



Winning **Faculty Allies** in the Struggle for Affordable Course Material Solutions

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Introduction

It's critical for administrators to understand how instructors see their role in relation to course materials.

The pressure to reduce course material costs has never been higher for administrators. The price of new textbooks soared **73%** between 2006 and 2016, according to Student Public Interest Resource Groups. As prices increase, more students feel compelled to opt out of buying at least one book per semester — an act that jeopardizes academic success.

Plummeting grades and rising school costs have a deleterious impact on retention. Unsold course material inventory can cause a major financial burden on the college store.

It doesn't have to be that way. Course material options have evolved in recent years, creating possibilities that entice students to make more purchases. Once, students chose between a new or used print textbook. Now, they can receive material via digital access codes, open educational resources (OER) and alternative content, which is often based on OER. Online and brick-and-mortar bookstores offer many choices, including custom publishing, spiral-bound and loose-leaf print materials.

Sales and distribution options that save students money and reduce institutional overhead costs are abundant. Some schools adopt an online bookstore. Others lease their campus store. Some choose a hybrid model, selling textbooks online and maintaining retail space on campus.

However, change requires collaboration with teachers. Research shows that faculty, not administrators, are the key campus decision-makers when it comes to course materials. Administrators hoping to find solutions that lower costs must win faculty allies.

"College administrators trying to establish their own favored programs too often try to obtain faculty buy-in after the fact. Far more likely to succeed is doing the hard work of creating alignment with faculty at the front end," Steven C. Bahls, President, Augustana College, Ill, wrote in "The Chronicle of Higher Education."

If administrators obtain faculty buy-in early, then teachers are more likely to promote the store.

3 key insights

Faculty are the No. 1 campus course material decision-makers

New editions prompt faculty to evaluate new material

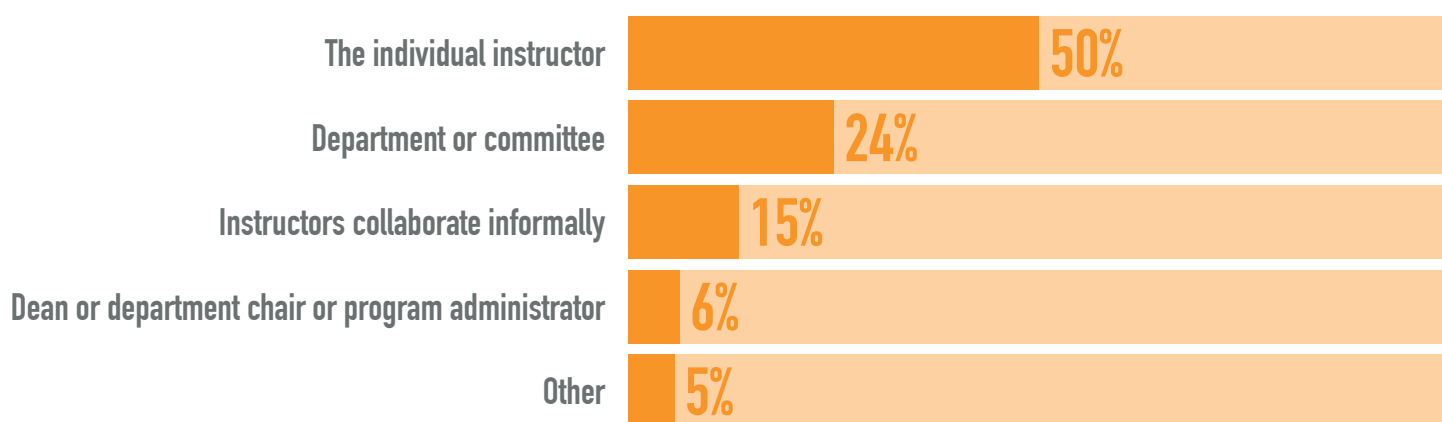
Faculty seek new material from traditional publishers more often than alternatives

MBS Direct sponsored the Fall 2016 "Faculty Attitudes Towards Content in Higher Education," produced by Nielsen. With this sponsorship, MBS Direct asked survey respondents additional, custom questions. This is a report of those findings, which weren't released as part of Nielsen's distributed report.

Faculty Choose Course Materials

Overwhelmingly, the data showed faculty were the No. 1 campus decision-makers when it came to course materials. A full **89%** of those surveyed said that either an individual instructor, a department or department committee, or an informal collaboration among instructors was responsible for course material initiatives at their school. Half said the initiative was the choice of the individual instructor.

Who Makes Course Materials Decisions?



The data varied between two and four-year and public and private colleges. Individuals had even greater control at four-year private schools with **64%** choosing their own texts. At two-year colleges, a greater number of departmental committees (**38%**) made course materials choices than individuals (**31%**).

Though asked, not one faculty member said a chancellor or provost was involved in course materials initiatives at their school.

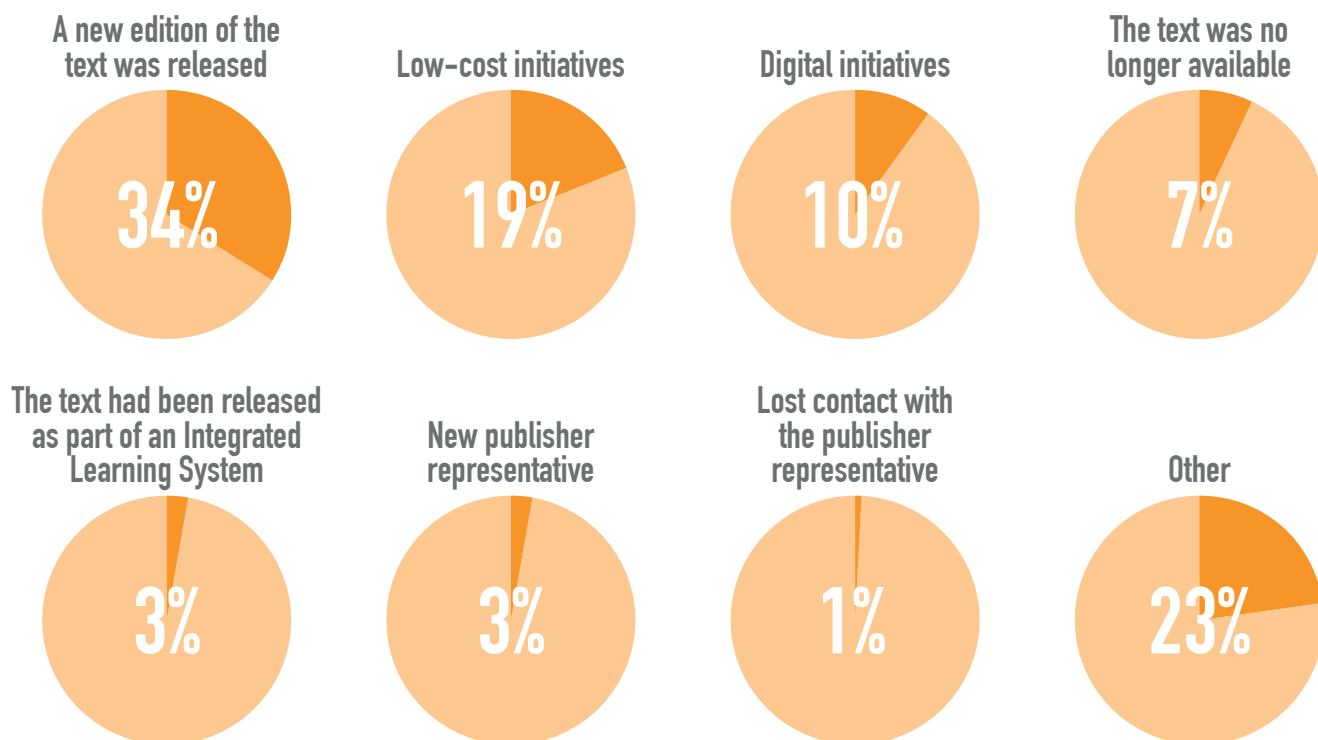
The majority of teachers at private schools are accustomed to autonomy with course materials choices. At minimum, departments and committees expect administrators to observe pedagogical and disciplinary boundaries where text choices are concerned.

Data showed faculty were accustomed to making course materials choices entirely without input from or communication with administrators.

Content Is King

We asked what factor last prompted faculty members to evaluate new options for their classes. Over one-third of those surveyed said the release of a new edition — a change in content — of a text used in their course inspired them to consider new options. Less than **20%** said low-cost initiatives prompted a re-evaluation. This suggests faculty were more concerned about course content than course material costs.

Why Faculty Evaluated New Options



Almost one-quarter of those surveyed said “other” occurrences influenced their choice to evaluate new options, frequently mentioning a “new or updated course,” the need to “evaluate new materials regularly” or that they were “bored with old materials.”

Data showed content change rather than cost initiative was more likely to prompt faculty to consider new course material options.

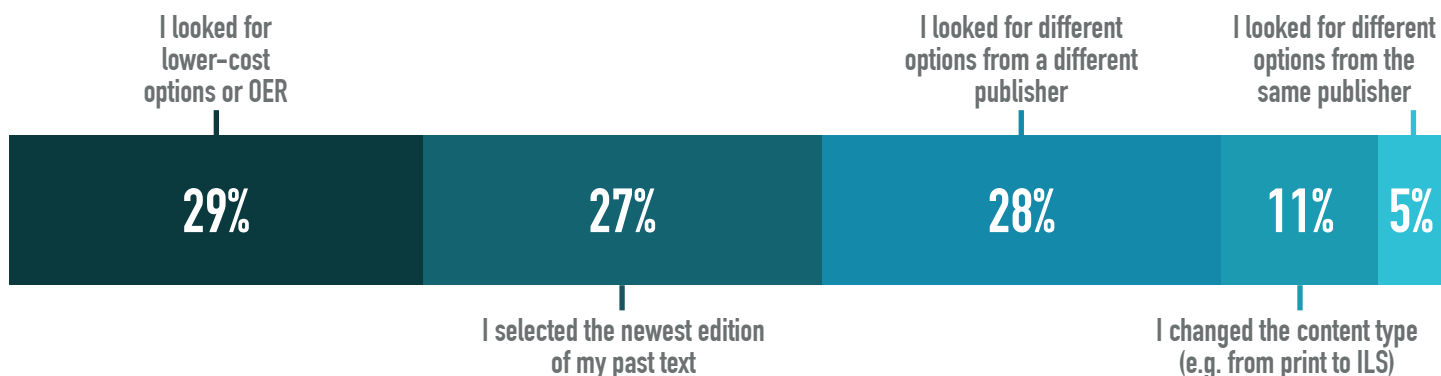
Divided Interests

After faculty evaluated new options, they were almost equally divided in what they chose to do next.

Nearly **30%** did one of three things:

- Looked for a low-cost option
- Selected the newest edition of the text
- Looked for different options from a different publisher

Next Step After Evaluating New Options



Overall, data showed less than one-third of faculty were interested in searching for texts that would reduce the cost of course materials for students. Meanwhile, **72%** either selected or sought a new edition from a publisher or an ILS.

Data show less than one-third of faculty were interested in seeking lower-cost options.

The Inclusive Access Solution

One cost-cutting solution gaining favor on campuses is inclusive access, a course material fee program that builds textbook charges into the price of tuition. Faculty appreciate inclusive access, because it ensures students have their required materials before the start of class.

In 2016, Nielsen and MBS Direct surveyed 1,829 students at two and four-year colleges about their attitudes toward course material fee programs. Data show a majority of students would participate.

Student Interest in Inclusive Access



Recommendations

Administrators searching for ways to save students money on textbooks face a challenge. Whether as individuals, committees or departments, faculty are the No. 1 campus decision-makers when it comes to course material content. Yet data show their commitment to lowering the cost of course materials is minimal.

Student success depends on access to affordable texts. Institutional success hinges on recruitment, retention and low overhead. However, a cost-reducing course material initiative will see much greater success with faculty approval.

Expert consulting

The solution lies in partnership with a course material aggregator that has industry wisdom, expertise and experience. The right partner offers consulting on cost-saving solutions like used, rental, marketplace, digital and alternative content, which often works with OER. It functions as a liaison between the administration and the faculty, with consultants who are able to educate teachers about the need for cost savings and about cost-saving text options, while reassuring faculty that content remains their domain.

Tailored solution

A solid course material partner tailors a solution to fit your school — taking all factors into consideration. It has technological infrastructure that can adapt to the ever-changing course materials landscape. Its online bookstore should include the integrations students expect from virtual retail, like single sign-on and LMS incorporation.

Established with publishers

Finally, the right partner is content neutral. This permits the sort of publisher relationships needed to offer a vast number of traditional and nontraditional formats.

In short, a true partner should be outfitted to provide the solution that's right for your school, whether it's an online bookstore, a contract-managed program, inclusive access or a combination of all three.

An effective course material partnership will form a bridge between the administration and the faculty. It will ensure effective communication and simplify course material distribution at your school.

Choose a course material partner who can

Educate faculty about the need for cost savings

Educate faculty in format options

Offer faculty assurance that they will continue to choose content

Tailor a solution to your school

Provide consulting on cost-cutting alternative content

About MBS Direct

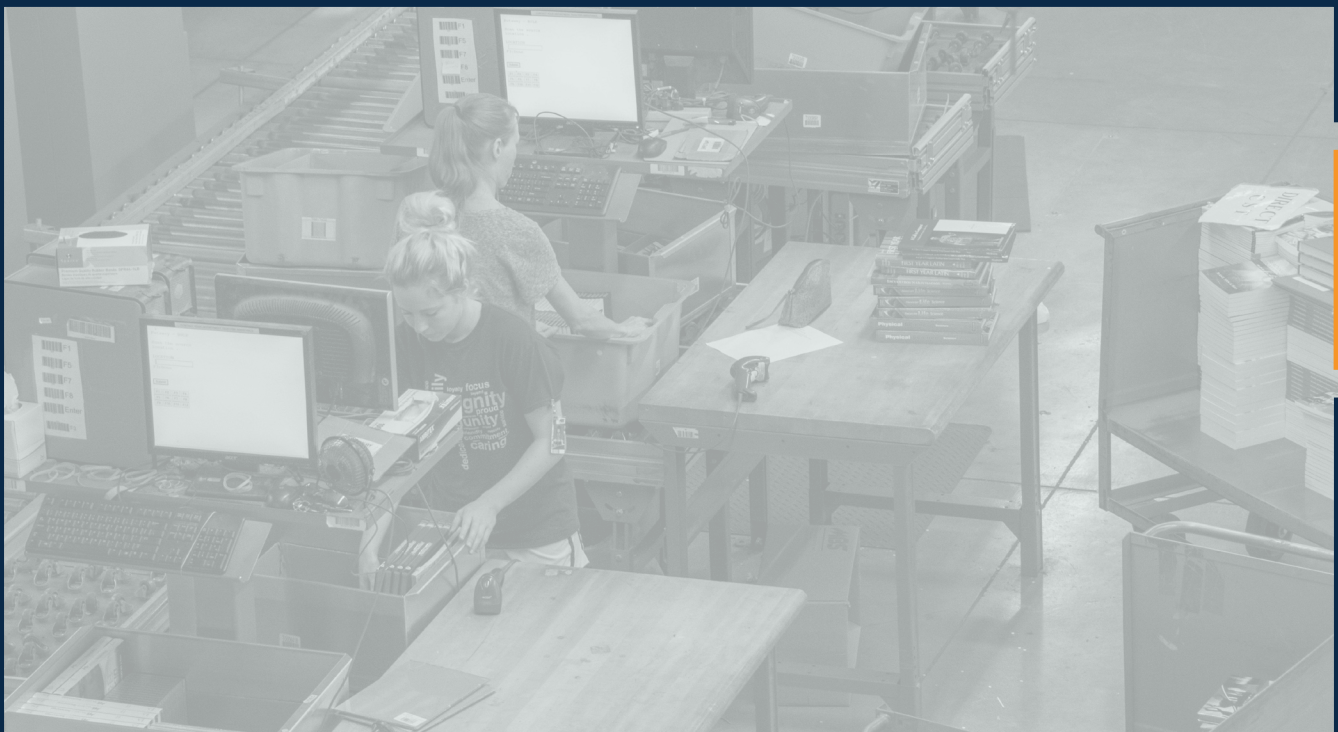
MBS Direct has been helping schools find cost-saving course material solutions for more than 25 years. Our solutions are tailored to fit each school's needs. These include a personalized Online Bookstore, contract-managed stores (through our sister company Barnes & Noble College), inclusive access and hybrid models. Our Online Bookstore has an infrastructure that permits acceptance of multiple tenders — including student financial aid. It can be integrated with an LMS and with student schedules, permitting single sign-on experience.

We consult with faculty at over 700 higher education and K-12 institutions on digital formats, alternative content and courseware. We provide marketing that helps all members of the campus community understand their role in course material initiatives.

MBS Direct cares about student success. We offer students 24/7 customer service, and our out-the-door in 24 guarantee ensures students have their materials Day One.

In the 2016-2017 school year, MBS Direct saved students **\$38.8 million** on course materials.

To find out more, contact us at
directinfo@mbsdirect.net





2711 West Ash Street, Columbia MO, 65203 | 866.638.5954 | www.mbsdirect.net