

TENNESSEE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION



**THEC**

**Library Leadership in  
Textbook and Course  
Material Affordability:  
University Perspectives**



# University Perspectives

## Session Topics

- Statewide Context and Institutional Roles
- Campus Engagement and Student Experience
- Affordability and Resources
- Q&A



# Higher Education in Tennessee

- **Tennessee Board of Regents System**
  - 13 community colleges
  - 24 Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology (TCAT).
- **Locally Governed Institutions (LGIs):**
  - 6 independent public universities
    - Austin Peay State University
    - East Tennessee State University
    - Tennessee State University
    - Tennessee Technological University
    - Middle Tennessee State University
    - University of Memphis
- **University of Tennessee System:**
  - Chattanooga
  - Health Sciences (Memphis)
  - Knoxville
  - Martin
  - Southern (Pulaski)
- **TICUA: Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association**
  - 34 private nonprofit colleges and universities.



# Tennessee Higher Education Commission

- THEC serves as the statewide coordinating body. Some aspects include:
  - **Student Aid**: HOPE scholarship, Tennessee Promise, Tennessee Reconnect, Tennessee Student Assistance Award, General Assembly Merit Scholarship, Wilder-Naifeh Technical Skills Grant (TCATs), Dual Enrollment Grant, Middle College Scholarship, Helping Heros Grant (Veterans)
  - **Access and Outreach**: programs that help Tennesseans prepare for and enter college including Advise TN, GEAR UP TN, Navigate Reconnect, Financial Aid Outreach
  - **Academic Affairs and Workforce Alignment**: Approves academic programs, supports transfer pathways, aligns programs with workforce needs, quality assurance funding, VETS Campus Initiative
  - **Compliance**: authorization of all post-secondary (private, public, non-profit, for-profit) institutions



# Course Materials and Open Education

- **Course Materials:** Required textbooks, readings, assignments, multimedia, and other instructional resources used in a course. These may include **low-cost, no-cost, library-licensed, or openly licensed materials.**
- **Open Educational Resources (OER):** Free, openly licensed teaching and learning materials that can be used, adapted, and shared, such as textbooks, modules, videos, or full courses.
- **Open Educational Practices (OEP):** Teaching approaches that promote collaboration and transparency, engaging students in creating, adapting, or contributing to course materials.



# Course Material Costs

## A Statewide Perspective

- Students at Tennessee's public universities **often delay or skip purchasing required materials** due to cost.
- These delays **reduce course engagement** and academic progress.
- At several universities, students are responsible for **most course material costs**.
- Providing reliable **day-one access** through low-cost, no-cost, library-licensed, or openly licensed materials **supports retention and completion**.



# Statewide Momentum

## Statewide Grants, Surveys, Reports



- Tennessee Board of Regents OER Grants
- 2020-2025
- Nearly 80 OER grants
- 18 institutions
  - Universities
  - Community Colleges
  - TCATs



# Recent Statewide Research on Open Education in Tennessee

- **Tennessee Open Education Survey (2024-2025)**
  - Shows wide variation across institutions in **readiness, support, and data systems**.
  - Indicates **strong interest in affordable materials** but inconsistent processes for expanding their use.
  - Underscores **the important role of librarians** in coordination, definitions, and faculty support.



# Recent Statewide Research on Open Education in Tennessee

- **Scaling Open Education in Tennessee**

(SRI Study, forthcoming)

- Examines how **instructors, librarians, and leaders** adopt affordable materials and student-centered teaching practices.
- Identifies campus conditions that help this work grow, including **partnerships** and redesign support.
- Finds that progress often depends on **individual champions**, highlighting the need for sustained institutional structures.



# Tennessee Open Education Initiative

- **Tennessee Textbook Affordability Task Force**
- Guided by a three-pillar framework focused on:

## Leadership and Collaboration

- Cross-sector steering committee
- Shared benchmarking, task forces, mission alignment

## Engagement and Support

- Webinars, faculty training, regional workshops
- Celebrations during Open Education Week
- Promote scalable models and resources

## Data and Definitions

- Common terms: OER, low-cost, no-cost
- Course marking and statewide data collection



# Panelists

## **Ginelle Baskin**

Open Education Librarian  
Middle Tennessee State University

## **Levi Fleming**

Scholarly Communications Librarian  
University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

## **Melissa Mallon**

Associate University Librarian  
for Teaching and Learning  
Vanderbilt University

## **Ashley Sergiadis**

Digital Scholarship Librarian  
East Tennessee State University



# The Library's Role

From your perspective as university librarians, why does textbook and course material affordability align with library missions and responsibilities?

- **ETSU: Copyright and Publishing**
- **MTSU: Course Reserves service, Library Textbook Program, Textbook Affordability Tabling**



# The Institution's Role

Affordability and access work cannot rest with libraries alone. How do you explain the broader institutional responsibility for this work, and which campus partners are essential for long-term progress?

- **ETSU: DOERS Grant Team**



# Building Campus Buy-In

- What strategies have helped you build interest, participation, and ongoing engagement among faculty, staff, and other stakeholders on your campus?
  - **Definitions, Data, and Champions at MTSU**
  - **Student Voice at ETSU**
  - **Partnering with teaching and learning centers and instructional designers at Vanderbilt**



# The Student Perspective

- What have you learned from students about their experiences with course materials?
  - **ETSU, MTSU, and UTC Survey Results**
- How do student perspectives influence your approach to OER and the ways you use OER content or open educational practices?
  - **Open Education Practices at Vanderbilt**



# Financial Concerns

- What approaches have you used to address cost related concerns, and what kinds of financial or structural support make a meaningful difference?
  - **Cost Savings at ETSU, MTSU, UTC**

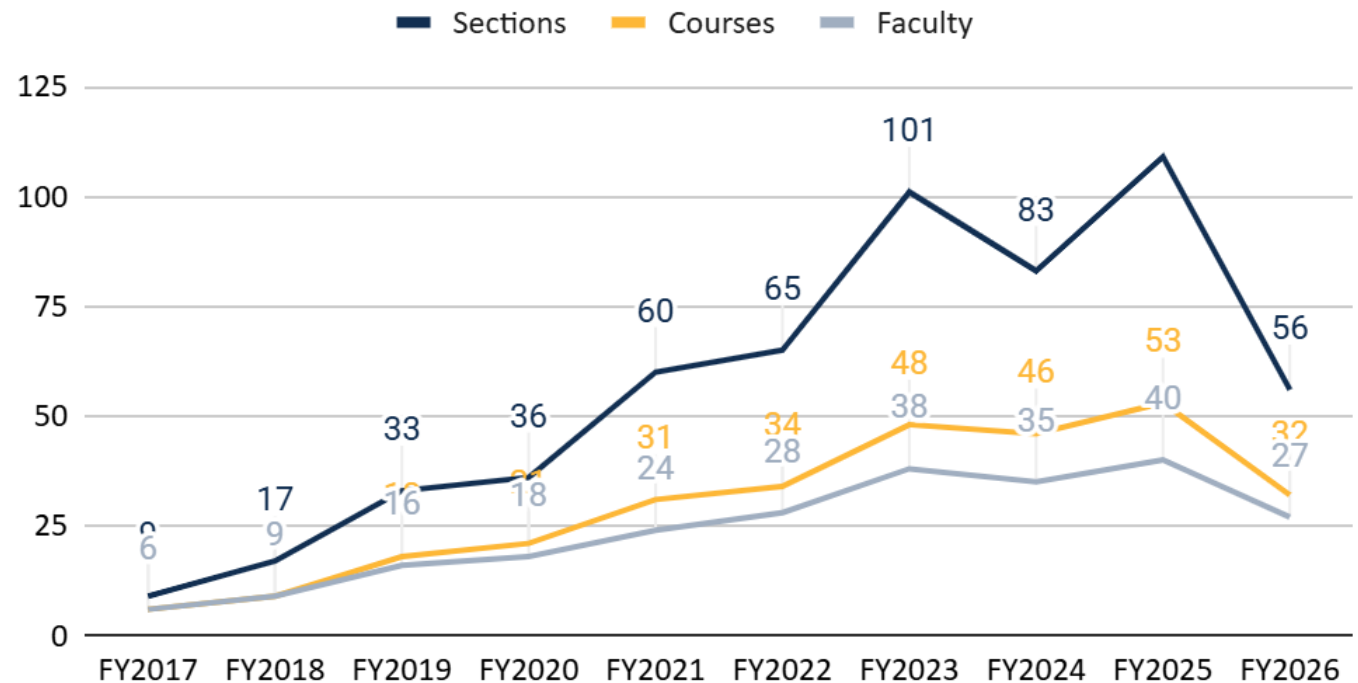


# Cost Savings at UT Chattanooga

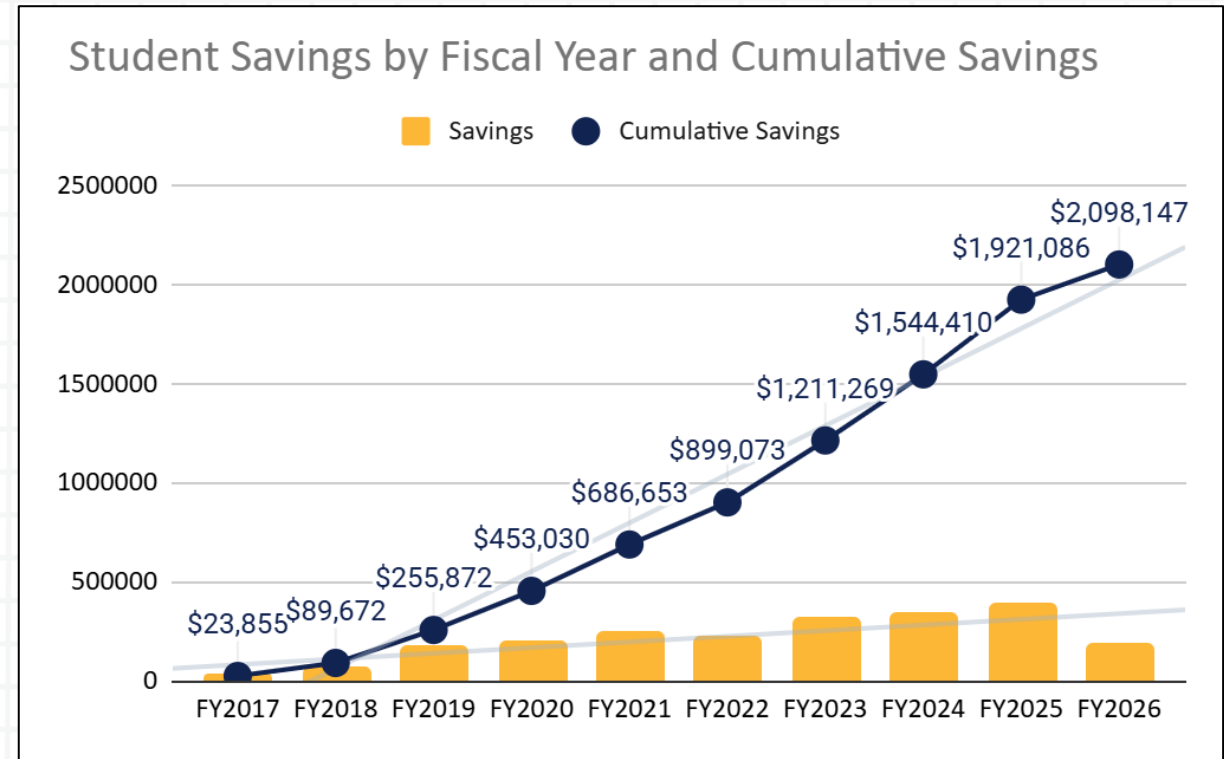
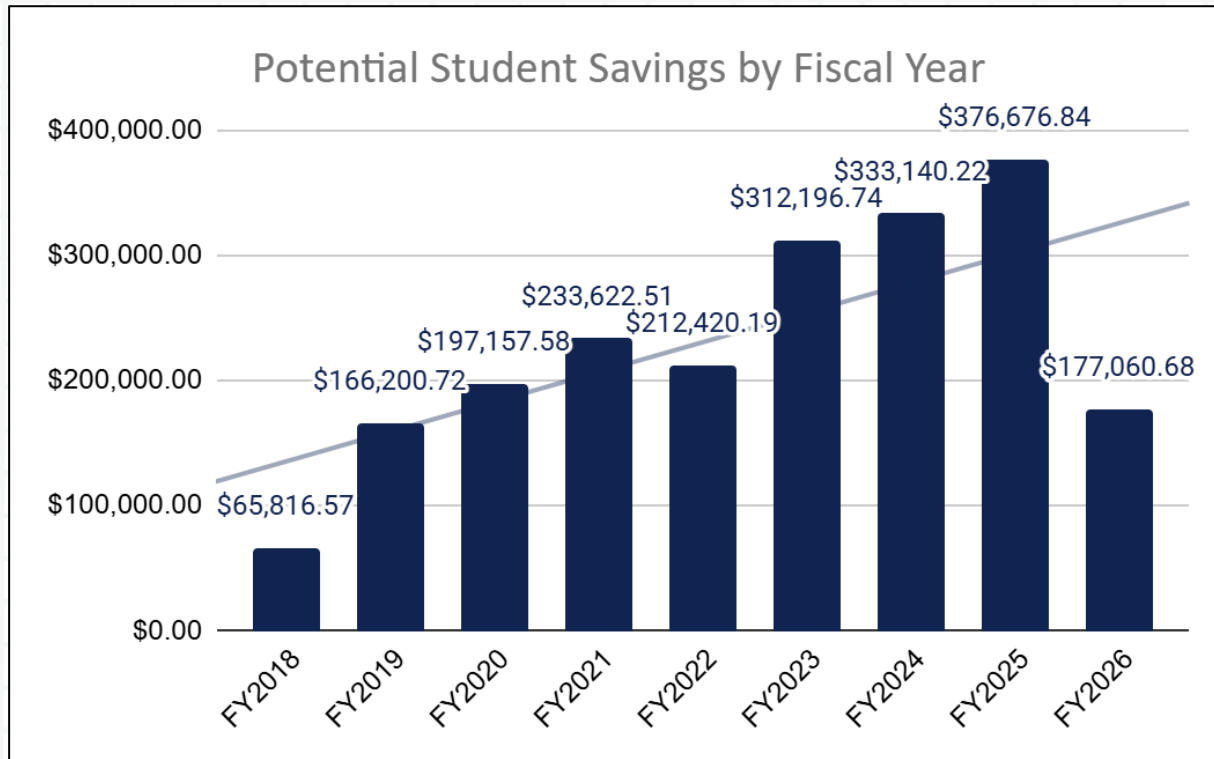
July 2018 to May 2025:

- 65 faculty
- 576 sections of 90 courses
- 17,376 students
- \$2,115,524 in course material savings

Number of ACMI Courses and Sections Offered by FY with Number of Participating Faculty Members



# Cost Savings at UT Chattanooga



# Helpful Resources

What resources, tools, or communities have been especially helpful in supporting open education and affordability work?



# Looking Ahead

- Looking toward the next five years, what opportunities do you see for strengthening open education and affordability efforts?
- How can librarians across different types of libraries work together toward shared access and affordability goals?



# Q&A

## Join us in the next session:

Library Leadership in Textbook and Course Material Affordability Session 2:  
**Community College Perspectives**

4:10pm - 5:00pm | 300 B

Community colleges play a leading role in advancing textbook affordability and access across the state. This session features community college librarians who have implemented Open Education Resource (OER) programs and supported collaborative development of open content. Panelists will share practical strategies and scalable approaches that can be adapted across diverse educational settings.

**For more information about the THEC Open Education Initiative, please contact:**

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**Thank You!**

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