

# Assessing the Impact of a Collaborative OER & Affordable Resources Committee

## *Instructors' Awareness of Course Material Options*

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### ***Abstract***

This case study shares observations from a 2022 survey of 197 instructors at Iowa State University, a public research university in the United States. The survey sought to explore instructor awareness of three major affordable course material initiatives supported by the university's Open & Affordable Education Committee (OAEC): Open Educational Resources (OER), Course Reserves, and Immediate Access. Results from the survey found that despite significant cross-promotion and collaboration between the three programs represented on the OAEC, the awareness and uptake of each program varied greatly, as did instructors' understanding of the differences between each material type. This paper shares the results of that survey, as well as improvements which have been made to the OAEC's programming and promotion efforts in the year since.

### **Introduction**

Covering the cost of course materials has been a longstanding concern for college students. The average cost of textbooks and supplies for a full-time undergraduate student at a four-year public institution in the US was estimated to be \$1,240 in the 2020-2021 academic year (Arnett, 2022). This cost can be a significant financial burden for students and may prevent them from accessing the resources they need to succeed academically. To address this issue, academic libraries and other units working across the higher education sector have developed programs and initiatives to support the

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creation and use of free and low-cost course materials, such as open educational resources (OER), library-licensed materials, and course packs, among others.

## ***Background***

Iowa State University's Open & Affordable Education Committee (OAEC) began in 2017 with the purpose of exploring, assessing, and supporting the use of OER and other affordable course materials across the university (Iowa State University, 2023). The committee is not a board which actively manages affordable course material programs. Instead, it serves as a space where several program leads and campus stakeholders can come together to discuss effective strategies for supporting the use of OER and other affordable course materials while prioritizing the needs of instructors and students. The committee includes the Open Education program's lead, the Course Materials manager for the ISU Book Store, the Iowa State Student Government Association's Director of Affordability, and other campus partners, including faculty, librarians, and instructional designers.

The OAEC collaborates on the promotion of three major course material initiatives: Open Education, Course Reserves, and Immediate Access. The Open Education program supports the use of OER, teaching and learning materials that are openly licensed, allowing for them to be used, revised, and shared by users freely (UNESCO, 2019). The Course Reserves program supports the use of library-licensed resources, such as e-books and journal articles, which can be accessed by students at no additional cost through the institution's library (Iowa State University Library, 2023). Finally, the Immediate Access program is a university-branded inclusive access initiative which supports the use of reduced cost course materials available electronically through textbook publishers' infrastructure (Iowa State University Book Store, 2023). While other affordable course material options are recommended by the committee (e.g., low-cost course packets, used books, and free online materials like blogs or websites), these three course material types are the ones which Iowa State University supports through substantial programming.

Staff supporting the OAEC's programs coordinate one-on-one with instructors to help them locate, evaluate, and adopt appropriate materials for their courses. Course material adoption data for these programs in 2021-2022 is added here for context, along with average student savings per course, when available. In the 2021-2022 academic year, 46 courses reported using OER, serving 9,395 students, including ISU's required 1-credit information literacy course, Library 160, which supported 5,065 students. We measure OER savings with the recommended \$116 average savings per course, as proposed by Wiley (2018) and later endorsed by Zaback (2022). Since we do not count Library 160 toward our cost saving numbers—its book has been provided freely by the library for many years—the cost savings for students taking all other courses using OER was roughly half a million dollars in 2021-2022. Iowa State University's Course Reserves served 450 classes and 11,275 students in 2021-2022. Finally, the ISU Book Store saw 105,849 total enrollments in courses using the Immediate Access program in 2021-2022, with just under two million dollars in reported savings to students. This indicates that students enrolled in courses using Immediate Access materials had an average \$18 in savings per course.

The OAEC's members have collaborated across our programs even prior to this study. For example, in order to provide accurate communications about our programs, the OAEC's members have leveraged the use of a shared slide set which we use when presenting about various affordable course material options across campus. Additionally, the committee collaborates on the collection and reporting of OER adoption data. Each semester, ISU Book Store staff collect OER adoptions in a spreadsheet shared with the OAEC. When faculty report OER adoptions to the library instead of through official means, these are also added to that shared spreadsheet and Book Store staff are notified so they can add the OER to their course materials portal for students. New and emerging collaborations since this survey was conducted are described in the Discussion section of this paper.

This study aimed to assess the impact of Iowa State University's Open & Affordable Education Committee (OAEC) by exploring faculty members' awareness of various affordable course materials that the committee promotes. Data was collected through a survey designed to find the answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the faculty's awareness of our various course material initiatives?
2. What barriers are stopping faculty from adopting affordable course materials?
3. What strategies are faculty members employing to make their courses more available?

The findings from this survey provide insights into the impact of Iowa State University's various affordable course material initiatives and the cross-promotional work of the OAEC.

## Literature Review

### *Motivations for Course Material Adoption*

While support for affordable course materials has been growing in recent years, faculty members' adoption of these materials is critical to realize their benefits; however, many faculty members still rely on expensive, commercial textbooks for their teaching (Wimberley et al., 2020). How faculty members perceive affordable course materials plays a critical role in their adoption and integration into the classroom. This is further complicated by a lack of understanding regarding what OER are and how they differ from other affordable course material programs (Santiago & Arthur, 2021). A study of 1,843 faculty and 916 administrators from colleges and universities across the United States by Seaman & Seaman (2022) found that although 43% of administrators surveyed were aware of an OER initiative on their campus, only 27% of faculty were aware of their institution's initiatives.

Furthermore, even when faculty are aware of the options available to them, there are different motivations among faculty members that lead them to create or adopt new course materials. For OER, research has identified altruistic, commercial, and transformational incentives that motivate faculty to integrate them into courses (Slater, 2011). Jhangiani et al. (2016) found that faculty perceptions of OER were influenced by a number of factors, including their perceptions of the quality of OER, their confidence in their ability to find and use OER, and the value they place on open access and sharing. In a more recent study by Spilovoy et al. (2020), faculty awareness and use of OER showed a significant

increase. Nevertheless, those faculty members who had not used OER were less likely to perceive OER positively than those who had. Because of this hesitancy and other considerations, like a lack of time to research other course material options, commercial textbooks are still the default course materials in use across the higher education sector (McBride & Abramovich, 2022).

### ***Benefits and Challenges of Affordable Course Material Options***

In contrast to traditional textbooks, OER allow instructors to reduce or even eliminate students' course material expenses (Hendricks et al., 2017; Read et al., 2020). Students who enroll in courses using OER save money and their educational outcomes do not change statistically significantly (Chiorescu, 2017). Hence, OER help in decreasing students' spending without compromising learning. However, locating appropriate OER for a given field is not always easy, either due to availability or other discoverability issues (Perifanou & Economides, 2022). To support the growing use of OER while finding ways to support students across the curriculum, some colleges have implemented a multi-pronged approach to supporting the use of affordable course material options.

One of the longest-standing programs for helping students access course materials freely is course reserves, a service that many academic libraries provide to help students access textbooks, articles, and other materials available through their library's collections (Dotson & Olivera, 2020). These library-licensed materials may include print textbooks and DVDs as well as electronic materials such as journal articles and e-books. While course reserves serve as useful affordability measures for student success, the budgets of many academic libraries cannot account for the full range of materials adopted on their campus, particularly as many textbook publishers limit the number and format of textbooks which academic libraries can purchase (Courtney & Ziskina, 2023). Despite the setbacks that libraries have faced when trying to advocate for more robust course reserves, these services are a longstanding and impactful program for providing free access to course materials.

Inclusive access programs have grown in popularity and use across the United States over the past 10 years (Seaman & Seaman, 2022). These programs help lower the cost of course materials by providing students with electronic access to course materials on the first day of class, typically at a reduced cost (Cuillier, 2018). However, publishers who manage inclusive access programs for their materials have come under fire for opaque billing methods, the unethical collection of student data, and uncapped price increases, among other concerns (Vitez, 2020). Many institutions have sought to follow best practices when setting up contracts with publishers for inclusive access by providing more price transparency and allowing students to opt-in rather than requiring them to opt-out of purchasing these materials (Vitez, 2020). Nonetheless, when there are no free materials available for faculty, taking a step toward something more affordable can be a positive change, and the robust marketing for inclusive access programs from campus stores and publishers alike have made this model a popular one.

## **Methods**

In early 2022, the Open & Affordable Education Committee (OAEC) conducted a survey to assess the reach and impact of its affordable course material programs. The survey, composed of a mix of 12 qualitative and quantitative questions, was based on San Mateo County Community College's (SMCCC) Faculty Open Education Week OER Awareness Survey Instrument, available under a Creative

Commons Attribution 4.0 license (Maloney et al., 2021). To assess the impact of Iowa State's collaborative committee structure, we adapted the SMCCC survey to include additional questions about our Course Reserves and Immediate Access programs. To ensure that the results would be comparable across the various program types, the question on the original survey about barriers to utilizing OER was adapted to ensure that the same or similar questions could be asked for each of the corresponding affordable course material programs being assessed.

Because this study was conducted to collect data which we used to improve internal programming, it did not undergo IRB review. However, we are planning to seek out IRB review for future studies in order to collect more in-depth data on faculty perceptions and engagement with our programs.

## ***Participants***

The survey was disseminated online via Qualtrics. All faculty (n=1,749) at Iowa State University were invited to participate in an email that included a description of the survey, its length, and its purpose. Two weeks after the initial email, a reminder email was sent to the same list of faculty. This was necessary because the survey was entirely anonymous and we could not verify which faculty members had already completed the survey. One month after the survey's initial dissemination, 226 participants had opened it, with 197 (11.3% of all faculty) completing at least 90% of the survey's questions.

## **Results**

### ***Background On Course Materials Adoption***

The survey opened with a few general questions about faculty members' adoption of course materials to develop a baseline understanding of how course material decisions are made across campus. Question 1 asked "Who has the PRIMARY role in selecting educational resources for use in the courses you teach?" Out of 197 participants, an overwhelming majority (86%, n=170) shared that they are personally responsible for selecting materials in their own courses. Every other category had a low response rate, with 4% of participants (n=8) sharing that a faculty committee selects the materials for their courses; 5% (n=10) sharing that department coordinators are responsible for selecting materials, and the final 5% (n=9) choosing "Other." Among the participants who selected this option, most (n=5) shared that multiple of these categories might be true, depending on the courses they are teaching.

Question 2 asked participants to rank factors that may impact their course material selection, from 1 (most important) to 9 (least important). We assessed this question via the mean rank applied to the factor being assessed. Most of the participants selected "cover the subjects I wish to teach" as their highest priority for materials (mean rank of 1.8), followed by "content is relevant to curriculum and learning outcomes," (mean rank of 2.4). Cost of materials was ranked as the third most important category, with a mean rank of 3.9. The fourth highest rated factor that faculty use when selecting course materials was "content that is current with up-to-date information" (mean rank of 4.2), followed by "ease of access" (mean rank of 5), and "content that is proven to improve student learning outcomes" (mean rank of 5.9). Finally, rounding out the bottom rankings were "content that works with the Canvas

LMS” (mean rank of 6.9), “content that is used by other course section faculty” (mean rank of 7.4), and “materials that are customizable” (mean rank of 7.6).

### ***Experience With Affordable Course Materials***

To get a better understanding of the scope of practices that faculty employ, the survey asked about participants’ experience using affordable course materials. First, the faculty were asked whether they had replaced commercial materials in one or more of their courses with a no-cost textbook, reader, lab manual, and/or homework system. The responses were surprisingly balanced, with 46.7% of participants (n=92) indicating that they had adopted no-cost course materials and 53.3% (n=105) indicating that they had not.

Next, the participants were asked about the strategies they used to lower costs for their students. The most popular option of those provided was creating one’s own course materials (n=144, 73.1%). Using course materials available through the library was the second most common practice, with 62.9% of participants (n=124) stating that they had implemented one or more of the following strategies: used library database articles to support instruction (n=85); used library subscribed ebooks to support instruction (n=58); or used library subscribed film databases to support instruction (n=22). Following these, the next most common practice was using online videos to support instruction (n=118, 59.9%).

The final four strategies were each used by less than 50% of participants. 39.1% (n=77) indicated that they had researched alternatives to a costly textbook, whether they were able to locate an appropriate alternative or not. 36.6% (n=72) created a low-cost reader or course pack for their class. 32% (n=63) used Immediate Access materials to lower costs for students. 20.3% of participants (n=40) indicated that they had used open educational resources (OER) in a course instead of a traditional for-cost textbook. Finally, 10.7% of participants (n=21) lowered course material costs through other means.

Answers to Other category included using low-cost traditional books (n=4), creating new OER rather than using existing ones (n=3), supplementing for-cost materials with free online content, including OER (n=3), using ebooks, streaming videos, and other materials available through library subscriptions (n=3), reducing course or lab fees (n=2), eliminating course materials altogether (n=2), using department-developed materials (n=1), assigning materials that are considered “grey literature” which are free to access (n=1), providing free PDFs of course materials in the course LMS (n=1), and bringing in guest speakers to supplement static course materials (n=1).

The next set of questions asked faculty about their awareness of the affordable course material options supported by the OAEC’s programming.

### ***Faculty Awareness of Open Educational Resources***

The first of course material types to be covered was OER. Nearly half of the faculty surveyed (45%, n=90) had no or very little information about OER, with 28.4% of the participants (n=56) reporting that they were not aware of OER at all and 17.3% (n=34) stating that they had heard of OER but did not know much about them. The next most common response was in the second highest awareness category, with 22.8% of participants (n=45) stating that they understand what OER are and how they are used, but they have not adopted OER in any of their courses. 18.8% of participants (n=37)

had some awareness of OER but did not know how to use them. Finally, 12.7% (n=25) were very aware of OER and had used them in one or more of their courses.

### *Faculty Awareness of Course Reserves*

Faculty awareness of Course Reserves was much more positive overall. In contrast with faculty awareness of OER, nearly one-third of the total participants (29.9%, n=59) indicated that they had used Course Reserves in the past. Furthermore, 19.8% (n=39) were aware of Course Reserves and how the service works but had not used it.

The last three categories were relatively similar in proportion in this section, with 17.3% (n=34) of participants stating that they are unaware of Course Reserves and 17.8% (n=35) knowing about Course Reserves but unsure what they are. Finally, 15.2% of participants (n=30) reported that they are somewhat aware of Course Reserves but unsure how to request materials on reserve for their class. The results suggest that while a majority of faculty members are aware of Course Reserves as an option, a lack of knowledge surrounding the service inhibits its widespread use.

### *Faculty Awareness of Immediate Access*

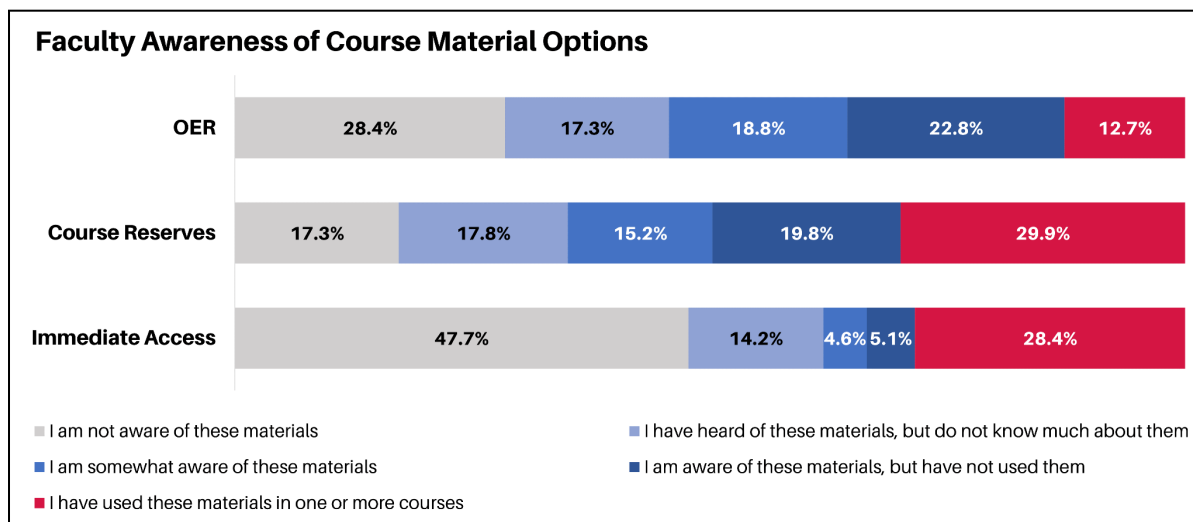
Finally, we explored faculty members' awareness of Iowa State University's Immediate Access (IA) program. Although the IA program has been in place at Iowa State University for ten years, IA is a relatively new business model, so it is not surprising that nearly half of the participants (47.7%, n=94) reported that they were not aware of the university's IA program.

Among those who were aware of IA, 28.4% (n=56) reported using IA in one or more courses, while 14.2% (n=28) shared that they had heard about IA but did not know much about it. Finally, 5.1% (n=10) reported that they knew about the IA program and how it works but had not used it in any of their courses and another 4.6% of the participants (n=9) stated that they were somewhat familiar with IA but unsure how to adopt the materials.

Responses about awareness for each course material option are pulled together in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1**

*Faculty Survey Responses on Awareness of Course Material Options*

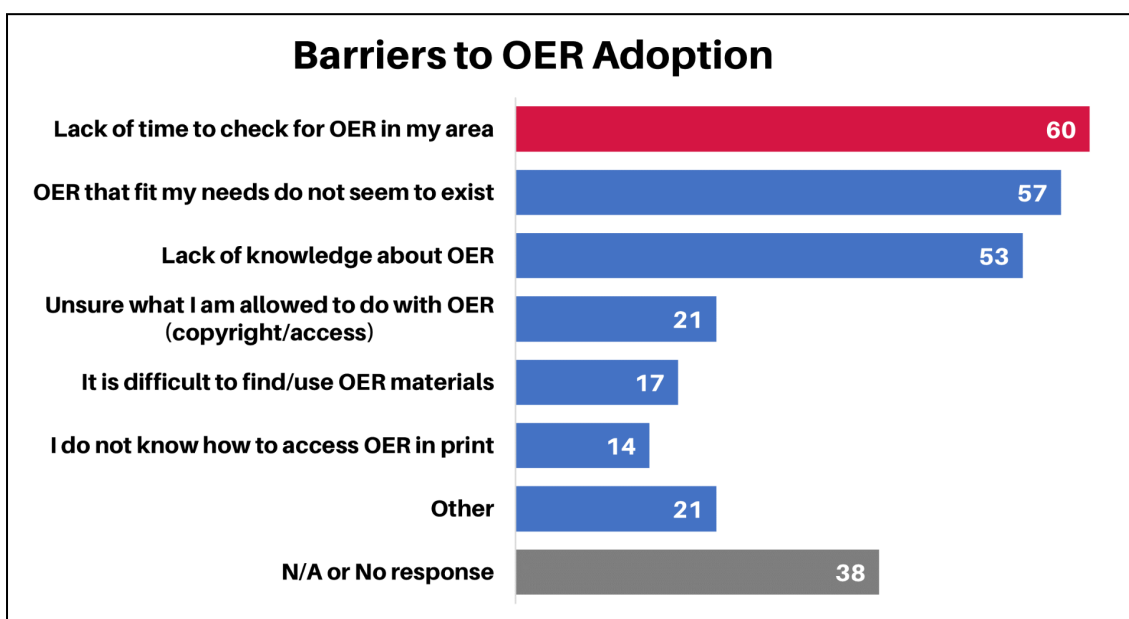


## *Barriers to Open Educational Resources*

The survey also asked about barriers to the use of these affordable course material options. For OER, the most common reported barrier was a lack of time to locate or adopt OER, with 30.5% of participants (n=60) selecting this option (Figure 2). Additionally, 28.9% of the participants (n=57) reported a lack of suitable OER available in their area and 26.9% (n=53) reported a lack of knowledge about what OER are, indicating a need for increased awareness and education about how to locate and assess OER.

**Figure 2**

*Faculty Survey Responses on Barriers to Open Educational Resources*



Other potential barriers to the use of OER were rated lower, with only 10.7% of participants (n=21) stating that they were uncertain about how OER can be used due to copyright, 8.6% (n=17) having difficulty finding or using OER, 7.1% (n=14) being unsure how to access OER in print, and 10.7% (n=21) having other barriers to the use of OER.

Among the responses to the Other category were faculty who are occupied with other responsibilities, such as heavy teaching and research loads and/or a lack of incentives to adopt or create OER. One participant reported, “The university does not offer incentive for faculty to spend time doing these tasks.” This is a particularly concerning response because Iowa State University offers funding for faculty to develop and implement OER in their courses through its annual mini-grant program, and encourages faculty to adopt OER through other administrative initiatives. The support we have developed should address many of the concerns levied by participants; however, since 28% of participants (n=55) reported being unfamiliar with OER, it is possible that these participants are unaware of the Open Education program in place as well, or that they are interested in other support structures to incentivize OER implementation.

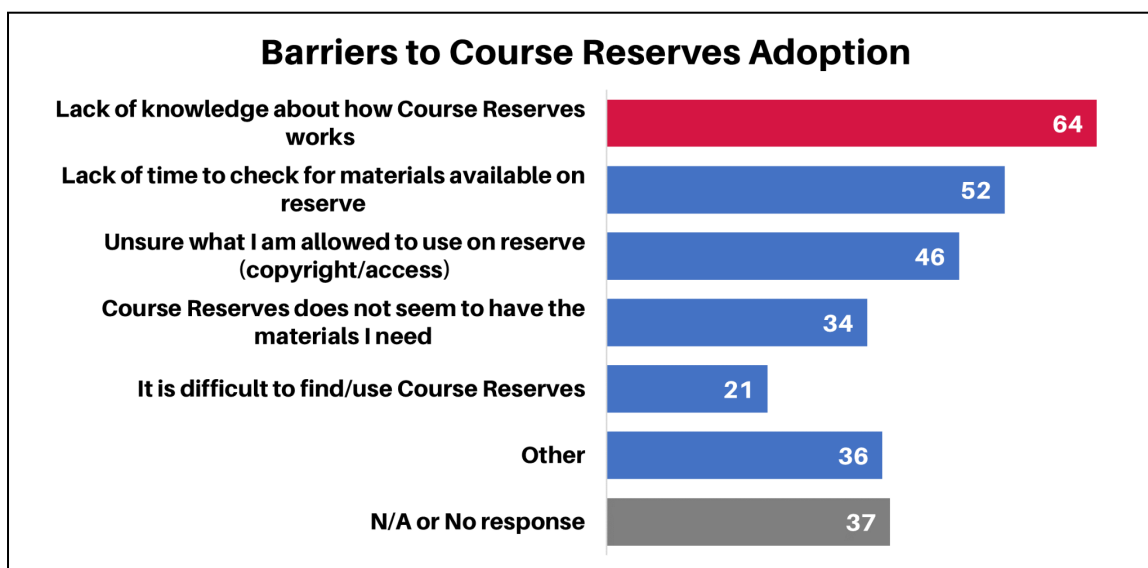


## ***Barriers to Course Reserves***

In contrast to the responses about OER, only 26.4% (n=52) of participants shared that they did not have enough time to check for available materials through Course Reserves (Figure 3). A larger barrier for this program was faculty members' general understanding of how Course Reserves works, with 32.5% of participants (n=64) citing this lack of understanding as a barrier. There were also concerns regarding copyright and access restrictions with Course Reserves, with 23.4% of participants (n=46) unsure what materials they could use on reserve.

**Figure 3**

*Faculty Survey Responses on Barriers to Course Reserve*



The last two barriers included under Course Reserves were less commonly selected, with only 17.3% of participants (n=34) stating that Course Reserves does not have access to the materials they need and 10.7% (n=21) stating that it is difficult to find or use materials through Course Reserves. Finally, 18.3% (n=36) reported other barriers to using Course Reserves. Responses to the Other category included notes that some faculty did not encounter any barriers with Course Reserves (8.1%, n=16) that students don't use materials on reserve (2%, n=4), that faculty already have all the materials they need through other means (4.1%, n=8), that Course Reserves does not provide the type of material the instructor needs (3%, n=6), and, in rare cases, that the faculty member has a negative perceptions of Course Reserves due to personal or departmental history (1%, n=2).

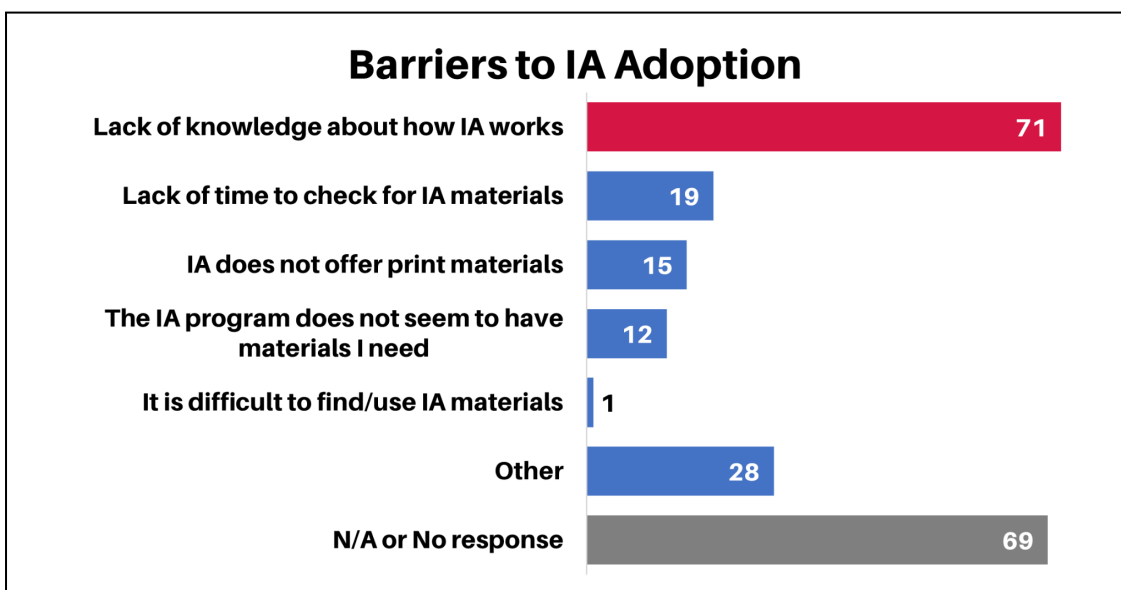
## ***Barriers to Immediate Access***

Next, we asked faculty whether they have faced several barriers when trying to engage with the Immediate Access program at Iowa State University. Nearly half of the participants (36%, n=71) reported a lack of knowledge about how IA works. The survey revealed that 9.6% of participants (n=19) did not have enough time to check for materials available through the IA program, while 6.1% (n=12) reported they could not find what they needed as IA. This might be because these instructors assign

content that is not typically provided by textbook publishers, such as journal articles, poetry books, or modern literature published by small presses. This is further highlighted by the 7.6% of participants (n=15) who identified a lack of print options for IA materials as a deterrent to their use. Finally, 1 participant shared that it is difficult to find or use IA materials, and 14.2% (n=28) of participants cited other barriers to the use of IA, such as concerns about student data and privacy concerns.

#### Figure 4

##### *Faculty Survey Responses on Barriers to Immediate Access*



Responses to the Other category included statements that some faculty encountered no barriers (4.6%, n=9), that they were unaware of the option to begin with (3%, n=6), that faculty did not need the IA program due to the availability of lower cost or free materials elsewhere (1.5%, n=3), that the specific courseware faculty use is not compatible with the Immediate Access program (1%, n=2), and that the faculty member has encountered procedural issues with submitting course material decisions (2%, n=4).

## Discussion

The outcomes of the OAEC's affordable course materials survey were not wholly unexpected. We knew that our programs were lacking in engagement and that there were likely some faculty unaware of the full scope of our programs. Nonetheless, the exact makeup of the responses we received were enlightening, with the differences in the distribution between our three course material programs being particularly interesting. There was a surprisingly high awareness of OER among the participants, with 22.8% of participants indicating that they are aware of OER but have not personally adopted them. However, there was a disconnect between this relatively high awareness and the actual adoption of OER in courses. In contrast, the Immediate Access program had much lower awareness, with 47.7% of participants completely unaware of the IA program; however, those who knew about IA were more likely to have adopted it in one or more of their courses. Finally, Course Reserves was shown to have a

high level of awareness from faculty, but comments around the service indicated that there was a lack of clarity surrounding its use.

### ***Misconceptions About OER Limit The Accuracy Of Our Data***

Throughout our survey, participants indicated that they lacked a strong understanding of what OER are and how they differ from other free online course materials. This confusion could lead to the collection of incomplete or incorrect adoption data for OER, as faculty may not be certain whether the materials they are using in their course “count” as OER. While it may not matter from a cost-savings perspective whether a faculty member is using free copyrighted online materials, library-licensed materials, or OER in their courses, understanding the differences between these materials is important for our institution’s programming to succeed.

A lack of awareness about OER as a course material option was not the only barrier noted in our survey. We also observed a lack of awareness of the Open Education program at Iowa State University itself. Some participants indicated barriers locating or adopting OER, and noted an interest in further incentives or support to locate materials from campus support services. Since our Open Education program already offers this support, these responses may indicate a gap in the promotion of our Open Education services, including introductory OER workshops, consultation services, and support guides, among other programming. It is important to note that even requesting or participating in these support services can be time-consuming for faculty, and so making access to these services visible is only the first step: stressing that these services are simple and easy to coordinate should also be a priority moving forward.

### ***Immediate Access Is Used But Not Well-Known***

For Iowa State University’s Immediate Access program, the largest barrier to adoption was awareness, with 47.7% of the survey’s participants unaware of this program. However, those who were aware of the program were likely to have adopted IA materials into their courses. This makes sense, as the IA program is backed by textbook publishers, and there are marketing professionals who liaise with faculty members to support this program, in addition to the ISU Book Store staff. For faculty who have been approached about this service, they have likely been directly offered support in adopting IA materials, making the choice an easier one for faculty than similar changes to their course which might require more coordination with other campus offices. These results indicate that continued discussions about the use cases for IA, including its opportunities and limitations, could help more faculty feel secure in their decision to adopt or not adopt IA in their courses.

### ***Course Reserves Is Known But Not Utilized Fully***

Finally, there were a substantial number of faculty members who expressed a limited understanding of how our Course Reserves program works. These results indicate that faculty may be aware of Course Reserves, but lacking critical information on its use. Faculty may not know how to request materials or they may not be aware that electronic materials such as streaming videos and

e-books can be made available on reserve. As the responses to question 4 indicate, many instructors are using library-licensed materials in their courses through databases, PDF downloads, and other means; however, these faculty members may not be aware that they can coordinate access to these materials through Course Reserves to ensure continued access and accessibility. Compared to the other programs on this list, Course Reserves had the fewest participants who were completely unaware of its existence. This is likely due to the long history of reserves as a core academic library service. Luckily, the lack of specific knowledge around this service can be remedied through additional outreach efforts, some of which have already begun.

### *Next Steps*

The main takeaway of this survey was that our cross-promotional efforts through the OAEC are lacking and that further coordination emphasizing the benefits of OER and Course Reserves is necessary to balance the unequal support which our institution's Immediate Access program receives through commercial partners. Continuing to coordinate our course material programs' efforts through the OAEC can be fruitful, but this work should be handled thoughtfully, with the feedback and support from all our partners and with the needs of students and faculty in mind.

In the year following this survey's implementation, members of the OAEC have collaborated on promotional efforts to share one another's work across campus. The most basic of these improvements was the implementation of a panel on affordable course material options which we hosted in the fall semester of 2022, with representatives from the library and Book Store discussing the impact of OER, Course Reserves, and Immediate Access across campus. Following this panel, members of the OAEC also presented collaboratively at several department meetings. What makes this different from past presentations is that, in addition to leveraging our shared slide set, members from across different units were invited to present at these meetings together, even when only one group was invited. Notably, the ISU Book Store invited librarians to share information about OER support services when talking about copyright for course materials and course material adoption reporting for faculty.

In addition to these more explicit outreach efforts, the OAEC's members have also put more effort into referrals. One example of this is a new workflow coordinated between the Center for Excellence in Learning & Teaching (CELT) and the library's Digital Press unit for helping faculty undergoing course redesign consider whether adopting or creating OER might be of interest. The other is a more general referral process, wherein the ISU Book Store's Digital Resource Specialist, will refer faculty to the library when approached with questions about course materials that have clear OER alternatives or which are difficult to locate and adopt traditionally. In the latter case, this led to an out-of-print textbook, *Basic Engineering Data Collection and Analysis*, getting republished as an OER thanks to the work of ISU Book Store staff who recognized that the authors could partner with the Digital Press to publish their work openly and reach a broader audience.

Looking to the future, the OAEC will continue to collaborate in new ways that leverage the benefits of each of our programs while supporting the preferences of faculty and students. As we develop new workflows into our programs, it will be a priority to continue to assess the impact of these

collaborations to ensure that efforts are not wasted by any of our team members. Therefore, a follow-up survey is planned which will implement an adapted version of this study's questionnaire to get a deeper understanding of faculty members' awareness of and engagement with our programs. Looking back on our experience running this survey, we would recommend that other institutions with similar collaborative committees consider implementing assessments like this for their own work, as it can help detect weaknesses within programs and opportunities for more targeted engagement with faculty.

### ***Limitations***

The results of our assessment were useful for understanding the reach of the OAEC's work; however, there were clear limitations to our survey's design which could be improved for future assessments. First, as this was an initial exploration of our committee's reach, the survey was not as tightly designed as it could have been. No demographic questions were included in the survey to delineate between responses from full professors, assistant professors, teaching professors, and adjunct instructors. Similarly, no questions were asked about the department each faculty member belonged to. In revisiting this survey, we would want to add demographic questions to get a clearer picture of each faculty member's awareness of and engagement with our committee's programming, while also clarifying the language used across other questions.

In addition to getting more demographic data, in revisiting this survey, we would want to clear up the language used throughout the questionnaire to avoid duplicate or inaccurate data. One thing we noted while reviewing the results was a discrepancy between the number of faculty who shared that they have adopted OER. In response to question 4, "Have you done any of the following to provide no- or low-cost materials for your courses?" 40 participants (20%) replied that they had used OER in place of traditional commercial texts, with an additional 3 participants sharing in the Other category that they had personally developed OER for their courses. In contrast, the responses to question 9, "How aware are you of OER?" only had 25 participants selecting the option that indicated they had adopted OER into one or more of their courses. This is likely due to an issue with the questionnaire, as question 9 asks for both awareness *and* adoption. Some participants may have felt that they did not know much about OER, even if they have adopted OER. In its next iteration, we will make changes to the awareness question so that it focuses on understanding, with a separate question about the adoption of each course material type.

### **Conclusion**

While this survey was only a preliminary review of the OAEC's efforts to cross-promote various affordability initiatives across Iowa State University, it was useful for identifying areas where we could do better. Highlighting support for faculty adopting OER and demystifying the Course Reserves process were two major outcomes of this survey, while general awareness campaigns and cross-promotion with the ISU Book Store helped raise general awareness of the Immediate Access program for faculty. Perhaps the best takeaway from this survey was that a general awareness campaign and collaboration does not benefit our programs equally: instead, we found the most rewards came when our team members highlighted the unique benefits of each of our programs, and referred faculty to one another, when appropriate.

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## Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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