

# University of Hawaii at Manoa

## Student Textbook Survey



Spring 2017

## **Spring 2017 – University of Hawaii at Manoa Student Textbook Survey**

### Introduction

In the Spring Semester, 2017, the University of Hawaii at Manoa Open Educational Resources (OER) Initiative surveyed undergraduate students to investigate their perspectives and behaviors with regards to using traditional textbooks, as well as using OER. The survey was sponsored by the Outreach College, the Associated Students at the University of Hawaii at Manoa (ASUH), and the University of Hawaii at Manoa (UHM) Library.

### Methodology

It was determined that the target audience would be undergraduate students for this survey. This population was targeted because the UHM OER Initiative has been putting effort into increasing OER in the high-enrollment undergraduate courses at UHM. These are often 100 and 200-level general education courses.

Approximately 480 students responded to the survey. Considering the target population consists of over 13,000 students at UHM, response rate was less than 4 percent. In part the low response rate is due to restrictions placed on how and how often undergraduate students can be contacted through our university announcement system. Respondents received only one request to respond to the survey early in the Spring Semester.

A survey was developed using the Qualtrics platform. The survey was based on recent surveys of a similar nature completed at Leeward Community College (Oshiro, 2015) and a 2016 Florida Virtual Campus survey (Donaldson, 2016). Both of these surveys examined textbook affordability and acquisition in public higher education institutions.

Prior to launch, the survey was reviewed by UHM subject matter experts and pilot tested using subjects from the target population.

### Findings & Discussion

In part, the survey was designed to provide data that would help to create a profile of student behavior with regards to the impact of traditional textbook costs on their progress in school. Only about 30% of the students reported that the cost of required textbooks would not determine whether they took a course. However, almost 70% of the students indicated that the textbook cost would either definitely determine or possibly determine whether a course was taken, and approximately 22% indicated that they had withdrawn from a course because of the cost of a required textbook. When asked if the cost of textbooks would affect whether they stayed in school, 46% said the cost would not affect that decision; whereas, 36% reported that it might affect that decision, and 18% responded that the cost would affect the decision to remain in school.

Besides the cost of the textbook, students are often asked to make an additional purchase of an access code for homework modules that correspond to the text (Carnes, 2016). The codes give students access to resources such as audio materials, study guides, quizzes and homework assignments. Unfortunately

these codes can typically cost from \$50 to \$100 and are good only for a single semester. At UHM over 92% of the student respondents reported having to purchase access codes. Depending on the area of study, there is an increase in this requirement: math and science courses seem to usually require codes more than humanities courses. At UHM students reported having purchased homework access codes on average of 6 times; however a number of students reported purchasing them for at least 20 courses.

A 2014 Student Public Interest Research Group (PIRG) report indicated that 65% of respondents in their survey from about 2,000 students from across 150 campuses nationally reported that they had decided against buying a textbook because of the expense, even though a full 94 percent had concerns that their decision would affect their performance in class (Senack, 2014). However, UHM students reported that almost 82% had chosen not to purchase required textbooks. Of those students, over 52% reported that it affected their performance slightly and another 13% reported that it affected performance significantly. Student respondents gave a number of reasons why they chose not to purchase required textbooks: they felt they were a waste of money (30%); they had developed other ways of accessing the information (21%); while some needed the money to support their family financially (8%). Twenty-six percent found other ways to avoid purchasing required texts from borrowing to using web resources to supplement lectures to pirating the texts.

When the UHM students were asked how well the required textbooks were used in their courses, almost 34% reported that they were rarely well used, while 52% responded that they were sometimes well used. Only 13% responded that the required textbook was well used. Student also reported that they never (35%) to rarely (37%) kept a textbook as a resource after completing a course.

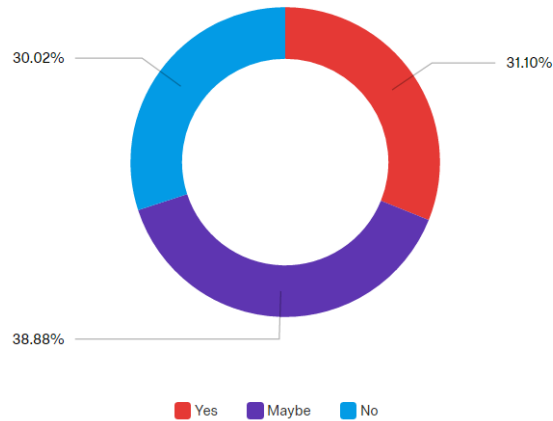
A number of studies have looked at how aware faculty are of OER. The Babson report produced in 2016 stated that of the 3,000 faculty interview across the US, only about 25% reported that they were "Aware" or "Very Aware" of OER (Babson, 2016). However, little literature can be found on researching student awareness of OER. This study found that over 87% of UHM undergraduate student respondents were not aware of OER. Only 1.37% reported being aware of OER. In addition 80% of the respondents indicated that they had not used OER, with 18% indicating that they were unsure of having used OER.

A recent report by the CollegeBoard indicated that undergraduate students spend on average over \$1,200 a year on books and supplies at college (2016, p. 11). Thirty-eight percent of the students from this survey reported spending from \$200 to \$399 for books for the current semester; 22% reported spending \$400 or more. This amount places UHM undergraduate students at or below the national average. This information should be taken into consideration when realizing that over 44% of the UHM undergraduate students report their annual total household income before taxes as \$24,999 or less.

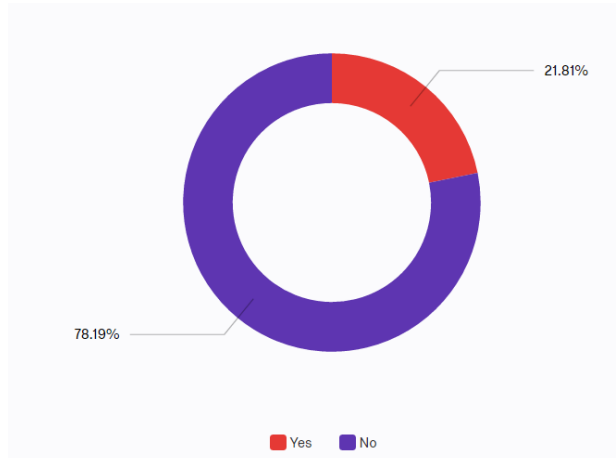
At the end of the survey, students were asked to leave comments they might want to share. Overwhelming many responded with the desire to know more about OER. Others lamented the high costs of textbooks and how students were forced to pay exorbitant prices for mandated books that were underutilized. One theme running throughout the responses was a plea to help students with the burden of highly-priced textbooks. Finally, one student lamented that *"I wish schools would find a way to be on the side of the students and not the publishing companies."*

Results

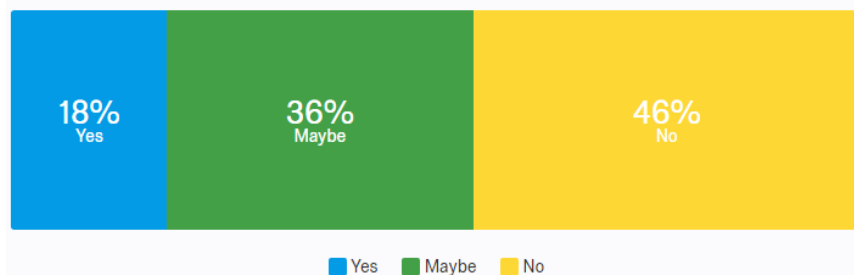
1. Would the cost of required textbooks determine whether you take a course?



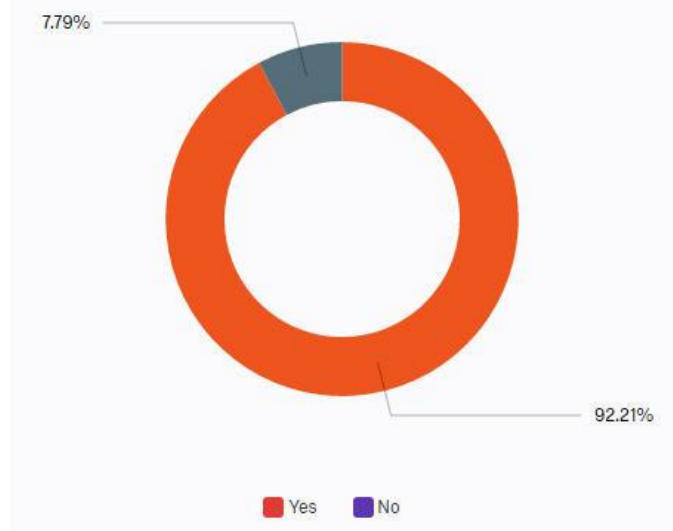
2. Have you withdrawn from a course because of the cost of required textbooks?



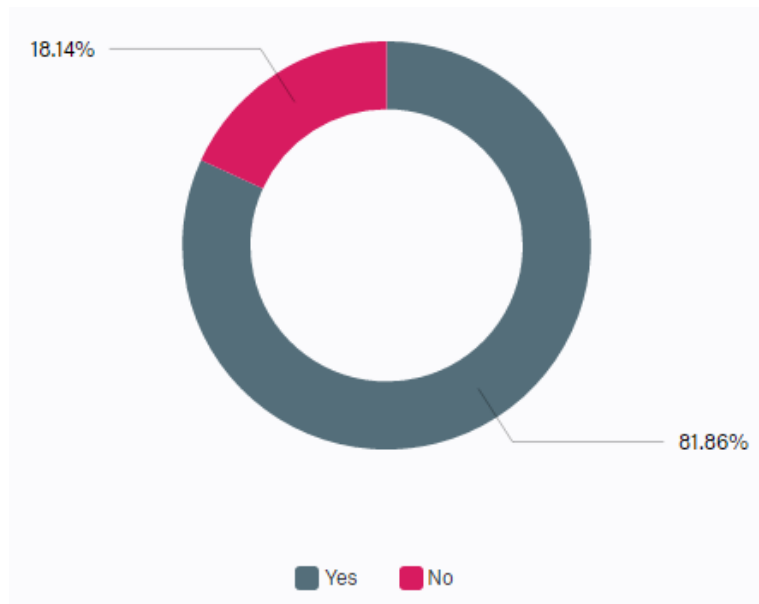
3. Would the cost of textbooks affect whether you stay in school?



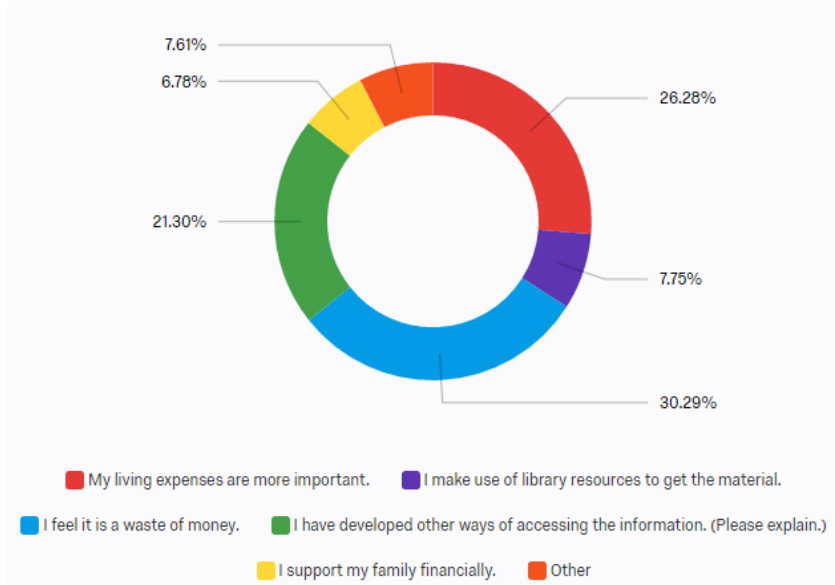
4. Have you taken a course that required purchasing an access code for the homework module? (If yes, please indicate how many courses you've taken that have required a code.)



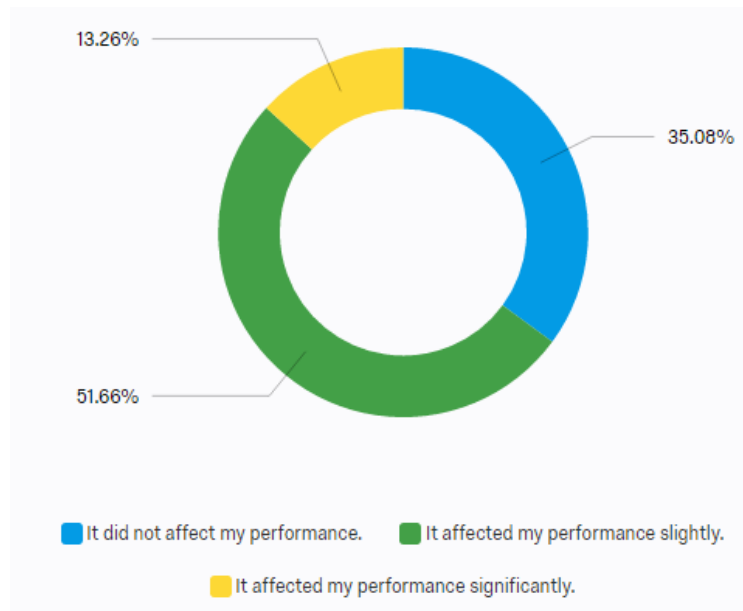
5. During one or more semesters at UHM, have you chosen NOT to purchase required textbooks for a course?



6. Why did you choose NOT to purchase required textbooks? (Check all that apply.)



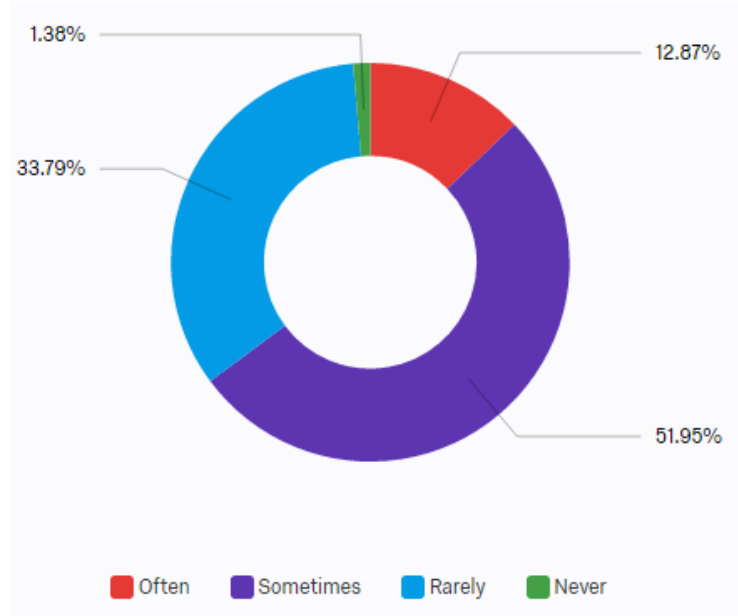
7. By choosing NOT to purchase a textbook for a course, how did this affect your performance in that class?



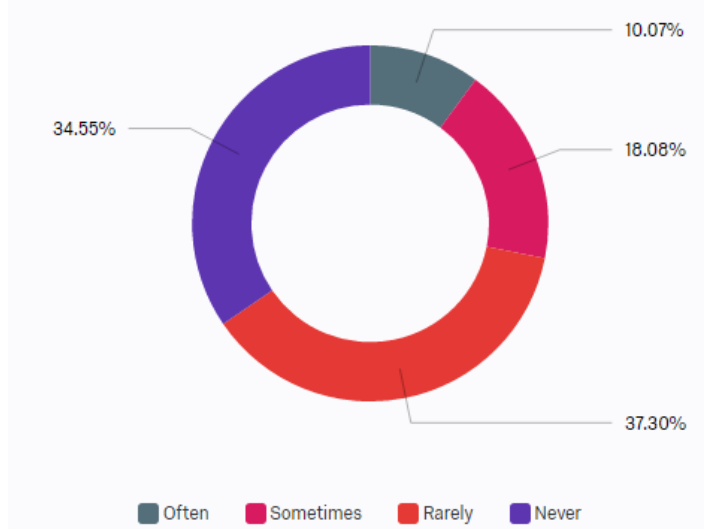
8. Which of the following strategies have you used to compensate for not buying a textbook for a course? (Please check all that apply.)

1	I buy used textbooks from the UHM Bookstore.	44.16%
7	I buy used or discounted textbooks online (Amazon, eBay).	59.50%
2	I rent textbooks.	48.05%
3	I share textbooks with friends.	48.05%
4	I access textbooks from UHM Course Reserves.	5.95%
5	I access resources on the web.	64.76%
14	I have checked out the book from Pueo Library.	3.89%
13	I haven't used any strategies.	4.35%
6	Other	6.64%

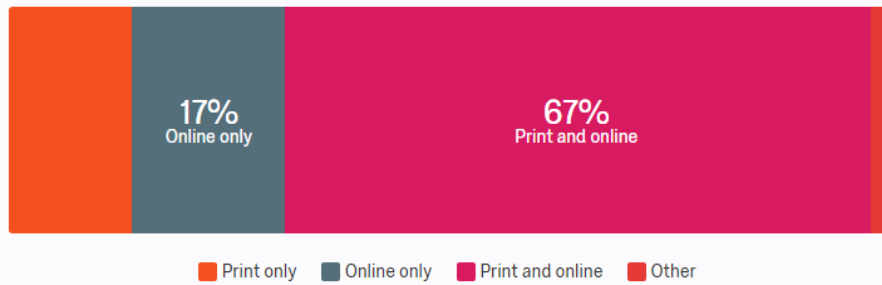
9. Generally, are required textbooks that you have purchased well used in courses?



10. Have you kept and used a textbook as a resource long after completing a course?

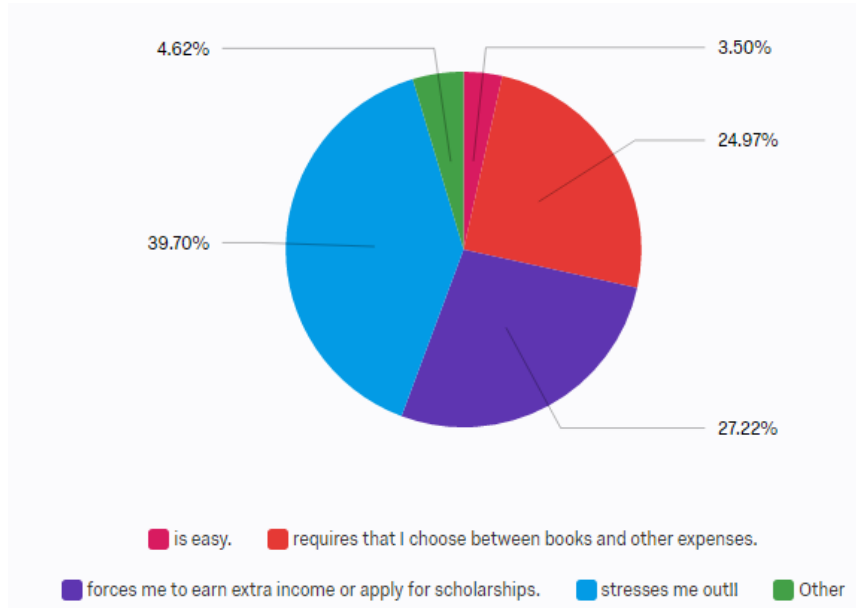


11. How do you prefer to access course materials?

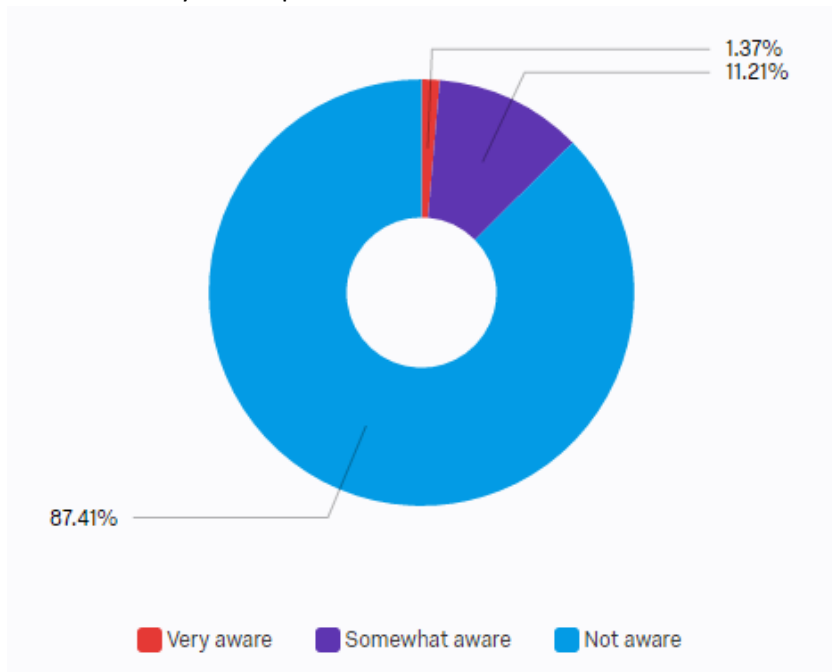




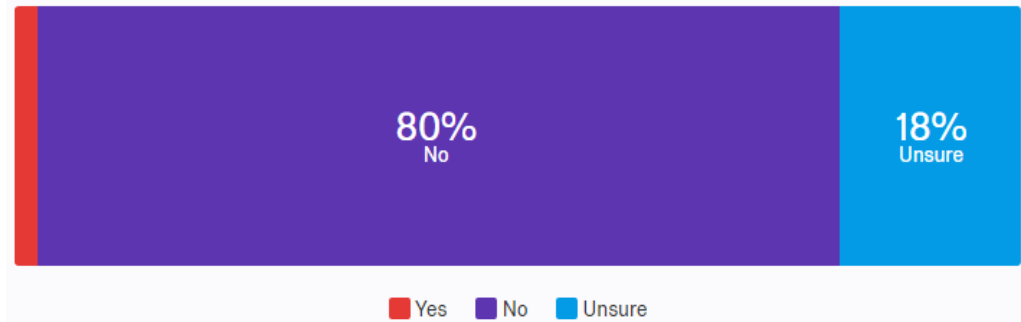
12. Planning for the costs of next semester's textbook ... (Please select all that apply.)



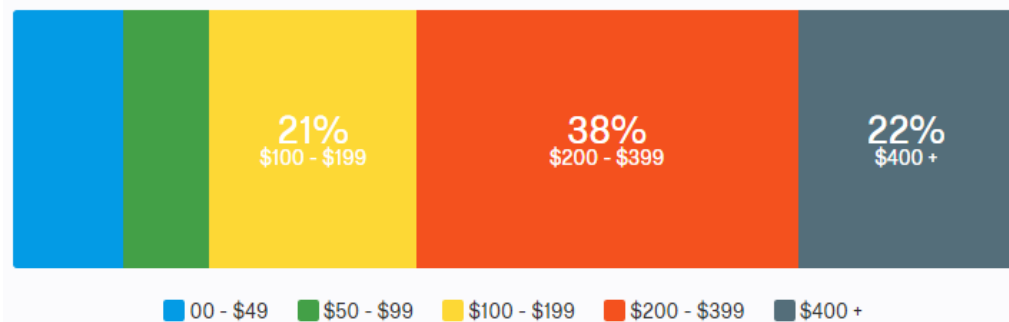
13. How aware of you of Open Educational Resources?



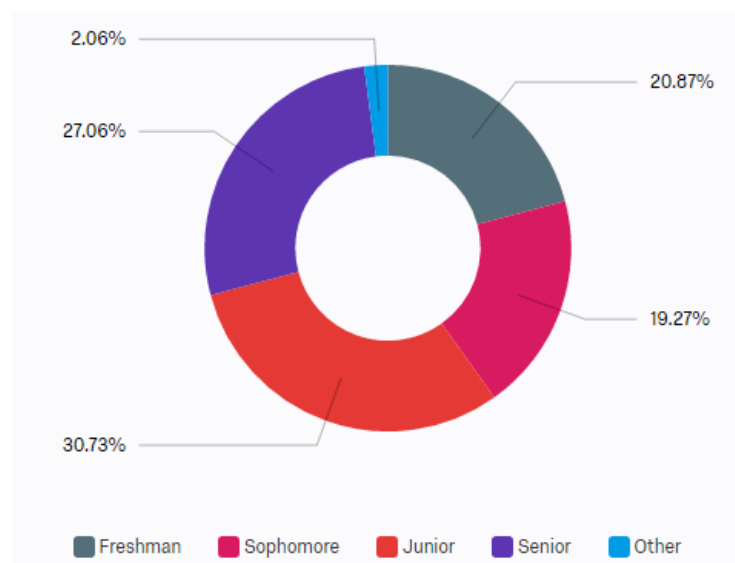
14. Have you used OER in any of your courses at UH Manoa? (If you mark Yes, please identify the course or courses.)



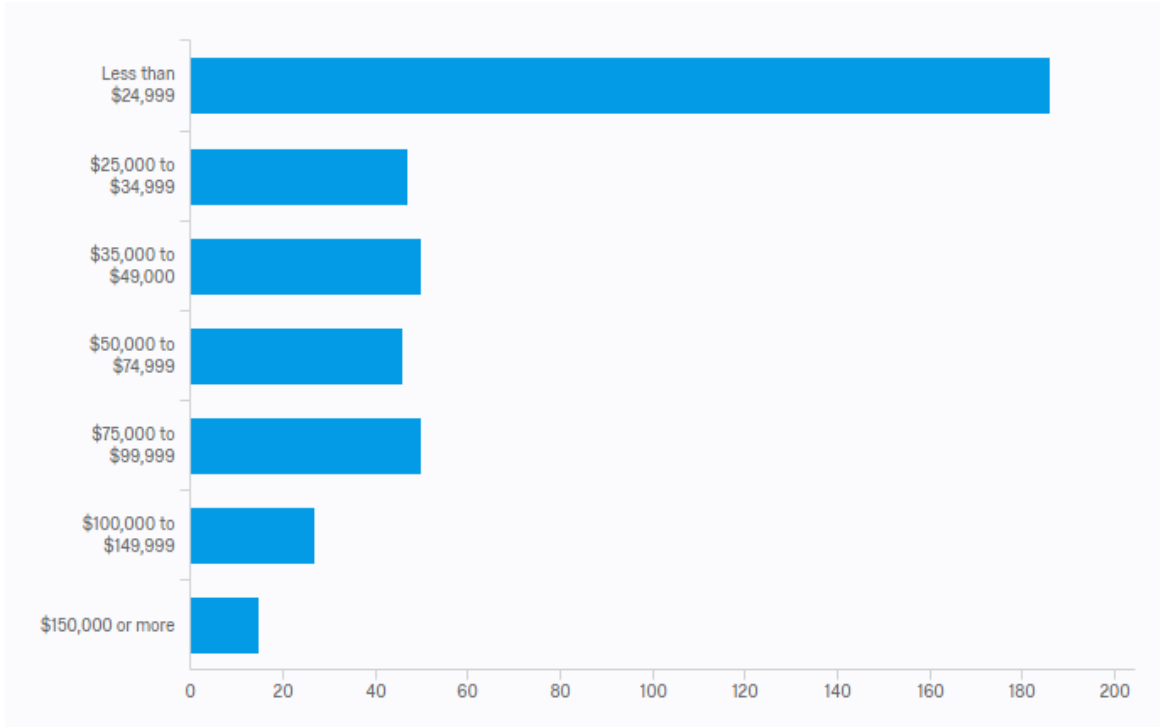
15. Please estimate how much you spent on textbooks for the Spring 2017 semester.



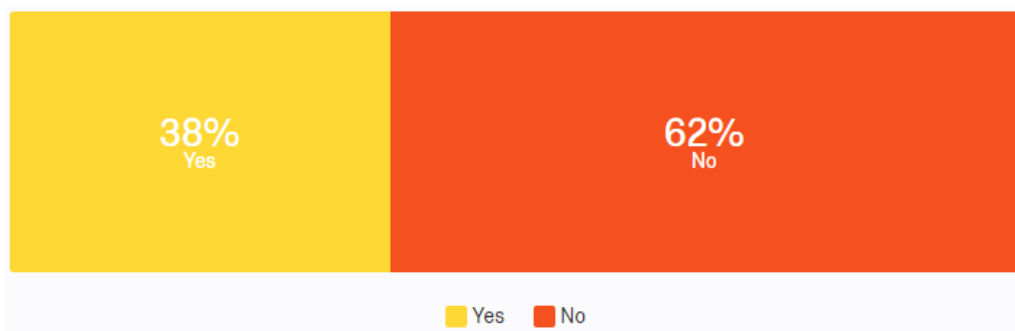
16. What is your status at UH Manoa?



17. What was your total household income before taxes during the past 12 months?  
(44.18% at \$24,999 or less)



18. Are you helping to financially support your family?



19. Please add any comments you might want to share. Do you have suggestions about how you would like to become involved in promoting OER on campus?  
(I think you have the comments from the earlier document I gave you.)

## References

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