

## Open Peer Review

Townes, J. (2023, April). [OER by Any Other Name, by A. Gamble & A. Schuler]. *Journal of Open Educational Resources in Higher Education*, 2(1), 100–104.

doi:10.13001/joerhe.v2i1.7849

-----  
**Reviewer:** Jennifer Townes

**Recommendation:** Accept Submission  
-----

### Scope, Objectives, Content

*Is the article in scope for Journal of Open Educational Resources in Higher Education? Does the topic discuss an element related to open education, open data, open access, or other open topics? Is the topic an important one, or is it trivial or of low priority?*

This article is securely within the scope of JOERHE. The authors attempt to address a gap in the literature by providing research from an “academic environment beyond community colleges or large public universities.” In addition, the authors present a novel approach – listening tours - that they’ve identified in only four other cases.

The topic is important, as much of the OER literature rehashes the same techniques and information from various points of view. In addition, some of the results could lead to more research and discussion, such as that around inclusive access, that will benefit the profession.

### Organization

*Does the article proceed logically? As applicable, does the article adhere to a recommended structure and the section guideline?*

The article has a logical flow and is easy to read. It adheres to the recommended structure. However, I did not see where the funding for the interview incentives was shared. This should go in the Acknowledgements, per the JOERHE Submission Preparation Checklist. (If I missed this information somewhere, my apologies).

## Methodology, Approach, Conclusions

***The methodology for data gathering and analysis should be appropriate for the problem addressed. Inferences from data should be sound--the author should not reach unsupported conclusions. Not all papers will use a scientific research methodology, but all should employ sound reasoning and an adequate balance between description and critical analysis. Consider: Is the article factually accurate? Is it clear the author knows, or has investigated, previous work on the subject of the article? Has the author failed to reference recent or seminal work on the subject?***

The authors set out to answer three research questions and attempt to get “in-depth qualitative” information (2). The study failed to answer the research questions for the School of Engineering, which, as stated, is half the population that the library supports. However, all the research questions were answered for the other school the library supports. For such a textbook-heavy discipline, I’d really love to see the data from a listening tour of Engineering faculty, and I’m curious if there is a known reason why they declined to accept an interview.

There are a few questions about participation that could be addressed:

Compared to the four other listening tour studies mentioned in the literature review, how was the participation at Tufts?

How was the number 16 deemed the most appropriate? The authors write that they came up with 16 to have “two to three faculty members from six different departments”(3) and that it would allow them “to speak with faculty from a range of disciplines and experiences while not being overwhelming in terms of the number of interviews conducted and time required from the study team.”(4) Did the total number of faculty enter into the criteria? Is 16 a representative percentage of faculty?

In the Limitations section, the authors acknowledge that the faculty who responded self-identified, but part of the methodology was to seek out faculty “identified by liaison librarians as having used OER or being interested in OER.”(4) The mixed method approach to recruitment could be addressed as a potential limitation.

These concerns do not, in my opinion, preclude publication of this article in JOERHE.

## Writing Style, References

***Please indicate whether there are problems with expression or flow, but do not comment about grammar or basic edits. Do NOT take the time to do copy editing - that will be handled later in the process. However, general comments pointing out problems with style or format are useful.***

There were, by and large, no problems with expression or flow. Two instances could use clarification.

Introduction: “More broadly, much of the existing literature about OER is produced by community colleges or large public universities, which sets it apart from Tufts’ context as a private, mid-size,

“student-centered research university” (Tufts University, n.d.), with a student body generally perceived to be wealthy (Aisch, Buchanan, Cox, & Quealy, 2017).” this does not seem to fit within its current paragraph. This gap in the literature could be further explored in the literature review section, or even moved to its own paragraph in the introduction.

OER: “Time was also identified as one of the primary barriers to creating OER, along with concern from two faculty members at the lecturer level that if their course materials are shared openly, their teaching roles could be replaceable.”(6) This can be combined with the third paragraph in this same section (beginning “Of faculty who identified a barrier...”).

## Application:

### **Does the article contribute knowledge or practical examples that will inform/improve others’ practice or education?**

The article absolutely contributes practical examples that will inform and improve others’ practice. Here are just a few:

Changing the language we use to market OER:

“Faculty members were also found to be unable to define inclusive access models and had difficulty understanding the term OER, leading to a change in librarian vocabulary when referring to these resources.” (1)

“...we have stopped using the term OER as the primary way we discuss alternative course materials, and instead use more literal terms like “no/low-cost course materials” or “affordable course materials”. In the semester following the listening tour, we rebranded the Tisch OER Awards as the Tisch Affordable Course Materials Awards.” (11)

Changing the method we use to market OER:

“sharing information in places where faculty are already primed to pay attention, such as faculty meetings or communications from their department chairs, made up the biggest percentage of responses, suggesting a future focus for messaging around OER” (10)

Changing the types of services we offer:

“Together, these barriers suggest that we should keep in mind that OER are not necessarily a good solution for all courses, all disciplines, or all faculty members, and ensure that our messaging discusses OER as one option among a variety of choices for course materials.” (10)

“syllabus affordability review service” (11) I would love to see an article just about this, to be honest

What are the stronger points/qualities of the article?

There are some really fascinating results that could be further explored. Some could even be whole articles on their own.

“...concern from two faculty members at the lecturer level that if their course materials are shared openly, their teaching roles could be replaceable.”(7)

“One faculty member, who was in the later stage of their career, responded that they are not interested in money at this point in their career.”(7)

“No faculty member could successfully define the inclusive access model of access to textbooks. Many thought it referred to freely-available course materials.”(6)

“...that faculty were directly negotiating vendor contracts rather than having the bookstore do this.”(2)

“Faculty primarily learn about textbooks and readings for use in their classes through direct messaging from publishers...”

What are the weaker points/qualities of the article? How could they be strengthened?

The weakest point is the respondent pool. Without knowing what percentage of total faculty 14 people represents, it is hard to imagine that the information is “in-depth.”

Peer Review Ranking: Scope

*Does the topic discuss an element related to open education, open data, open access, or other open topics?*

Highly Relevant

Peer Review Ranking: Clarity

*Clarity of expression and flow? Does the article proceed logically?*

Very Clear

Peer Review Ranking: Contribution

*Contribution to Higher Education research and/or practice*

Contributes

Peer Review Ranking: Research Assessment

*If this is a research paper, is the methodology appropriate?*

Appropriate

Peer Review Ranking: Research Assessment

*If this is a research paper, is the methodology appropriate? Does the article contribute knowledge or practical examples that will inform/improve others' practice or education?*

Sound

Overall Evaluation

2- Accept

-----