Findings of the OER Course Marking Landscape Analysis Survey

MIDWESTERN HIGHER EDUCATION COMPACT

POLICY REPORT
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In April 2021, the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC) convened a working group of institution, state, and national leaders to help advise its efforts to develop a set of principles to improve consistency and reliability in the field for measuring cost savings and the return on investment (ROI) of open education resources (OER).

The result of this work was the report, *Toward Convergence: Creating Clarity to Drive More Consistency in Understanding the Benefits and Costs of OER*. The report outlined six principles to help define efforts to identify savings and ROI from OER investments. It also offered two frameworks for making those calculations, which can be adapted to local interests and needs. Following on this work, MHEC and its partners in the National Consortium of Open Educational Resources (NCOER) determined to explore more about course marking of OER in U.S.-based postsecondary institutions via a landscape analysis survey. The survey included questions related to the course marking process, validation of course marking data, technology, motivations for marking of courses, use of course marking data, and opportunities and challenges encountered by institutions and systems when marking courses.

Course marking and data validation processes

More than one-third of survey respondents stated that they have implemented a process for marking courses that use OER. Given the voluntary sampling method used for this survey, it may be the case that this is an overrepresentation as compared to all U.S. colleges and universities. About one-third of respondents shared that OER is its own designation in the course marking process. Thirty different terms were shared, involving forty-one unique definitions, highlighting the great variety in institutional course marking data. Because of this variety and because OER is mixed in with other types of course designations, it remains difficult to study any impacts specifically connected to use of OER. A variety of individuals or units are involved in course marking, including faculty, bookstore staff, the registrar, librarians, and others. Few respondents have training for individuals who mark courses, and few have data validation processes to ensure data quality. While it is heartening to see that institutions and systems have implemented OER course

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/ SPARC /

Course markings (also called attributes, designations, tags, flags, labels) are specific, searchable attributes or designations that are applied to courses, allowing students to quickly identify important information to aid in their decision making and allow them to efficiently plan their academic careers.

/ Marking Open and Affordable Courses: Best Practices and Case Studies /

marking or are discussing plans to do so, it is clear that there remains much work to do to automate and standardize data collection processes to use the data in meaningful ways across institutions.

Use of course marking data

A small sub-set of survey respondents was asked to complete a brief survey exploring their use of course marking data related to OER. Eighty-five percent of respondents stated that they use the data to provide information to students about course materials. Other uses for the data include cost savings or return on investment (ROI) analyses, assessment of impact on student outcomes, and compliance with reporting requirements, though compliance was reported as a use by the fewest number of respondents. There is a relationship between collection and use of the OER course marking data, but more research is needed to understand the benefits and challenges associated with the use of these data.

Motivations for course marking

Less than half of respondents indicated that there is a state, system, or institutional policy related to course marking that impacts their institution, so, though such a policy may have been the impetus for some institutions and systems developing a course marking process, policy is not a requirement for action. Respondents shared many different methods used to develop a course marking process, often involving an individual or formal or informal committee taking the lead. In a few cases, demand and support came from students.

Course marking opportunities and challenges

Respondents to the survey shared a great variety of strengths and obstacles they have encountered as they discussed and developed a process for course marking at their institutions or systems. Strengths shared centered on themes of resource allocation, technology and processes, communications, and ease of use. Challenges included lack of support, definition challenges, technology and process difficulties, data input issues, and lack of awareness.

IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

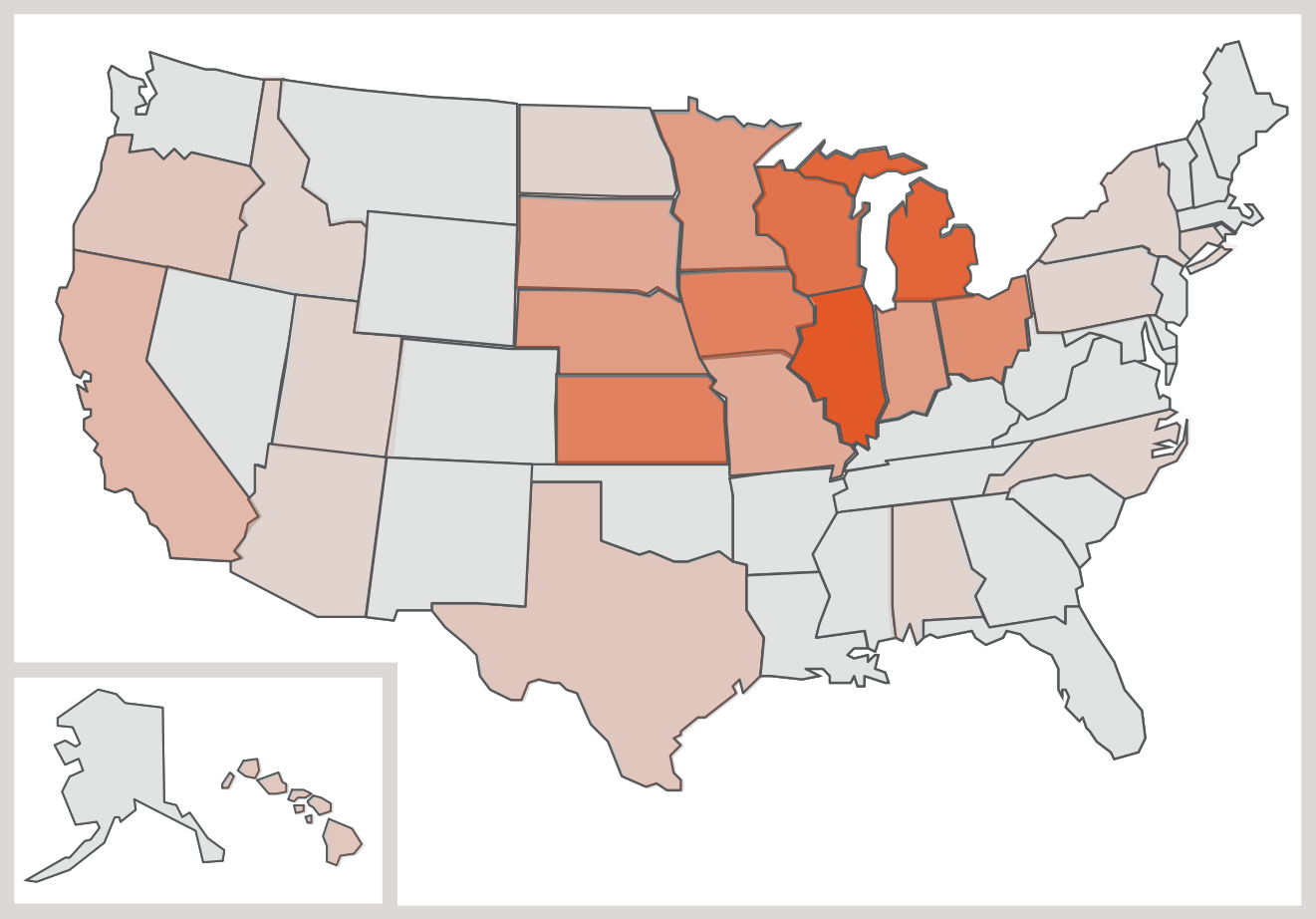
- There exist institutions and systems that have successfully implemented OER course marking processes and are using the data in ways that help students and the institutions and systems make data-informed decisions.
- Great variety exists in definitions used to collect and share course marking related to OER. This variety presents challenges to the use of data for research focused on more than one institution or system.
- Institutions and systems interested in developing or improving their course marking related to OER can learn from the strengths and obstacles encountered by those that have completed the process. Possibilities exist for collective sharing of promising practices and collaboration among institutions, systems, and technology and bookstore partners.

Findings of the OER course marking landscape analysis survey

In April 2021, MHEC convened a working group of institution, state, and national leaders to help advise its efforts to develop a set of principles to improve consistency and reliability in the field for measuring cost savings and the return on investment (ROI) of open education resources (OER). The result of this work was the report, *Toward Convergence: Creating Clarity to Drive More Consistency in Understanding the Benefits and Costs of OER*. The report outlined six principles to help define efforts to identify savings and ROI from OER investments. It also offered two frameworks for making those calculations, which can be adapted to local interests and needs. Following on

this work, MHEC and its partners in the National Consortium of Open Educational Resources (NCOER) determined to explore more about course marking of OER in U.S.-based postsecondary institutions via a landscape analysis survey. The survey included questions related to the course marking process, validation of course marking data, technology, motivations for marking of courses, use of course marking data, and opportunities and challenges encountered by institutions and systems when marking courses. A link to the survey was shared widely with the OER community, with 164 individuals representing 29 states completing at least a portion of the questions.

RESPONDENT LOCATION



Note. An additional 42 survey respondents did not report their location.

Survey results

The survey began with a question that determined which follow-up questions each respondent would be directed to.

FIGURE 1. Does your institution/system have a method for marking courses that use OER?

Yes, we have implemented a method for marking courses.	37%	60
No, but we are in the formal planning stage of method development.	6%	10
No, but we have discussed developing a method for marking courses.	31%	51
No, this is not a topic we have discussed at our institution.	26%	43
Other (please describe)	0%	0

Survey results for respondents that have implemented a method for marking courses

Only respondents that answered "Yes, we have implemented a method for marking courses" were directed to questions about their course marking process, data validation process, and institutional technology and bookstore. Forty-five of these respondents represented institutions and eight represented systems. Following is a summary of the results of these survey questions.

Course marking process

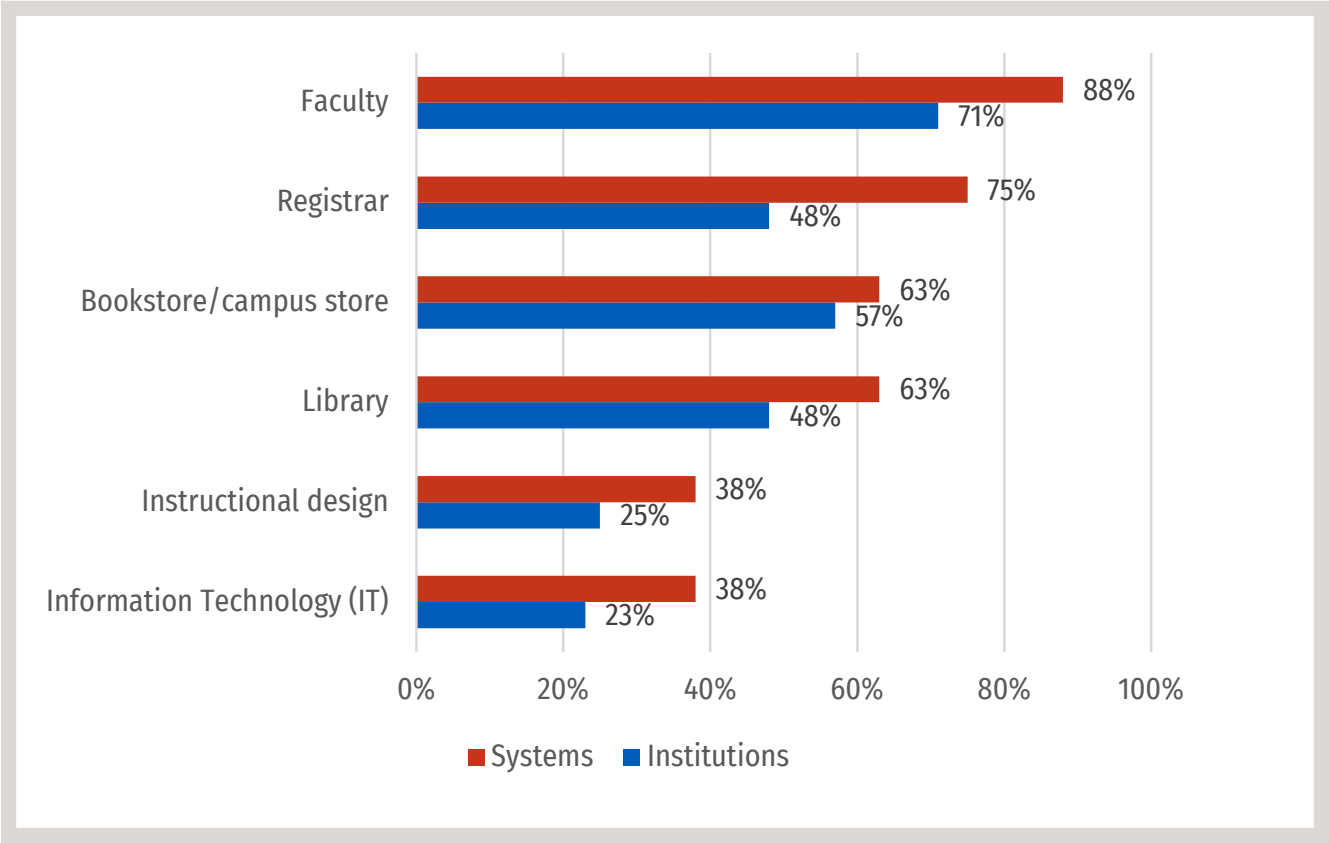
Figures 2 through 7 display the results of the survey questions related to institution and system course marking processes, including data on inclusion of OER, units and committees involved in course marking, and definitions, storage, and display of course marking data.

FIGURE 2. At your institution/system, which of the following course marking designation(s) includes OER? (Select all that apply.)

	Institutions		Systems	
OER is its own designation	33%	15	13%	1
OER is captured as part of "No cost to students/Zero Textbook Cost (ZTC)"	67%	30	88%	7
OER is captured as part of "Low cost to students/Low Textbook Cost (LTC)"	29%	13	38%	3
Other (please describe)		9		1

Most institutions and systems that have implemented a method for marking courses that use OER include OER in part of the designation, "No cost to students" or "Zero Textbook Cost (ZTC)". Those respondents that selected "other" generally captured OER using a different term (e.g., "OER/Library materials", combined OER with low cost and no cost for one designation or clarified that OER is not used as a term in their course marking process. Respondents were asked to share their institution or system definitions of the designations they capture. This information is detailed in Appendix A.

FIGURE 3. What units or individuals are involved in course marking at your institution? (Select all that apply.)



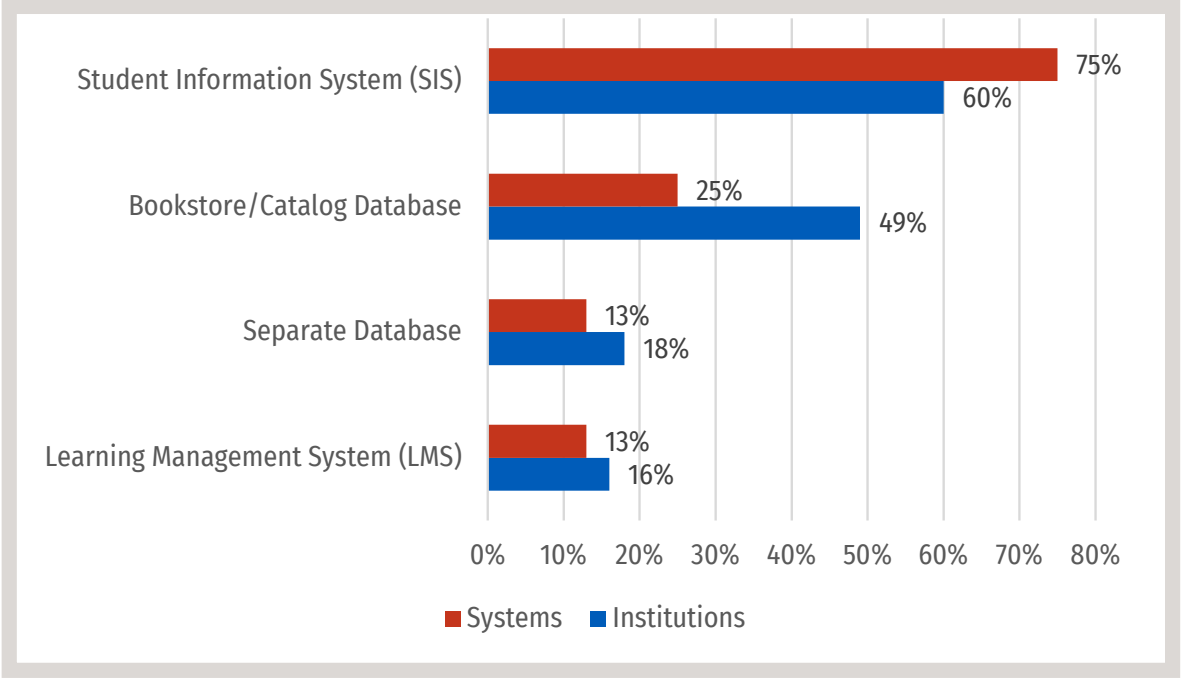
Most respondents indicated that faculty and bookstore/campus store are involved in course marking. Registrar and Library were also involved in many cases, with instructional design and Information Technology (IT) less likely to be involved in the process. Respondents who selected "Other" shared that Academic Affairs, academic departments, administrative assistants, and course schedulers/Curriculum and Scheduling Office are involved in the process. While the units listed in the original question may have developed the course marking process, others, such as administrative assistants, have been tasked with seeing the process through.

FIGURE 4. When marking courses using OER, what do you include as "course materials"? (Select all that apply.)

	Institutions		Systems	
Textbooks (includes digital and printed)	91%	41	100%	8
Supplies (e.g., culinary materials, art supplies, lab materials, calculator)	29%	13	13%	1
Ancillary materials (e.g., test banks, quizzes, slides, lesson plans, homework platforms, software subscriptions)	58%	26	50%	4
Other (please describe)		5		4

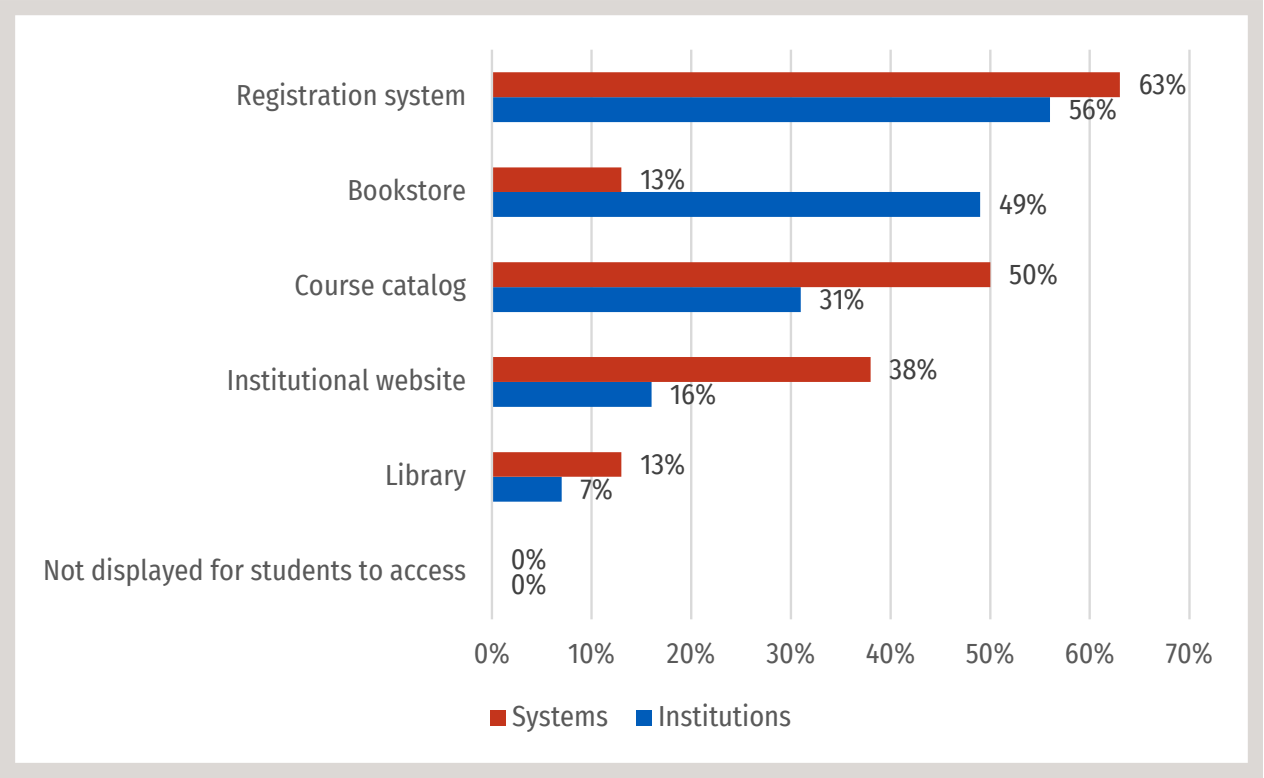
Almost all respondents indicated that they include textbooks as course materials when marking courses using OER. More than half include ancillary materials and less than one-third include supplies. Respondents that selected "Other" added items not included in the survey options (e.g., streaming videos, coursepack reader) or explained that supplies are covered under a separate course fee. In addition, a few respondents used the "Other" option to explain that their course marking process includes both an OER marker and a marker related to the cost of the course materials.

FIGURE 5. Where are course marking data stored for access by the institution/system for administrative purposes? (Select all that apply.)



Most course marking data are stored in the student information system (SIS) and/or the bookstore/catalog database. Fewer institutions/systems store the data in the learning management system (LMS) or in a separate database. Respondents that selected "Other" indicated that data are stored in the course schedule/scheduling app or explained the connection between various systems in which the data are stored (e.g., bookstore database and SIS are integrated).

FIGURE 6. Where are course marking information displayed for students to access? (Select all that apply.)



Most course marking information is displayed in the registration system for students to access. Respondents also indicated that information is displayed at the bookstore and in the course catalog. Fewer respondents reported having an institutional website with the course marking information and sharing the information at the library. An additional three respondents selected "other" and indicated that the information is displayed in the course schedule for students to access.

FIGURE 7. Does your institution/system have a committee or task force that oversees course marking of OER?

	Institutions		Systems	
Yes	24%	11	25%	2
No	67%	30	63%	5
Unsure	7%	3	13%	1

About one-quarter of respondents reported that their institution/system has a committee or task force that oversees course marking of OER. Names for the committees include Affordable Learning Committee, Course Materials Affordability Task Force, Textbook Affordability Committee, OER Steering Committee, OER Task Force, OER/Textbook Committee, Open SLCC Advisory Committee. A few respondents indicated that the committee has no formal name but collaborates on work related to marking of courses that use OER.

Course marking validation process

As shown in Figure 8, below, about one-third of institutions and 13% of systems that responded to the survey indicated that training is provided for the individuals responsible for marking course data related to OER. These relatively low percentages may be connected to the statements shared by respondents indicating that there is inconsistent course marking occurring at some institutions/systems. More institutions and systems, as documented in Figure 9, indicated that a process exists for validating OER course marking data.

FIGURE 8. Is training provided for the individuals responsible for marking course data related to OER?

	Institutions		Systems	
Yes	33%	15	13%	1
No	49%	22	63%	5
Unsure	18%	8	25%	2

FIGURE 9. When an individual marks a course as using OER, is there a process for checking that the course does, in fact, use OER?

	Institutions		Systems	
Yes	42%	19	25%	2
No	53%	24	63%	5
Unsure	4%	2	13%	1

Use of course marking data

To explore institutional and system use of course marking data, individuals to the original survey who answered "Yes, we have implemented a method for marking courses" and who had shared their email address as part of their survey response were sent a link to a 4-question survey focused on ways in which their institution/system uses its course marking data. 13 respondents completed the questions. Following is a summary of the results of that survey.

FIGURE 10. In which of the following ways does your institution/system use course marking data related to OER? (Select all that apply.)

To provide information to students about course materials	85%	11
For cost savings/return on investment (ROI) analyses	38%	5
To assess impact on student outcomes	38%	5
To comply with reporting requirements	23%	3
We do not currently use course marking data related to OER	15%	2
Other (please describe)		2

Most respondents indicated that they use course marking data related to OER to provide information to students about course materials. Thiry-eight percent of respondents use the data for cost savings/ROI analyses and to assess impact on student outcomes. Twenty-three percent of respondents indicated that they use the data to comply with reporting requirements and only two respondents stated that, though they have a system for collecting the data, they are not currently using course marking data related to OER. One respondent that selected "Other" indicated that they plan to use the data to assess

impact on student outcomes in the future and one uses the data to recognize department efforts.

Cost savings/ROI analyses

Most of the respondents that indicated they use the data for cost savings/return on investment analyses stated that they regularly conduct analyses to determine and share student cost savings with their institutional community. Specifically, the University of Missouri St. Louis shared that it is developing an open dataset about the return on investment of OER. Those respondents with specific affordability initiatives calculate the impact of the initiatives. One respondent indicated that the data are used to analyze whether Zero Cost courses fill more quickly during the registration process.

Assessing impact on student outcomes

One respondent indicated that they use course marking data in student retention and success analyses along with disaggregated student demographic data. And another respondent indicated that their OER stipend requires assessment of impact to demonstrate effectiveness of OER materials. A respondent from the University of Nebraska Omaha shared that, in May 2023, they published a white paper titled, *Student Success in Open Nebraska Courses*, summarizing their findings assessing impact on student outcomes of their Open Nebraska program.

Providing information to students about course materials

Respondents use a variety of methods to provide information to students about course materials, including advertising to student organizations, emailing students information at the start of the registration process, sharing a video on the student registration page, reminding academic advisors to help student find zero textbook courses, and using course markers (e.g., low-cost/free resource, OER, ZTC) in student registration system, bookstore website, and course catalogs.

Complying with reporting requirements

Reporting requirements varied by respondent. One system requires institutional reporting on the number of sections and number of students in ZTC sections. Another state requires that public institutions provide a website that displays cost information for required course materials for no less than 75% of courses offered each term. In this state designations for courses using low-cost and no-cost materials are also required to be included in the course schedule.

Kansas State University Open/Alternative Textbook Initiative

In 2013, three faculty members at Kansas State University founded the Open/Alternative Textbook Initiative to support student learning. Funding for the launch was provided largely by the student government association (SGA) to provide awards of up to $5000 for faculty to replace their commercial textbooks with open or alternative education resources. Long-term funding is provided by a $10 fee that students pay when registering for a course that is part of the initiative. A description of the initiative is detailed in chapter 21 of the text, Marking Open and Affordable Courses: Best Practices and Case Studies.

Technology and bookstore

Figures 11 through 14 display data related to respondents' technology systems and bookstore structure, including details about student information systems, course catalog software, and bookstore operations.

FIGURE 11. Does your institution/system have a student information system (SIS)?

	Institutions		Systems	
Yes	89%	39	88%	7
No	2%	1	13%	1
Unsure	9%	4	0%	0

Student information systems (SIS) appear ubiquitous in the institutions and systems that responded to the survey. This is important since, as shown in Figure 5, above, 60% of institutions and 75% of systems reported that their course marking data are stored in their SIS. The most popularly reported SIS in use by respondents was Ellucian (Banner and Colleague). Almost half of respondents reported using these tools. The next most popular systems were PeopleSoft and Oracle (Student Cloud, an older Oracle system, or a mix of Oracle and a homegrown system). Only 2% of institutions each reported using EAB Starfish, Jenzabar SONIS, and Workday Student. One system reported that the SIS varies by institution.

FIGURE 12. Does your institution/system use course catalog software?

	Institutions		Systems	
Yes	44%	19	50%	4
No	28%	12	25%	2
Unsure	28%	12	25%	2

Respondents were less certain about institutional/system use of course catalog software, but almost half indicated that their institution/system does use software to run its course catalog. About one-quarter of respondents use CourseLeaf, about 20% use Acalog. Watermark and Coursedog are also used by some respondents.

FIGURE 13. If your institution/system has an SIS and/or course catalog software, did you need to make changes to your SIS and/or software to be able to mark courses with OER?

	Institutions		Systems	
Yes	42%	16	71%	5
No	32%	12	14%	1
Unsure	26%	10	14%	1

Forty-two percent of institutions and seventy-one percent of systems reported that they needed to make a change to their SIS and/or software to be able to mark courses with OER. Many reported the need to add a new designator field or attribute to their system(s) and a few institutions indicate course type using a comment field. Some respondents explained that labels were added so that students can search for different course types in the course catalog. Some changes were made to the course search and display pages so that the SIS/software displayed course type for students to access in their searches.

FIGURE 14. Which of the following best describes the operation of your institution/system's bookstore?

	Institutions		Systems	
Institutionally/systemically operated	25%	11	38%	3
Independently operated	21%	4	0%	0
Operated by Barnes & Noble	21%	9	0%	0
Operated by Follett	25%	11	38%	3
Other (please describe)		9		2

Variety exists in the operation of respondents' institutional or system bookstores. In addition to the options listed in Figure 13, above, six institutional respondents reported that their bookstores are operated by eCampus, two by Akademos, and one by a regional outside company. The two system respondents that selected "Other" stated that bookstore operation varies by institution.

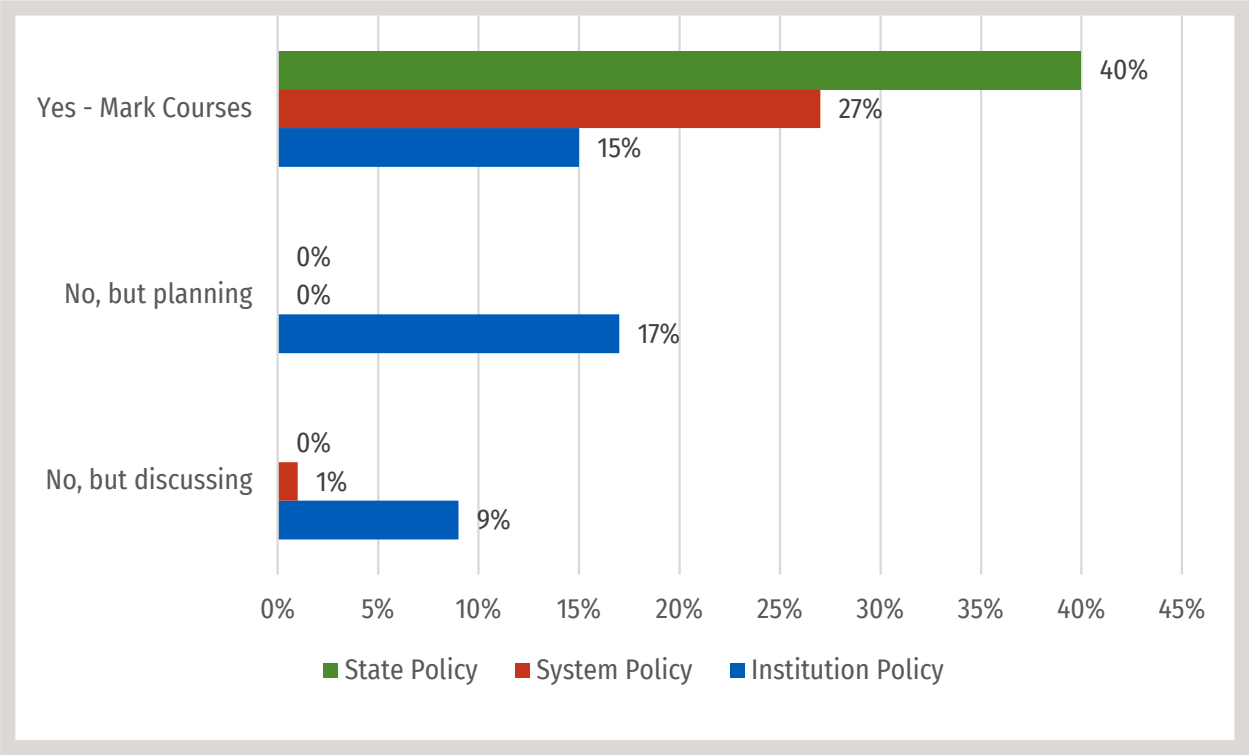
Survey results for respondents that have implemented a method for marking courses and those in the formal planning and discussion stages of course marking method developments

Respondents that answered "Yes, we have implemented a method for marking courses", "No, but we are in the formal planning stage of method development", and "No, but we have discussed developing a method for marking courses" were directed to questions about their motivations for course marking of OER and asked a series of open-ended questions about the process that led to establishing course marking at their institution/system, what is working well related to the marking of courses using OER, and the obstacles encountered. Following is a summary of the results of these survey questions.

Motivations for course marking of OER

To explore one type of motivation for the development of course marking processes, respondents were asked whether state-, system-, and institution-level policies exist that impact their system or institution.

FIGURE 15. Is there a state-level policy, system-level policy, and institution-level policy related to course marking that impacts your institution/system?



State-level policy

Eight institutional respondents and four system respondents, all of which indicated that they have implemented a method for marking courses, indicated that there is a state-level policy related to course marking that impacts their institution/system. All eight of the institutions that indicated that there is a state-level policy stated that the policy specifically addressed OER. Three of the system respondents stated the same, while one was unsure. States represented in these numbers include California, Connecticut, Idaho, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Oregon, and Texas.

> ▶ **SPARC tracks OER state policy currently under consideration and previously enacted.**

System-level policy

Eight institutions that are part of a system (seven that have implemented a method for marking courses and one that has discussed developing a course marking method) indicated that there is a system-level policy related to course marking that impacts their institution. Five systems indicated the same. All eight of the institutions indicated that the policy specifically addresses OER. One of the five systems indicated that the relevant system-level policy specifically addresses OER. Five of the eight institutions that stated there was a system-level course marking policy stated that all institutions in the system are required to follow the policy. The one system that reported such a policy also stated that all institutions in the system are required to follow the policy. System respondents that shared a link to their policy include Connecticut State Colleges and Universities, Idaho State Board of Education, and the University of Nebraska System.

Institution-level policy

Six institutions that have implemented a method for marking courses, one that is in the formal planning stage of method development, and three that have discussed developing a course marking method indicated that they have an institution-level policy related to course marking. Of those, only four of the six institutions that have implemented a method for marking courses stated that the institution-level policy specifically addresses OER. Examples of institution-level policies shared by respondents include Kansas State University, Northern Illinois University, and Salt Lake Community College. One respondent specifically stated that their institutional policy is to follow state policy, highlighting that the existence of state- or system-level policies precludes the need for an institution-level policy. One respondent indicated that their institution does not have a policy but does have a student senate resolution that impacts their efforts. Another stated that they do not have a ratified policy, but the institution does make course marking explicit

Conclusion

The findings of this survey confirm that there exist institutions and systems that have successfully implemented OER course marking processes and are using the data in ways that help students and the institutions and systems make data-informed decisions. While some institutions, systems, and states have policies related to course marking that may have motivated the development of course marking, at least half of respondents developed their processes in the absence of formal policies.

Institutions and systems continue to encounter challenges as they develop and implement course marking processes. With the great variety of terms and definitions shared in the survey, it may continue to be challenging to standardize course marking language across institutions and systems, but those that are in the development stage can learn from the findings of this survey. In particular, the postsecondary community can learn from the successes shared here and in other course marking resources referenced in this report.

What is working well?	What are the obstacles?
Resource allocation: — OER is part of strategic plan — Resources are committed to OER — Registrar is committed and helpful — Committed employees — Effective OER committee	**Lack of support:** — OER use is low for faculty (OER not always available to meet needs, unfair to faculty not using OER) — Lack of state-level policy impacts coordination efforts — Lack of funding has slowed process — Organizational changes/leadership turnover have slowed progress — Lack of institutional commitment — Lack of course marking committee — Challenge securing lead for the project — Lack of faculty involvement — Challenging to work with IT — Limited technical/coding resources — Challenging to find time to develop system — Third party textbook provider considers cost information proprietary — Use of textbook subscription by bookstore obscures cost
Technology/process: — Attribute already existed in systems — Bookstore and publishers recognize markings — Established workflow	**Definition challenges:** — Lack of definition of “low cost” — Lack of clarity when faculty say no textbook required (e.g., OER, on reserve, in database with institutional fee)
Communications: — Between bookstore and institution — With students	**Technology/process:** — Bookstore partner system is inconsistent — Bookstore partner was changed – lost previous marking system — Course marking is not available in institutional systems — Difficult to make change in SIS — Lack of universal SIS across institutions

What is working well?	What are the obstacles?
	Technology/process: (continued) — Data are not easily extractable from systems — Difficult to compile data in one place for students to access/data are not included in all systems students use to access information/ students see data after they have registered — Process is not automated/formalized
Ease of use: — For students to see costs/find courses — For faculty to report information	**Data input:** — Inconsistent/lack of marking by faculty — Course materials change by semester — Marking is done by course and not all instructors for a course use the same materials — Data are needed early to include in system for students to access, but faculty may not yet be assigned to courses (particularly with adjunct) — Lack of verification of data inputted by faculty/verification is manual and time consuming — High turnover in administrative assistants who input data
Other: — Visual signal to students related to affordability and accessibility — Promotes OER/Increased number of courses using OER — Awards for departments offering the most courses using OER — Provides useful data for the institution	**Awareness:** — Lack of student awareness that data are available — Lack of faculty awareness that they need to initiate the marking process

Comprehensive resource for course marking best practices

Marking Open and Affordable Courses: Best Practices and Case Studies provides details on methods for marking course material as OER or under a low-cost threshold. The openly available book includes a summary of relevant state legislation, provides tips for working with stakeholders, and shares technological and process considerations for institutions as they embark on the process.

APPENDIX A – INSTITUTION AND SYSTEM DEFINITIONS RELATED TO COURSE MARKING

Term	Definition	Attribute	Respondents
TBD	Textbook to be determined		2
Unknown Textbook Used	If an instructor does not report the textbook type (including no textbook used), or the textbook type is not entered into ISRS.		
OER	Primary required text(s) and other text-based materials, workbooks, lab manuals, etc. are not in the public domain or have a Creative Commons license that permits free use and re-purposing by others.		
	Creative Commons copyright		2
	Free to students		
	Print or digital books or resources that are free to students, but not necessarily free for the College to supply.		
	This course uses free Open Educational Resources (OER). OERs are teaching, learning and research materials in a digital medium that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits no-cost access, use, adaptation, and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions.		
OER/Library	Course uses only OER or library materials		2
No Cost OER	This course uses free Open Educational Resources (OER) or free textbook alternatives and does not require purchase of a textbook.	NOCOST	
Low Cost OER	This course uses free Open Educational Resources (OER) to eliminate conventional textbook costs but requires less than $75 for required course materials.	LOWCOST	
No textbook	Course does not require a textbook		3
No Course Materials Required	This course does not require any course materials.	NOMAT	
Zero Textbook Cost/ OER (Backend)	Course materials consist of Open Educational Resources (OER) open for use at no cost to students (not including supplies such as calculators, Scantrons, goggles, or other equipment).		

APPENDIX A – INSTITUTION AND SYSTEM DEFINITIONS RELATED TO COURSE MARKING (CONTINUED)

Term	Definition	Attribute	Respondents
Zero Textbook Costs/ No Book (Backend)	There are no required course materials, such as textbooks or assigned digital platforms (not including supplies such as calculators, Scantrons, goggles, or other equipment).		
Zero Textbook Costs/ STC Paid (Backend)	Course materials consist of materials purchased by the College (such as library e-books and databases) for use at no cost to students (not including supplies such as calculators, Scantrons, goggles, or other equipment).		
Zero Textbook Cost (Student-facing)	Any course materials, such as e-textbooks and access to digital platforms, are free to the student (not including supplies such as calculators, Scantrons, goggles, or other equipment).		
Zero Cost	Total list price of $0		4
	This course exclusively uses OER, library-licensed materials, or other materials that are free to students.		2
ZTC	Zero Cost to Students		3
Z-course	Use textual course materials and have not cost to the student for textual course materials.		
No Cost	Zero cost for required textbook	CONO	
	No additional costs for course materials		
	OER or any resource that is no additional cost to the student, including library resources and/or any copyrighted material freely available on the web.		
	No textbook required or using OER.		
No Cost Materials	Course materials are included at no additional cost to the student. No book purchase is required.		3
No Cost Textbook	An instructor uses a textbook(s) in a course that is no cost for students. These textbooks include textbooks available in the public domain, are open textbooks, materials used under fair use, etc. This category does NOT include OER. Note, if a print option is available, but is a cost for students, the textbook can still be classified as OER if a no-cost option is available to all students.		

APPENDIX A – INSTITUTION AND SYSTEM DEFINITIONS RELATED TO COURSE MARKING (CONTINUED)

Term	Definition	Attribute	Respondents
Low Cost Course Materials	This course uses a conventional textbook or software but requires less than $75 in cost for required course materials.	LOWMAT	
No-Cost/Low-Cost	Any course using OER as the primary course materials with the option of adding supplemental materials with a cost no greater than $40 (not including the cost of fees or other supplies required or recommended by the instructor.		
No/Low Cost	Up to $25 in printing costs		
Zero/Low-Cost	Textbooks/lab manuals/ancillaries total less than $50		
Very Low Cost	Total list price of $1-30		
AER	Less than $40		
Low Cost	Less than $29	COLO	
	Total list price of $31-50		
	Less than $40		11
	Less than $50		5
Low Cost e-Book	This reduced cost e-book is purchased through the campus bookstore and costs a student less than $40.		
Open Textbook	Course uses an open textbook, but course materials are above the Low-Cost threshold.		
Regular-Cost Textbook	Total cost of textbook(s) in a course cost more than $40		
Mid Cost	Total list price of $51-100		
High Cost	Total list price of more than $100		

MIDWESTERN HIGHER EDUCATION COMPACT

Vision MHEC members collaborate to address the region's most pressing challenges in higher education and transform educational opportunities so that people and communities thrive.

Mission MHEC brings together midwestern states to develop and support best practices, collaborative efforts, and cost-sharing opportunities. Through these efforts it works to ensure strong, equitable postsecondary educational opportunities and outcomes for all.

Who MHEC Serves MHEC is comprised of member states from the midwestern United States. MHEC works with and for a variety of stakeholders within and across member states, including higher education system leaders, state policymakers, legislators, and institutional leaders, while always maintaining a focus on students and their success.

How MHEC Works MHEC's strategic approach highlights member states' strong desire for collaboration, effectiveness, and efficiency. MHEC believes that collaborative actions informed by research and best practices are the catalyst for improving quality, accessibility, relevance, and affordability of postsecondary educational opportunities. MHEC does this primarily through the following approaches: convenings, programs, research, and cost-savings contracts. Increasingly, MHEC looks to leverage these approaches in conjunction with each other to serve its strategic priorities.

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