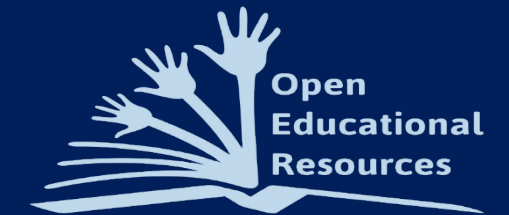




# The State of Open Educational Resources in Massachusetts Public Higher Education



**Teaching, Learning & Student Development  
Conference, Bristol Community College**  
Dr. Robert Awkward, Assistant Commissioner for Academic  
Effectiveness  
May 1, 2026



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# Why Is OER Important? What Are the Benefits?

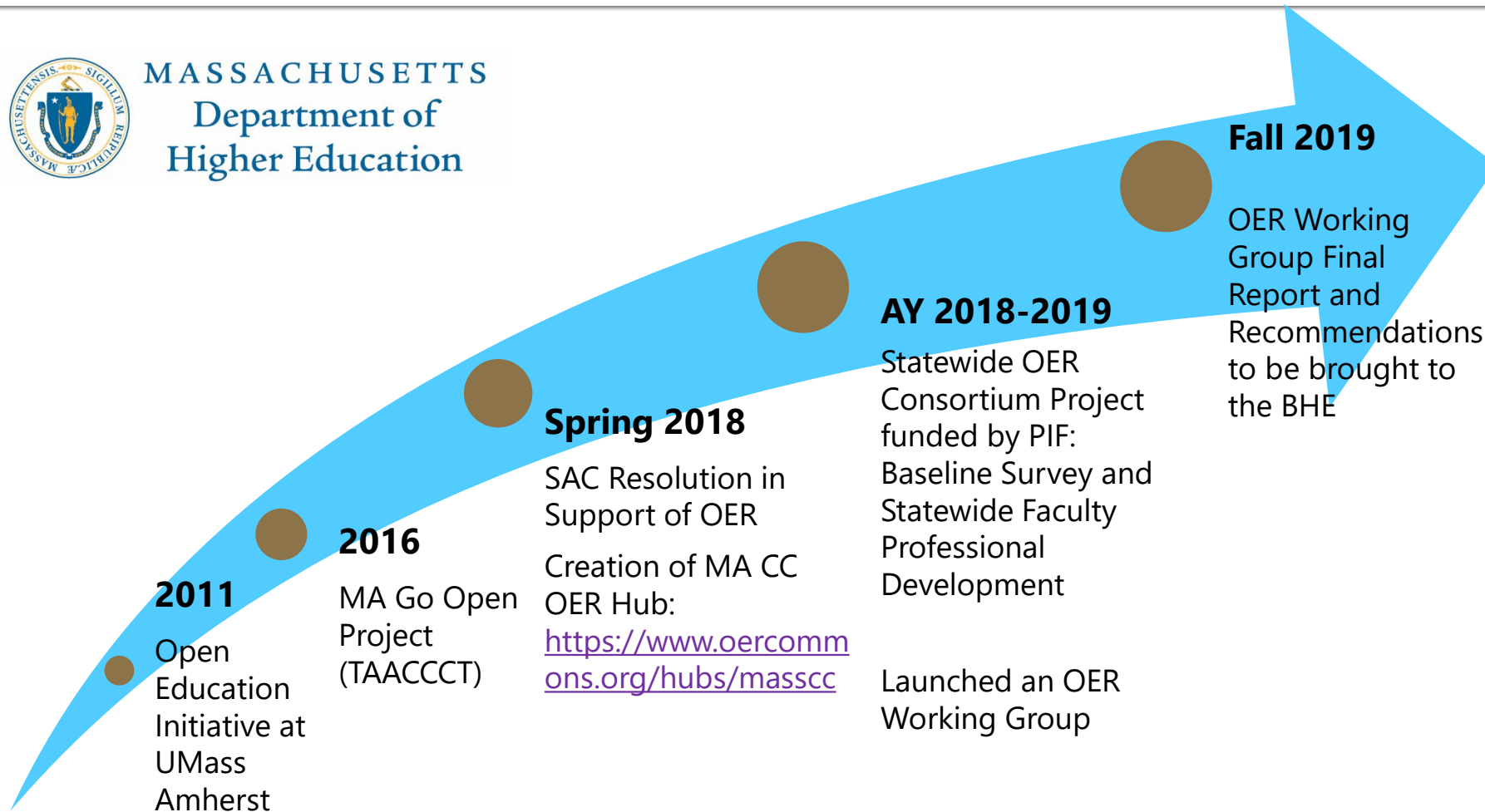
- Positive Impact on Student Learning
- Engagement with Equity, Diversity & Inclusion
- Increasing Interest by Stakeholders:
  - Students
  - Public Higher Educational Institutions
  - Faculty
- Responding to Rising Costs
- Increasing Interest in the Legislature



# OER Historical Timeline



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# OER Working Group

- Convened by **Commissioner Santiago**
- Launched November 26, 2018
- Leadership: Dr. **Patricia A. Marshall**, Deputy Commissioner for Academic Affairs & Student Success
- Staff support: Dr. **Robert Awkward**, *Director of Learning Outcomes Assessment*

## Co-chairs

- **Marilyn Billings**, *Head, Office for Scholarly Research Communications, University of Massachusetts Amherst*
- **Susan Tashjian**, *Coordinator of Instructional Technology, Northern Essex Community College*

## Membership

- **UMass System** (4),
- **State Universities** (5)
- **Community Colleges** (7)
- **Faculty** (4),
- **Librarians** (7),
- **Administrators** (5),
- **Students** (2)
- **External** (3)

# Final Recommendations

## Short-term

- Adopt OER definition
- Establish OER statewide advisory council
- Designate statewide OER coordinator
- Identify OER courses in course management systems
- Continue to encourage student advocacy

## Mid-term

- Provide faculty professional development
- Use OER for graduate & continuing education
- Expand and establish a unified statewide OER repository

## Long-term

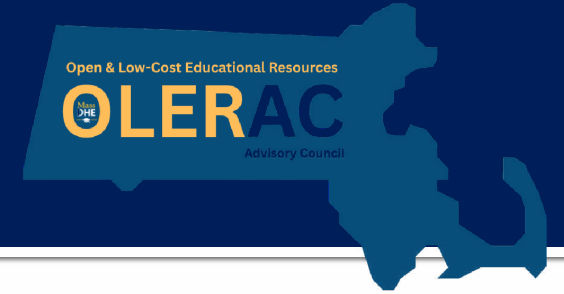
- Increase funding to address campus technology challenges
- Encourage the consideration of OER in faculty tenure & promotion

# OER Working Group Recommended OER Definition

*Open Educational Resources (OER) are teaching, learning and research materials in any medium – digital or otherwise – that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits no-cost access, use, adaptation and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions (UNESCO).*



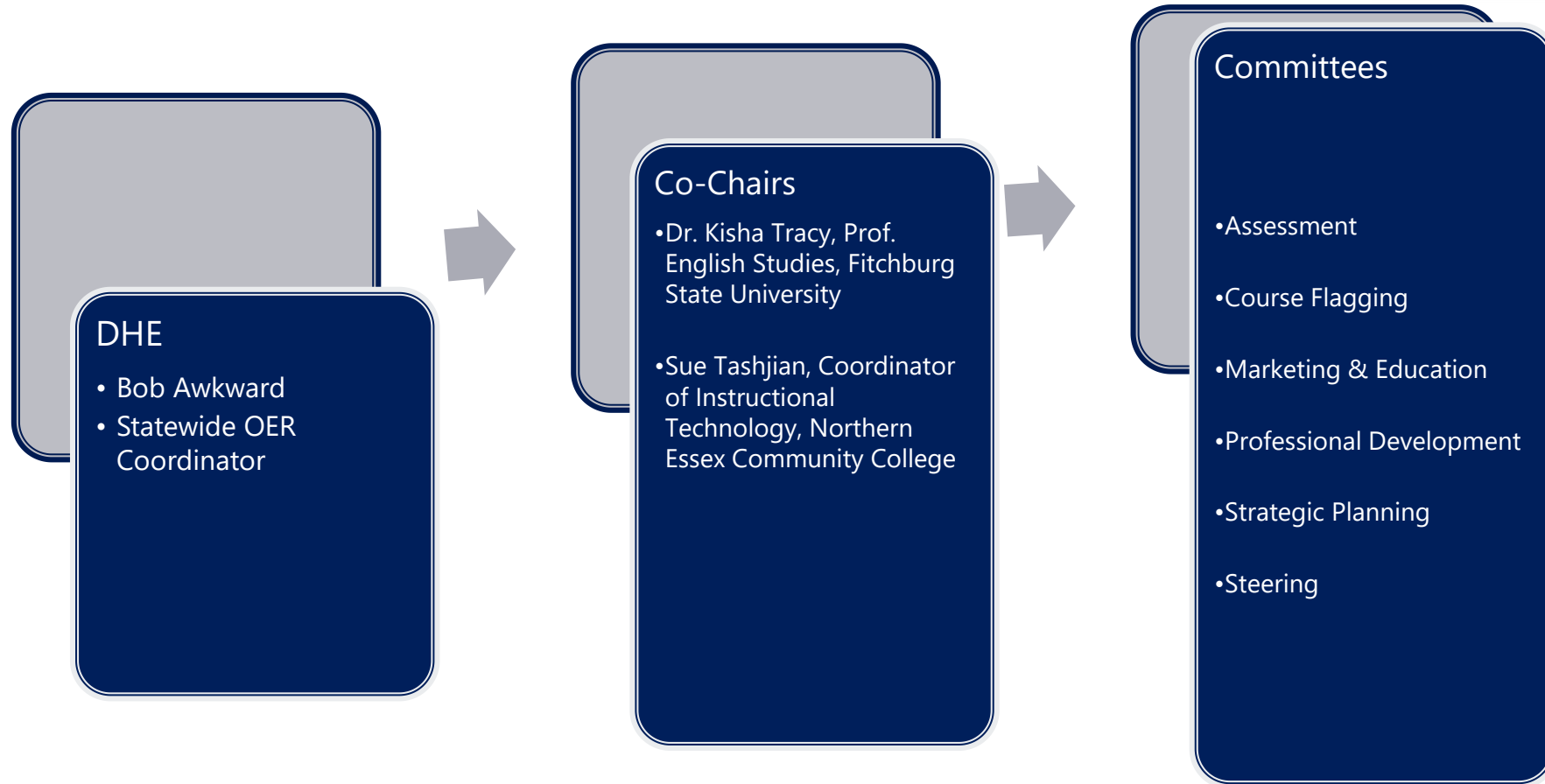
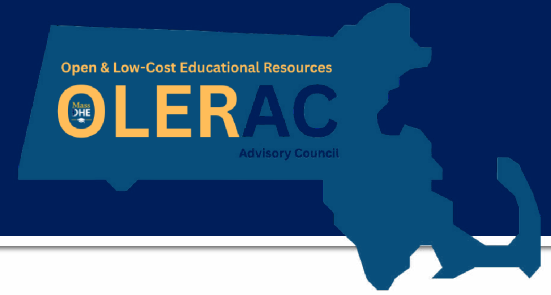
# OLER Advisory Council



- Comprised of representatives from the 28 undergraduate-serving institutions and a representative from UMass Medical School
- There are four student representatives including the current SAC Chair Michael Hannigan from Greenfield Community College
- There are five OER Faculty Fellows:
  - Dr. Patricia Lynne, Professor, English, Framingham State University
  - Dr. Amanda Simons, Professor & Chair, Biology, Framingham State University
  - Dr. Kisha Tracy, Professor, English Studies, Fitchburg State University
  - Brokk Toggerson, Sr. Lecturer, UMass Amherst
  - Devan Walton, Associate Professor, Computer Science, Northern Essex Community College



# OLER Advisory Council Organizing Structure



# OER Final Report & Recommendations: Short-Term

- **Adopt a statewide definition (Completed)**
  - *Open Educational Resources are teaching, learning, and research materials in any medium – digital or otherwise – that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits no-cost access, use, adaptation and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions.*
- **Establish statewide coordination (Completed)**
  - The OER Advisory Council was launched comprised of representatives from all of the 29 public institutions
  - The OER Advisory Council has six committees: Assessment, Course Marking, Marketing & Education, Professional Development, Rebranding, and a Steering Committees
  - Dr. Robert Awkward, Assistant Commissioner for Academic Effectiveness serves as the statewide coordinator
- **Designate OER courses in course management systems (In-progress)**
- **Enable, activate, and support student advocacy (Completed and ongoing)**
  - The Advisory Council has four student members including the Student Advisory Council (SAC) Chair
  - We have identified OER Student Ambassadors on 15 campuses; the largest number ever!

# OER Final Report & Recommendations: Mid-Term



- **Share and encourage faculty development best practices (Ongoing)**
  - Two OER Partners Training (Librarians, Instructional Designers & Teaching & Learning Center Staff) sessions held in June 2020
  - Two OER Faculty Training sessions held in May 2020, May 2021, Oct./Nov. 2022, May 2024 and April 2025
  - Must attend the training AND complete a written review of a digital textbook in OEN's Open Library in order to receive a \$200 stipend
  
- **Results to Date:**
  - 58.4% adopted OER in fall 2020 (May 2020)
  - 60.9% adopted OER in fall 2021 (May 2021)
  - 63.7% adopted OER in spring 2023 (Oct./Nov. 2022)
  - 73.5% adopted OER in fall 2024 (May 2024)
  - 71.1% said the training influenced their decision to adopt (May 2020)
  - 65.7% said the training influenced their decision to adopt (May 2021)
  - 68.2% said the training influenced their decision to adopt (Oct./Nov. 2022)
  - 52.7% said the training influenced their decision to adopt (May 2024)

# OER Final Report & Recommendations: Mid-Term



- **Actively promote the use of OER in graduate and continuing education to meet employers' workforce development needs** ([Limited action to date](#))
  - UMass Medical School is a member of the OER Advisory Council and is working to create a culture of OER
- **Promote discoverability best practices and expand a unified repository to make the discovery of local content easier** ([Ongoing](#))
  - **OER Advisory Council adopted the Repository Committee (since sunset) Report on January 11, 2020:**
    - Retain and enhance the OER Commons Community College Hub, which was renamed Open Massachusetts: A Public Higher Education Repository
    - Hired a Mass. OER Commons Coordinator (i.e., OER librarian) – Rachel Oleaga
    - Coordinator has reorganized the Hub, established and ensures consistent application of meta-data, and expanded the collections to include four-year institutions through education, training and marketing
    - Has led efforts to comply with Title II
    - DHE continues to pay for OER Commons as the Hub vendor

## OER Final Report & Recommendations: Long-Term

- **Address issues related to technology and access (No Action)**
  - The Bright Act will provide institutions funds to address this issue if they so choose
- **Recognize and advance Open Educational Resources in faculty tenure and promotion (No Action)**

### Receipt of the *Course Marking Implementation Guide* & the *OER Assessment Implementation Guide* by the Board of Higher Education

- Course marking was adopted by the Board of Higher Education in June 2021
- The results of course marking to date:
- **Fully Implemented:** 17 total (61%) - 10 community colleges; four state universities; and UMass Boston, Lowell & Dartmouth (**Up from 11 in FY22**)
- **Implemented with Issues:** 6 total (21%) - five community colleges; and UMass Amherst (**Down from eight in FY22**)
- **Not Implemented:** 3 total (11%) - three state universities (**Down from nine in FY22**)
- **Planning Stage:** 2 total (7%) – two state universities

# What is Course Marking?



“Course marking is the process of assigning specific, searchable attributes to courses”

(Ainsworth, Allen, Dai, Elder, Finkbeiner, Freeman, Hare, Heige, Helregel, Hoover, Kirschner, Perrin, Ray, Raye, Reed, Schoppert, & Thompson, 2020).

## Marking Open and Affordable Courses

Best Practices and Case Studies

T E X T B O O K D W  
E D U S T S O C O N  
Z E R O C O S T N E  
J Z T C S A L T E P  
M R C W J K N O L O  
A F F O R D A B L E  
O E R L E E R F X

Edited by Sarah Hare, Jessica Kirschner, and Michelle Reed

# OER Type Policies

- No Cost = OER/Library Resources/Free
  - No textbook to purchase and no cost for students
  - To be so designated, a course/section should use OER as the primary, required instructional materials
  - No cost = 18, OER = 9, Other = 2
- Low-Cost = \$50 or less
  - Low-cost = 21, OERL = 3



# OLER Advisory Council Recommendation: KPIs



## Established and approved by the Board of Higher Education: Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) - June 2022; adopted the **COUP** Framework

- **Cost**
  - Total cost savings
- **Outcomes**
  - Total no. of OER courses/sections as a percentage of total courses/sections
  - No. of students enrolled in OER courses as a percentage of total enrollments
  - Changes in DFW rates in OER vs. non-OER courses
  - Demographics of students taking OER courses vs. total students
- **Usage**
  - No. of faculty, staff, students participating in OER activities on campus
- **Perception**
  - Student perception survey – fall 2024/spring 2025 implementation



April 14, 2025

# OER Key Performance Indicators: FY24

## Executive Summary

Assessment Committee: Connie Strittmatter (Chair), Emily Alling, Bob Awkward, Corinne Ebbs, Niki Nguyen, Bernadette Sibuma, Mandy Simons, Suzanne Smith, & Emma Wood



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# Overview

- AY 2024: 26 out of 28 undergraduate-serving institutions (93%) reported at least some data.
  - 15 (100%) – Community Colleges
  - 9 (100%) – State Universities
  - 2 (50%) – University of Massachusetts System
  
- AY 2023: 26 out of 28 undergraduate-serving institutions (93%) reported at least some data.
  - 15 (100%) – Community Colleges
  - 8 (88.8%) – State Universities
  - 3 (75%) – University of Massachusetts System

# KPI 1A: Cost Savings – FY24

**\$21,446,915**

# Overview

- AY 2025: 27 out of 28 undergraduate-serving institutions (96%) reported at least some data.
  - ✓ 14 (93%) – Community Colleges
  - ✓ 9 (100%) - State Universities
  - ✓ 4 (100%) – University of Massachusetts System
  
- AY 2024: 26 out of 28 undergraduate-serving institutions (93%) reported at least some data.
  - ✦ 15 (100%) - Community Colleges
  - ✦ 9 (100%) - State Universities
  - ✦ 2 (50%) - University of Massachusetts System

## KPI 1A: Cost Savings – FY25

**\$27,484,206 (28%)**

# KPI 1A: Student Savings

	<b>AY 2023</b>	<b>AY 2024</b>
Community Colleges	\$6,293,423	\$8,222,410
State Universities	\$5,579,806	\$6,176, 219
UMass	\$3,756,448	\$7,048,286
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$15,629,677</b>	<b>\$21,446,915</b>
<b>% change</b>		<b>37.2%</b>

# KPI 1B: Return on Investment

Since AY22, ROI = \$58.83

\$44,698,586 in Savings

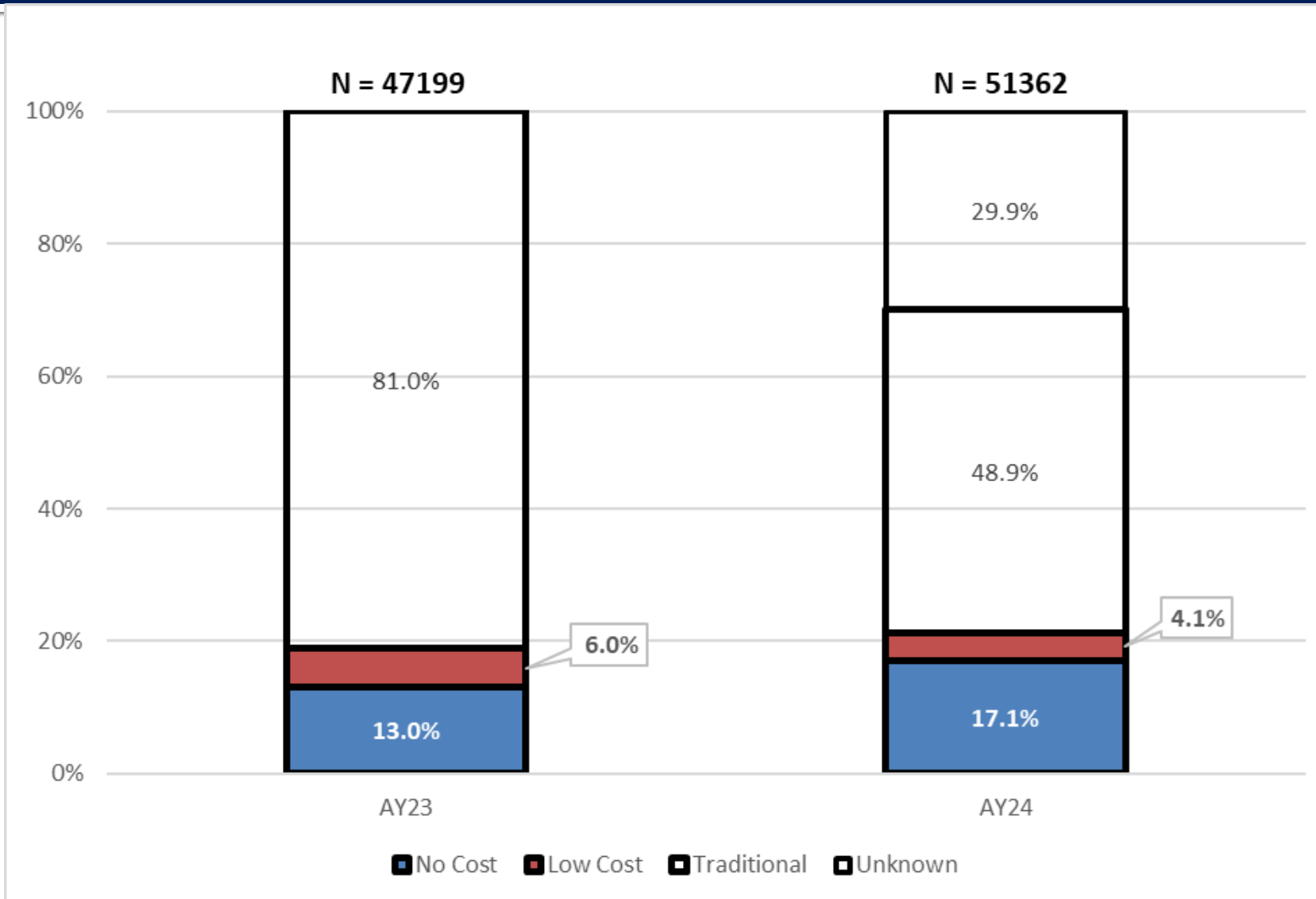
7,621,994 (AY22) + \$15,629,677 (AY23) + **\$21,446,915 (AY24)**

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\$747,077 in Investments

\$487,245 (Institutional) + \$222,000 (DHE) + \$37,832 (ROTEL)

# KPI 2: % of Course Sections - All Reporting Institutions



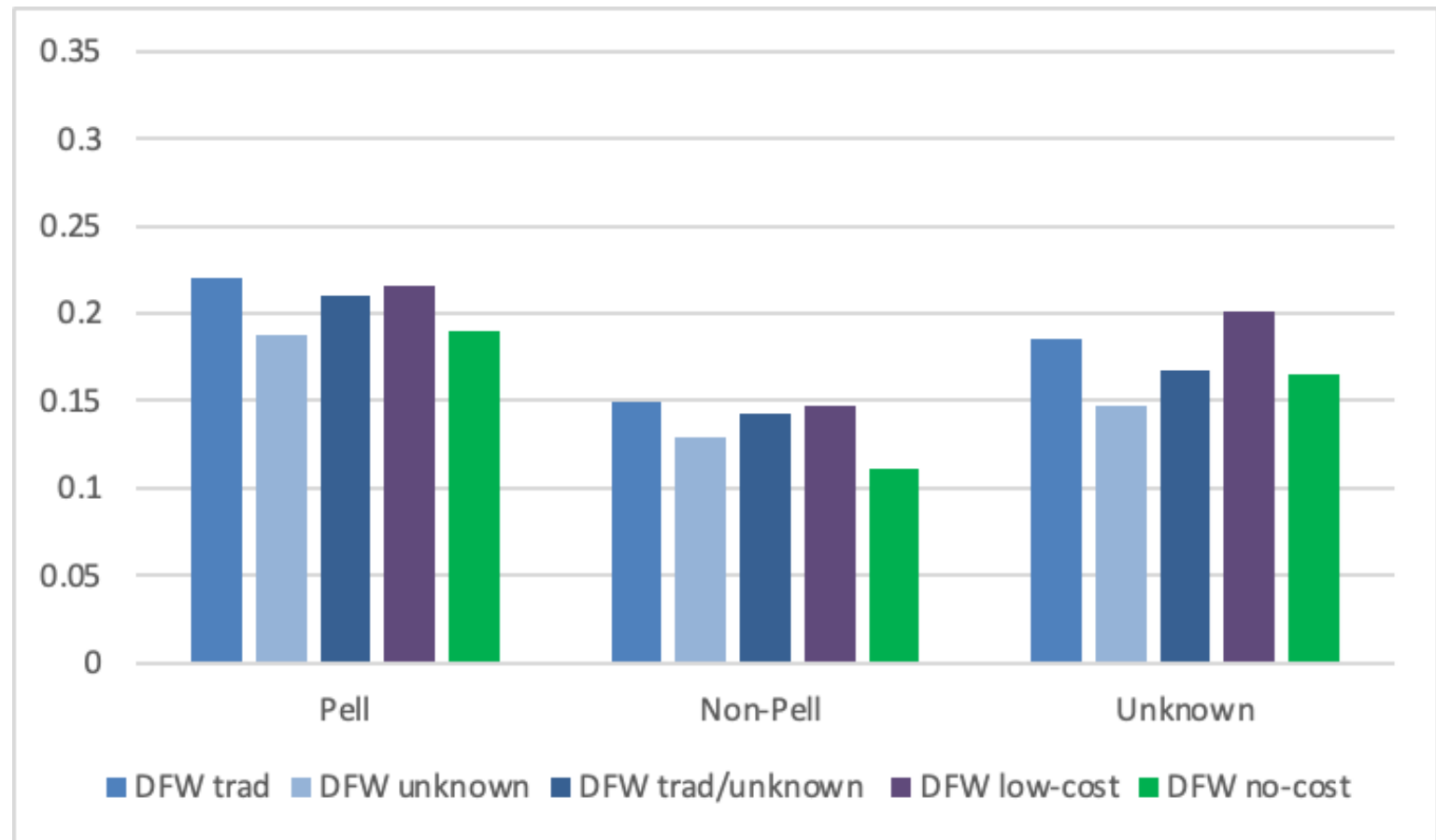
# KPI 5: DFW Rates

## ■ Comparable to AY23

	DFW rates in No Cost n (%)	DFW rates in Low Cost n (%)	DFW rates in remaining sections n (%)
Community College	23.5%	25.1%	23.2%
State Universities	12.0%	13.8%	13.7%
UMass System	5.2%	8.9%	8.9%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>13.9%</b>	<b>17.4%</b>	<b>16.6%</b>

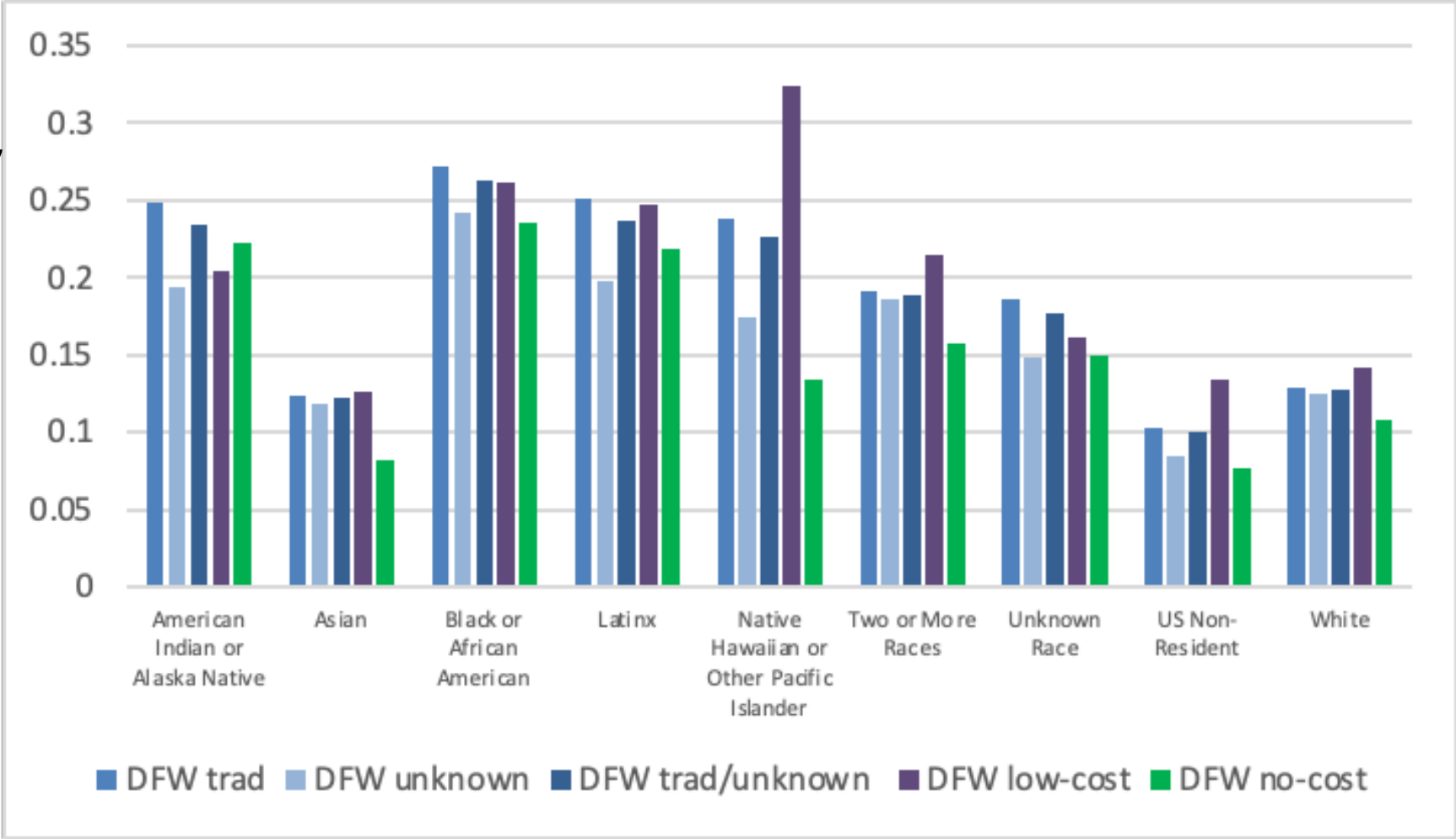
# KPI 5: DFW Rate Reporting - Disaggregated by Pell Status

- System-wide **No-cost** materials show lower DFW rates among both Pell-eligible and Non-Pell-eligible students



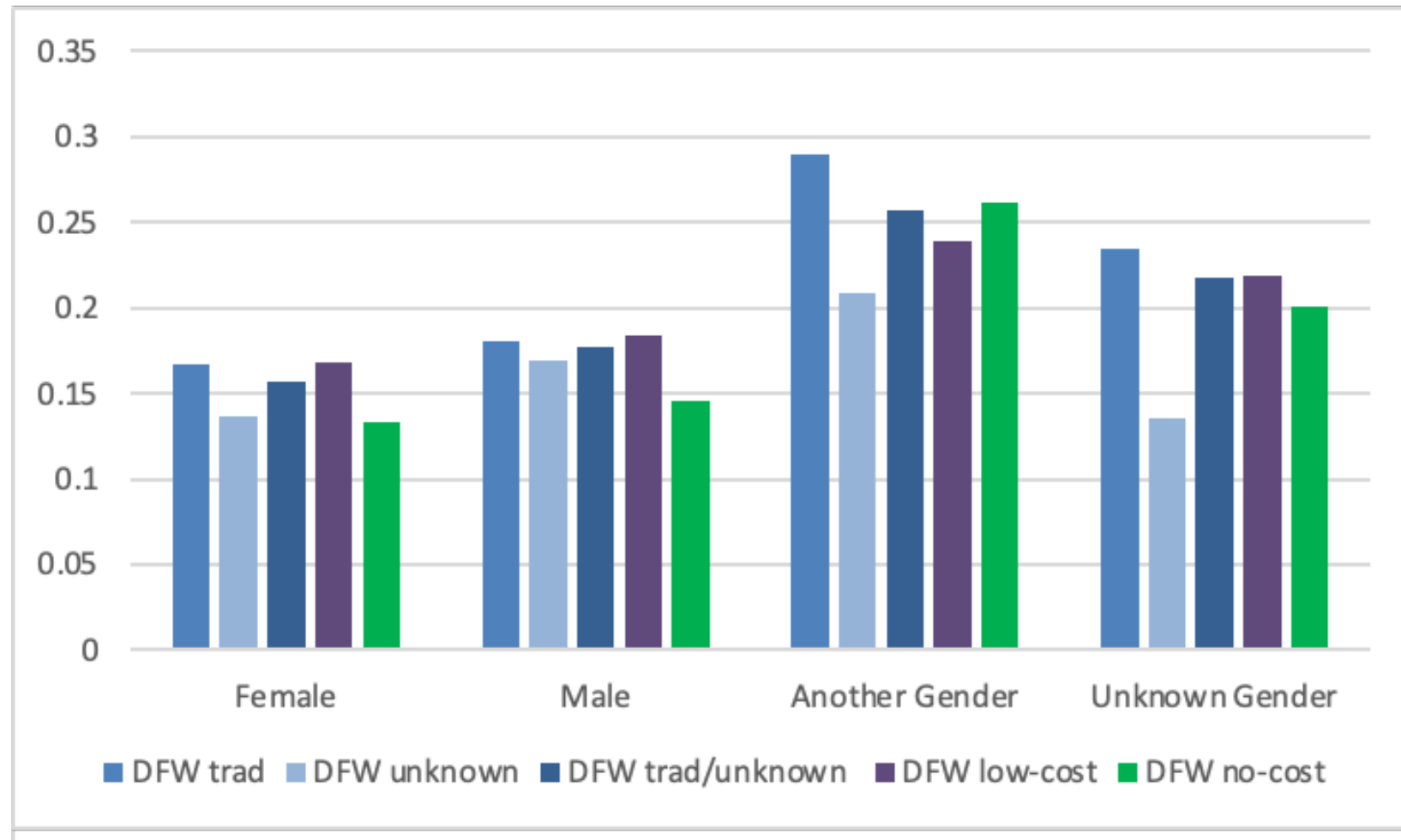
# KPI 5: DFW Rate Reporting - Disaggregated by Race

■ System-wide **No-cost** materials show lower DFW rates among most racial groups



# KPI 5: DFW Rate Reporting - Disaggregated by Gender

- System-wide **No-cost** materials show lower DFW rates among males and females but not other genders





# Status of Current Ongoing Efforts

- Annual Faculty OER Awards to be presented May 18 at Quinsigamond Community College:
  - Demetrios Brellas, Framingham State for Adapter
  - Heidi Getchell-Bastien, Mass. Bay Community College, Creator
  - Nasreen Latif, Roxbury Community College, Adopter/Advocate
- Strategic Planning Committee to present the results of their national landscape analysis and draft plan on May 18



# Status of Current Ongoing Efforts

- Presentation of the FY25 Key Performance Indicator data to the Community College CAOs (June 1) and the State University CAOs (TBD)
- Assessment Committee is analyzing the FY25 data for presentation to key stakeholders on June 15
- Steering Committee to develop a new way forward for OLERAC

# DHE Funding for OER Initiative to end in FY26

- Conference Committee and the elimination of the HEIF budget line – Summer 2025
- DHE continued funding OER, Institutional Assessment & Civic Engagement for FY26.
- DHE requested funding for FY27 and it was approved by the Secretary of Education, but denied by the Secretary of A&F
- Therefore, not included in the Governor's budget request