

## **Maryland Open Source Textbook (M.O.S.T.) Initiative**

### **Fall 2018 Update**

Replacing costly textbooks with open educational resources (OER) shows promise to reduce students' cost of college attendance significantly while maintaining, or perhaps even improving, learning outcomes. The Maryland Open Source Textbook (M.O.S.T) initiative began in 2013 to support faculty across Maryland public higher education institutions in adopting freely available, openly licensed instructional materials for their courses.

From Spring 2014 – Fall 2018, 113 courses at 24 institutions across Maryland switched to OER, saving 39,000 students \$154 per course on average or approximately \$6.3 million cumulatively. In addition to those direct benefits, indirect benefits of OER adoption have included:

- **Student Access:** Ensuring all students have full access to all learning materials from day 1 of class to help them be prepared and successful.
- **Faculty Control of Learning Materials:** Giving faculty full control over the amount, order, and content of learning materials.
- **Faculty Collaboration:** Collaboration with like-minded faculty also working with OER.

Over half of faculty have reported that they have spent, on average, about the same amount of time preparing to teach their course and another 45% reported that they have spent more time, but once that work was done, faculty were generally positive about their experiences working with the open materials, with 92% of faculty somewhat to very likely to use OER materials in future courses.

Findings from the M.O.S.T. data collected indicated that students:

- **Saved a significant amount of money:** Sixty-one percent of students surveyed typically spend between \$200-\$500 each semester on books and 9% of students spent over \$500 each semester. Sixty-seven percent of students in the M.O.S.T. initiative did not spend any money for resources for their course, and an additional 19% spent less than \$40 for materials.
- **Were more likely to use the resources:** Fifty-six percent of students surveyed used traditional textbooks 2-3 times per month or less. Sixty-two percent of students in the M.O.S.T. initiative used their materials 2-3 times per week or more often.
- **Found the OER to be the same or better quality than traditional resources:** Sixty-three percent of students surveyed said quality was about the same and 32% of students surveyed said it was better.
- **Are likely to enroll in other courses using OER:** Eighty-five percent of students surveyed said they were likely to enroll in another course that uses OER.
- **Prefer a course with OER over a course using traditional textbooks:** Given the choice between a course that uses OER and one that uses traditional textbooks, where all other variables are the same, 66% of students surveyed would prefer the course with OER.

At the same time, the University of Maryland University College (UMUC) recently became the first 4-year public higher education institution to move entirely to zero-cost instructional materials, saving their 84,000 students at least \$20 million per year and clearly demonstrating how quickly savings to students can add up when these initiatives are taken to scale. Further, evaluation of learning outcomes from the UMUC initiative has found that converting to OER has not negatively impacted student success in these courses.

While M.O.S.T. is being led out of the University System of Maryland's William E. Kirwan Center for Academic Innovation, faculty and staff at both 2-year and 4-year institutions across Maryland have participated in M.O.S.T.'s programs. Now in partnership with the Maryland Association of Community Colleges (MACC) and MarylandOnline, M.O.S.T. is providing participating faculty with the support they need to locate materials and incorporate them effectively into their classes.

### **Future Plans**

With Maryland 2-year and 4-year students spending over \$223 million annually on textbooks, the savings realized to date are just a drop in the bucket when compared to the potential OERs have for reducing the cost of education. There is much work remaining to do to move from the pilot phase to a structured, large-scale implementation. To this end, in Spring 2017 the Maryland General Assembly unanimously passed Senate Bill 424 (cross filed with House Bill 967) *The Textbook Cost Savings Act*, and the Governor included \$100,000 in the fiscal 2019 state budget as a grant to the Kirwan Center to support a state-wide OER summit and an additional round of mini-grant funding for Fall 2018.

With this momentum built, we are seeking additional funding to support several initiatives designed to scale OER adoption and amplify the impact of the M.O.S.T. initiative. We are also eager to disseminate the "lessons learned" at UMUC about scaling OER and investigate a range of OER sustainability models in use in other states. Once OER adoption reaches a critical mass, such models promise to allow M.O.S.T. to generate the funds needed to sustain long-term OER adoption to help address college affordability and benefit Maryland students for generations to come.