UCLA Faculty Survey Report on Course Material Affordability Efforts

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Survey created in collaboration with the ASUCLA Bookstore and the UCLA Library

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Introduction

This report will review the responses from a faculty survey sent to all UCLA faculty, created by students, with advice and support from librarians and the ASUCLA bookstore. Out of 4,622 emails sent out, 219 faculty members responded (just under 5%). The survey asked faculty members about department-wide consideration of course affordability, including the cost of textbooks. They were also asked about their use of open educational resources (OER), the Affordable Course Materials Initiative, and other course materials programs. The following includes the findings from the survey responses, which we have split into humanities and STEM categories to identify where the UCLA administration could consider increased educational outreach to increase affordability measures. The survey was created to support UCLA's data collection for the University of the Office of the President Textbook Affordability Taskforce, which was ordered by Governor Newsom's Multi-Year Compact Report in 2022. This survey should provide valuable information for policy proposals related to course material affordabili Students also want this survey report to act as a method of engagement for the Undergraduate Student Association Council on the issue of course material affordability.

Key Finding 1

STEM faculty report using OER almost 15% more than humanities faculty. There is a larger gap of knowledge around OER for humanities faculty, with 20% reporting unfamiliarity with the topic.

**STEM faculty use OER almost 15% more than humanities faculty.**

Key Finding 2

Most of the course affordability consideration at UCLA comes from individual faculty, rather than from the department as a whole. Survey responses indicate this is more pronounced in the humanities than in STEM.

Key Finding 3

Most of the respondents were unfamiliar with the Affordable Course Materials Initiative, though among those that were, humanities faculty utilized the program slightly more.

Key Finding 4

The Inclusive Access program is more popular among STEM faculty, with **under ⅓ of humanities respondents utilizing the program**, and only slightly over 40% of STEM faculty using it.
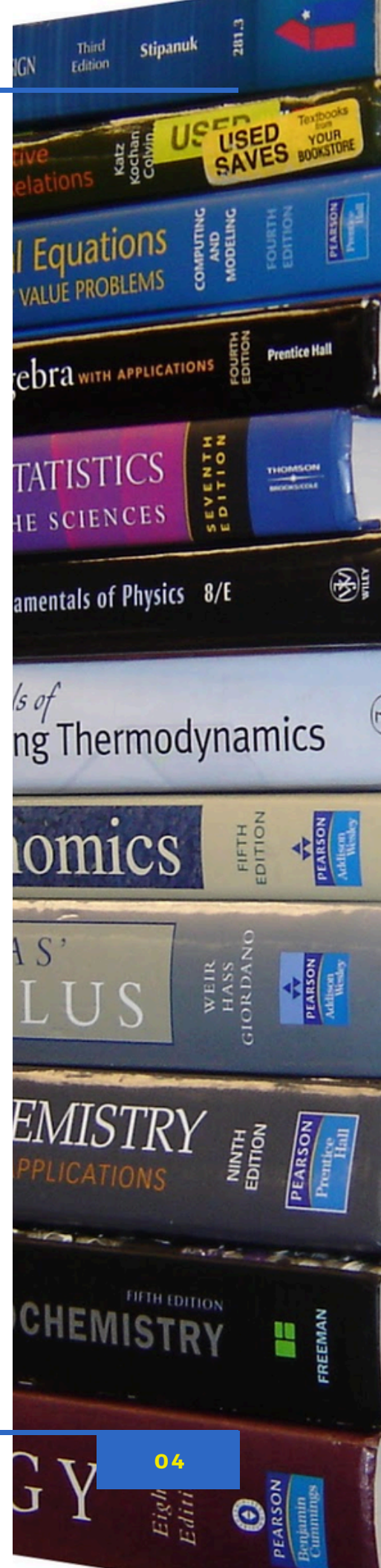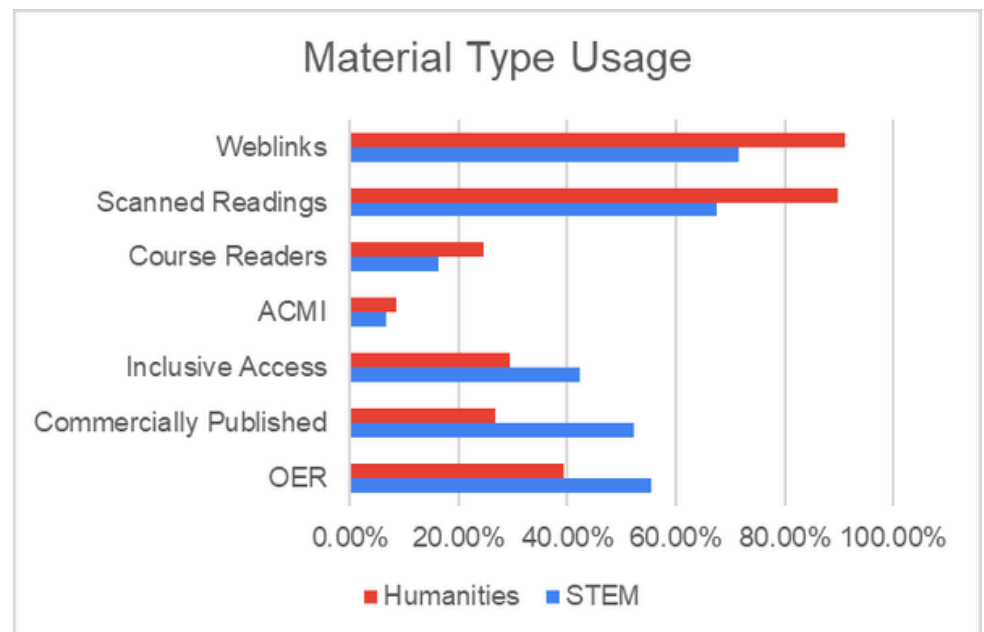
Definitions

- Open Educational Resources (OER): Materials published under an open license that are free to use, change, and share with others.
- Course readers: A collection of existing texts, notes, passages, etc. that are distributed as photocopy packs or PDF documents
- Affordable Course Materials Initiative (ACMI): A library-run program that rewards instructions for adopting open education resources. For instructors teaching courses with less than 200 students, grants of $1,000 are available. For instructors teaching course switch over 200 students, grants of $2,500 are available.
- Weblinks: Any free-to-use website or material that students can access with a simple web link.
- Scanned readings: Photocopied readings that faculty have taken from pre-existing materials, given free to students
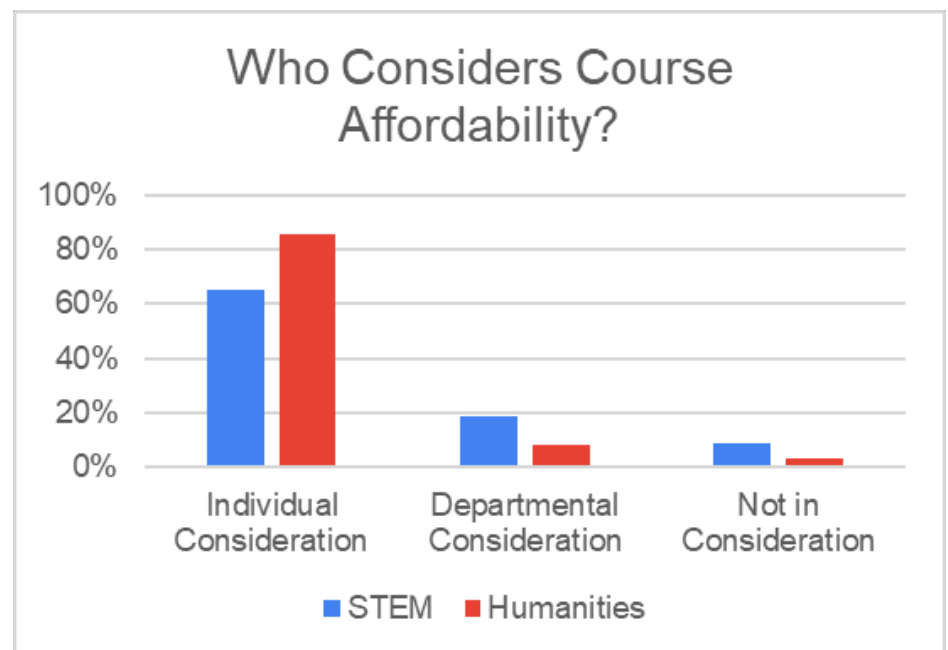
Overall Course Material Usage

When considering overall usage, some stark differences stood out. As Figure 1 shows, humanities faculty members use significantly more (almost 20%) weblinks and scanned reading, which are free for students. Humanities faculty also use slightly more course readers, and have utilized the Affordable Course Materials Initiative more. This means that more humanities faculty have applied for and received a grant in exchange for creating an OER for their class. On the other hand, STEM faculty have significantly higher rates of Inclusive Access, commercially published materials, and OER usage.

Humanities faculty use more "nontraditional" materials, while STEM faculty use more administrative programs.

Material Type Usage

Weblinks
Scanned Readings
Course Readers
ACMI
Inclusive Access
Commercially Published
OER

0.00%   20.00%   40.00%   60.00%   80.00%   100.00%
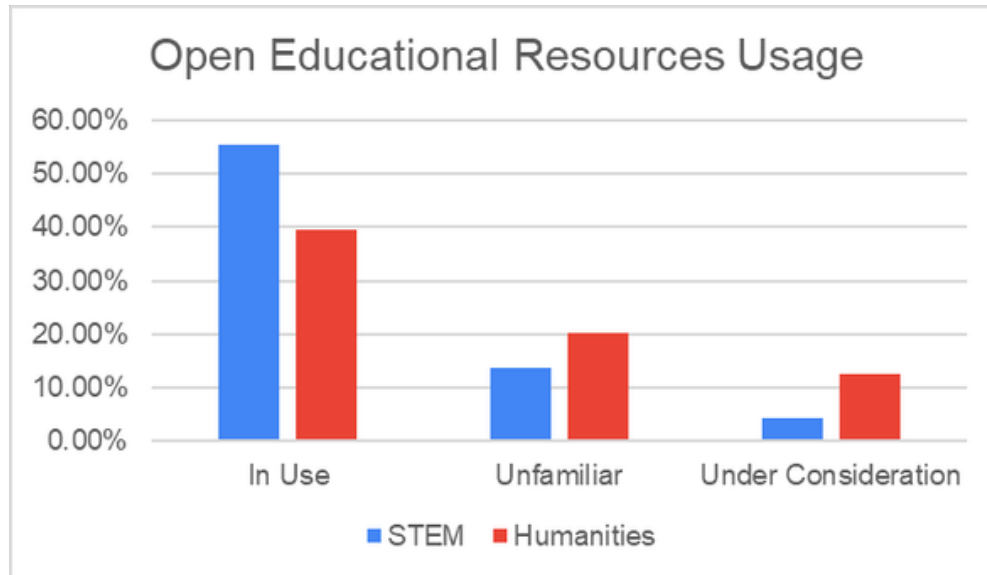
■ Humanities   ■ STEM

Who Considers Course Affordability?

When asked who, in general, considers course affordability in their departments, faculty overwhelmingly reported that this is an individual consideration. As seen in Figure 2, humanities show a larger number reporting individual consideration (about 20% more than STEM), which aligns with their greater use of nontraditional materials like weblinks and scanned readings. STEM faculty report more departmental consideration; however, STEM faculty also responded that course affordability was not in consideration at all more often than humanities faculty. Even so, STEM departmental considerations were only reported 20% of the time, suggesting that departments need to do more to consider course affordability.

OER Usage

Open Educational Resources Usage

	60.00%	50.00%	40.00%	30.00%	20.00%	10.00%	0.00%

In Use   Unfamiliar   Under Consideration

■ STEM   ■ Humanities

Open Education Resources are more popular amongst STEM faculty, with STEM using OER about 15% more than humanities. However, it seems that at least 40% of faculty use OER across both fields. Humanities seem more unfamiliar with OER, with 20% reporting such. The school could do more to ensure that faculty are aware of OER, options for usage, and its impacts on students and learning.

40%

of faculty use OER across both fields

Inclusive Access Usage

STEM faculty use the bookstore's Inclusive Access more than humanities (over 10%). Humanities faculty report being more unfamiliar with this program (about 15%). Inclusive Access usage ranges from 30-45% between STEM and Humanities faculty.

Inclusive Access Usage

Affordable Course Materials Initiative
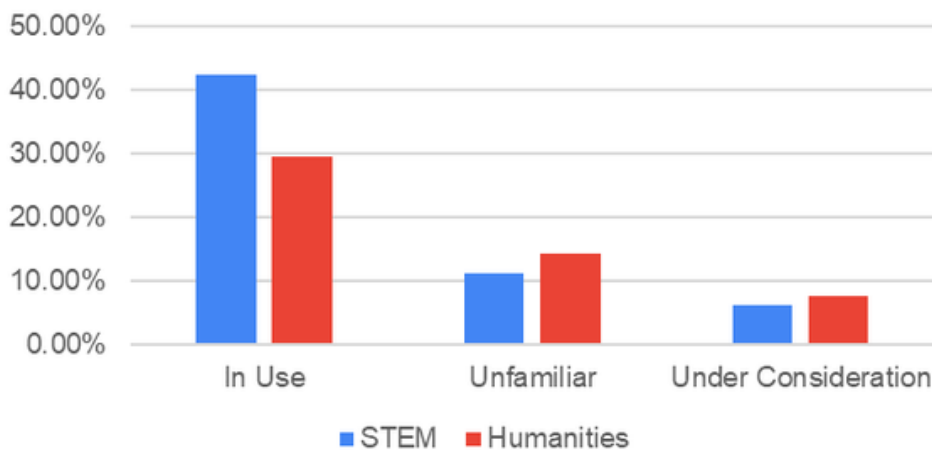
Affordable Course Materials Initative Usage
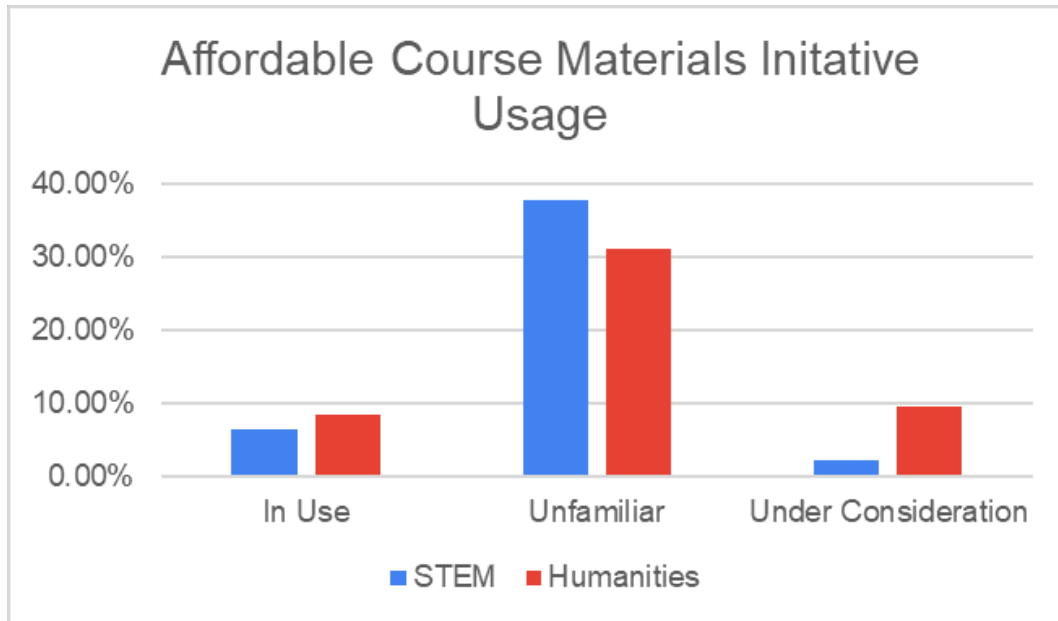
30-40%

of faculty across fields are unfamiliar with the program

When asked about the Affordable Course Materials Initiative, both STEM and humanities faculty reported usage under 10%, with humanities using the program only slightly more. Concerningly, between 30-40% of faculty across both fields are unfamiliar with the program altogether, with STEM being about 8% more unfamiliar than humanities. As depicted in Figure 4, the results also showed that humanities faculty were considering the program more than STEM, by almost 10%. Given these results, it seems that the program is being underutilized and under-advertised. The library and department heads could do more to ensure faculty know about the program and know how to use it.

Faculty Experiences

> Inclusive Access seemed like a good idea, but the price reduction was not very impressive for my textbook.

> "I was awarded ACMI and developed OER but the program coordinator of our program and colleagues do not allow me to use it in my courses.

> I try to use materials available at the library: e-books and articles from journals the library subscribes to

> Inclusive access is not a good deal for students, at all, and I actively encourage students not to use it if they can buy a "forever" book online

Recommendations

1. **Greater departmental consideration for course affordability**
   a. Departments can take course affordability into consideration by adding it to their yearly goals, having meetings around it, creating guidelines for faculty to follow, etc.
2. **Re-evaluate the benefits of Inclusive Access**
   a. Multiple faculty members commented on Inclusive Access and their dislike of the program. It might be beneficial for the bookstore to evaluate its program and determine how it might better serve students and faculty.
3. **Training on the benefits of OER**
   a. When considering the Governor's request to reduce the cost of course materials, the lack of awareness around OER is concerning. The administration needs to ensure that all faculty know about OER as an option. They can do this by giving the library more resources to run programs like ACMI, as well as train faculty on OER in general.
4. **Increase awareness of library support for affordability**
   a. The library runs multiple programs at UCLA that encourage lower costs for courses, such as the ACMI program, various copyright licenses, OER education, and more.
   b. This can be done through mandatory training for the course, webinars from the library, Academic Senate or Departmental presentations, etc.
   c. A faculty member reported that their department did not allow them to use the ACMI grant they recieved. Departments need to ensure that policies exist to protect the academic freedom of faculty members and allow them to use the programs the library runs.
   d. Multiple faculty members commented on using library programs to find cheaper materials for their students. The administration at UCLA needs to ensure that the library has the tools it needs to continue to do that work.
5. **These findings be included in the UCLA inventory for the UCOP Textbook Affordability Task Force**
   a. This feedback from faculty is essential in filling gaps about course affordability. This data is useful for the inventory and proposal portions of the UCOP report. UCLA cannot get a holistic view of the course material landscape without this feedback from faculty.

Survey Collection Methods

Out of 4,622 emails sent out, 219 faculty members responded (just under 5%). The survey asked faculty members about department-wide consideration of course affordability, including the cost of textbooks. They were also asked about their use of open educational resources (OER), the Affordable Course Materials Initiative, and other course materials programs. The following includes the findings from the survey responses, which we have split into humanities and STEM categories to identify where the UCLA administration needs to do educational outreach to increase affordability measures.

Methodology Notes:
- "In use" combines already in practice in at least one course + already in practice in all courses + responses that checked both
- Unfamiliar includes responses that checked both "not in use" and unfamiliar
- Under consideration includes responses that checked both "not in use" and under consideration
- Responses that did not fit into categories were not included (fill in responses)
- responses that clicked two categories that were undecipherable (ex: always in use, unfamiliar with this material) were not included and removed from the total count
- Blank responses were not included in the total count
- Took out original rows 4, 45, 109, 148, 184, 204
- Humanities responses count: 113, 53.1%
- STEM responses count: 100, 46.9%
- N/A 6 removed from total count (could not be put into STEm/humanities category)
  - these are included in whole-survey analysis, but not in STEM and humanities comparisons