



Testimony on House Bills 2213 & 2214

House Education Committee

February 25, 2019

Chair Doherty, Vice-Chairs Alonso Leon and Helt, and members of the Committee. My name is Kyle Thomas and I am the Director of Legislative and Policy Affairs for the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC). Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on House Bills 2213 and 2214.

At the request of the former House Higher Education and Workforce Development committee, HECC worked with Amy Hofer, the statewide Open Educational Resources (OER) coordinator, to develop a list of policy options the committee could consider to advance access to low and no-cost textbooks for Oregon students. Two of those concepts were introduced by the committee as House Bill 2213.

These concepts were designed to advance important goals: First, Section 2 was designed to provide students with the earliest possible notification regarding materials that will be used for a particular course. Not every course or course section uses a free or low-cost textbook, and early notification allows students to consider textbook costs as a factor when creating their personal schedules for a term. When students know what materials are available early, they can more readily plan for the expense and shop around for the best price on the new and used textbook market. This gives students them a greater degree of control over their materials' costs.

For students who are extremely price-sensitive, cost-certainty and the ability to source cheaper course materials can make the difference between remaining enrolled and withdrawing from coursework—significantly harming their ability to complete a certificate or degree on time and at the lowest possible cost.

In June 2018, the HECC received a report from four University of Oregon students completing a capstone project for a Master of Public Administration degree. A copy and summary of the report is posted on OLIS. Two of these students submitted testimony but are unable to be present today due to weather.

Their findings are highly informative. Both through survey results and group interviews, the researchers found that students believed they did not receive timely enough information on course materials, with the plurality of students reporting receiving no and low cost textbook information from their instructor—too late to make course decisions based on price.

The report also indicates 40% of students at community colleges have taken fewer courses as a result of textbook costs, and over 30% of students at both colleges and universities have elected not to register for a specific course because of textbook costs. The full chart is attached at the end of my testimony.

HECC has been working with stakeholders on the language of Section 2, and share the concern raised by Dr. Ann Buchele in her written testimony regarding how multi-term course registration and the materials notification requirement in the bill are in conflict. We are prepared to work with the committee to amend the bill to address this concern.

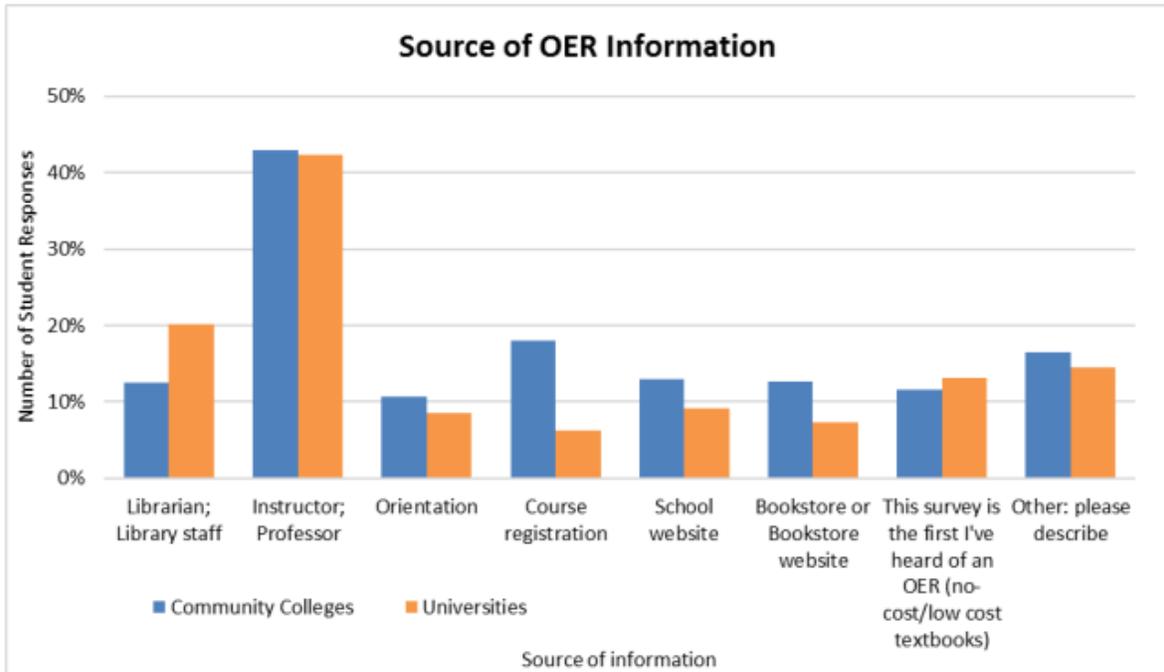
Other stakeholders have raised a concern about how requiring advance course adoption will affect faculty, particularly those who are assigned to courses late. We are continuing discussions on this issue and may offer further amendments, but we are approaching this issue with the belief that students should have the ability to plan for their financial and educational future as early as possible in the course selection process. Students should not face undue uncertainty because of the late assignment of an instructor to a course.

In addition to the notification provisions, the bill also requires each institution establish a plan for increasing textbook affordability, and HECC looks forward to institutions developing measurable goals and local approaches to meeting those goals to reduce material costs for students.

Finally, I would like to offer brief comment on HB 2214. In her testimony, Amy has spelled out a compelling case for continuing funding for her work as the statewide OER coordinator. With some exceptions, it is faculty spread throughout an institution that lead the charge in building awareness and adoption of OER. However, it is the statewide OER program that accelerates this work by providing a forum for faculty to discuss and become acquainted with OER, by providing training in accessing and using materials, and by providing grants to faculty to create OER material and review them for rigor. The materials developed because of these activities are available for multiple sections across multiple years, and can be edited and updated freely by anyone, making investment in OER material development and awareness one of the best indirect mechanisms of student financial support available.

Thank you for your time today.

Attachment: Mechanisms by which students become aware of OER



Notes: Only respondents that indicated some level of awareness of OERs (in Q7) were asked this question. Total Number of Respondents to Q8: Community College (n=1497), University (n=372)

*Some variables showed statistically significant differences between community college and university respondents. See Appendix E for chi-square analysis.

Source: Freed, B., Friedman, A., et. Al. (2018). *Evaluating Oregon's Open Educational Resources Designation Requirement: A Report for the Higher Education Coordinating Commission* (Capstone report).