for teaching
- ○ I am aware of OER and currently use them for teaching

E.2 How aware are you of Open Textbooks?

Open textbooks are published textbooks and ancillary materials that are free, adaptable, openly licensed peer-reviewed quality textbooks and supplemental materials that are available to download and print in various formats.

- ○ I am not aware of Open Textbooks
- ○ I have heard of Open Textbooks, but don't know much about them
- ○ I am aware of Open Textbooks and some of the ways in which they may be used
- ○ I am aware of Open Textbooks and have previously used them for teaching
- ○ I am aware of Open Textbooks and currently use them for teaching

E.3 Have you used open educational resources (as defined above) in either of the following ways?

Primary course materials (main class material used by teacher and student)

Supplementary course materials (supporting materials to enhance teaching or as further reference for students)

- ❖ Never/NA
- ❖ Rarely
- ❖ Occasionally
- ❖ Regularly

E.4 If yes, which of the following types of OER resources (as defined above) you have used? If you are not sure if the resource is an OER, choose Not Sure.

OER   NOT SURE

- ○ Videos
- ○ Audio podcasts
- ○ Images

- Interactive games and simulations
- Video lectures/tutorials
- Tests and quizzes
- Textbooks, chapters from textbooks
- Homework exercises
- Slides and class presentations
- Whole courses
- Elements of an existing course
- Lesson Plans
- Any other type

F. Demographics

F.1 What is your rank?

- Professor
- Associate Professor
- Assistant Professor
- Special Instructor
- Visiting Faculty
- Special Lecturer
- Lecturer
- Graduate Assistant
- Other, please describe

F.2 What is your tenure status?

- Tenured
- Tenure-track
- Job-secured non-tenure track
- Not job-secured non-tenure track
- Other, please describe

F.3 How many years have you been teaching at the university level? years teaching

0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 50

F.4 Do you typically teach (mark all that apply)

- Undergraduate lower-level courses
- Undergraduate upper-level courses
- Graduate courses
- I only supervise research/coordinate programs etc.

F.5 Which OU School are you are primarily affiliated?

- College of Arts & Sciences
- School of Business Administration
- School of Education and Human Services
- School of Engineering and Computer Science
- School of Health Sciences
- School of Nursing
- School of Music, Theatre and Dance
- Honors College
- University Libraries
- OUWB School of Medicine

F.6 Which OU Department are you primarily affiliated?

- Accounting & Finance
- Art & Art History
- Biological Sciences
- Biomedical Diagnostic & Therapeutic Sciences
- Chemistry
- Communication & Journalism
- Computer Science & Engineering
- Counseling
- Dance
- Decision & Information Sciences
- Economics
- Electrical & Computer Engineering

- English
- Environmental Health & Safety
- Exercise Science
- Health Sciences
- History
- Human Development & Child Studies
- Industrial & Systems Engineering
- Linguistics
- Management & Marketing
- Mathematics & Statistics
- Mechanical Engineering
- Modern Languages & Literatures
- Modern Languages & Literatures
- Music
- Organizational Leadership
- Philosophy
- Physical Therapy
- Physics
- Political Science
- Psychology
- Reading & Language Arts
- Sociology, Anthropology, Social Work & Criminal Justice
- Teacher Development & Educational Studies
- Theatre
- Wellness, Health Promotion & Injury Prevention
- Writing & Rhetoric
- N/A