



I recently learned that there are questions and concerns surrounding Hocking College's partnership with ED MAP. I want to clear up any misunderstandings and misconceptions; ED MAP is very proud of our partnership with Hocking College, and we are committed to helping Hocking College, its students, faculty, and administration achieve their goals.

ED MAP's commitment to Hocking College is rooted in our history. I am a former educator who has been an Athens County resident for more than 30 years. I started ED MAP with two distinct objectives: help higher education institutions' faculty and staff more effectively select and manage their course materials to better support students, and help grow the local economy. In 2001 I co-founded ED MAP, in Nelsonville. Over the past 12 years the company has successfully grown to nearly 100 employees – several of whom are Hocking College graduates. Our commitment to the region is reflected in our employees' participation in community fundraisers and events, my work on the Stuart's Opera House board, and our President's work on the Athens Foundation board. No one from ED MAP serves on the Hocking College board, and other than our partnership to solve the course materials problem, we have no business or legal ties.

Nationally, the cost of course materials has out-paced inflation and tuition, increasing an incredible 812% over three decades. It's not really surprising that surveys have shown that up to 70% of students report that, on occasion, they have failed to purchase required course materials due to cost – even though the students realize that not having the materials will impact their ability to be successful in the courses. For community college students, required course materials can increase their costs of education by 72%.

Clearly, finding relevant, affordable course materials has become a key challenge across all of higher education. That Hocking College is motivated to solve this problem shows real leadership. While making a significant change is always difficult, Hocking College, is clearly committed to improving access to and affordability of course materials. ED MAP and Hocking College came together to discuss these critical goals:

- **Reduce the cost of education:** As noted previously, textbook prices, driven in part by the used and rental book markets, are rising faster than inflation and represent a significant portion of educational expenses for students attending community colleges.

These national trends were evident at Hocking College. As part of our work with Hocking College, student surveys supported the growing concern that students were not prepared to succeed in their studies because they couldn't afford or access course materials.

- 40% say they don't have enough money at the start of class to buy books
 - 31% say they have to borrow money from friends/family to buy books
 - 54% say the cost of course materials greatly affects their ability to purchase those materials
- **Ensure all students have access to educational materials by the start of class:** The prohibitive cost of course materials means that many students begin (and sometimes end) class without access to the essential course materials they need to succeed. This creates difficulty for faculty members and often results in poor student outcomes. Survey data from Hocking College students shows:
 - 37% say they rely on financial aid to purchase course materials, but don't get their funds until after classes began
 - 10% say they couldn't overcome roadblocks and had no access to course materials

- **Provide students with a consistent experience:** The rising costs of course materials have forced students to make difficult decisions: new book? Used book? Rental book? Wait to buy the book when financial aid funding comes? Try an eBook subscription? Buy an old edition and hope not too much has changed? Skip the book altogether and borrow from a friend? While there is great value in having choices, little value is actually realized if no options are feasible.
- **Helping students develop 21st century digital skills for today's technology-driven world:** To provide students with a solid education Hocking College cannot ignore student needs and expectations just because we are located in a rural area.

ED MAP has partnered with more than 100 institutions. The entire premise of our technology and services is to help schools like Hocking College lower the cost of education and improve student outcomes by ensuring all students have access to affordable course materials. By helping institutions provide affordable access to course materials for *all* students, faculty can hit the ground running on the first day of classes knowing their students have the materials they need to succeed.

Hocking College's stated goals are something that we can all agree with. Working together, we can continue to drive the change that puts control over cost and educational content back in the hands of the Academy. We are honored to help Hocking College with this important project.

Sincerely,

Michael Mark
CEO
ED MAP