



**AFFORDABLE  
LEARNING PA**



**PALCI™**

Partnership for Academic Library  
Collaboration and Innovation



ONLINE LEARNING™  
CONSORTIUM

# COURSE MATERIALS COST STUDENTS MORE THAN MONEY

PREPARED FOR OLC

PRESENTED JANUARY 2024



Bay View Analytics®



# WELCOME

## Agenda

1. Project Introduction
2. Survey Results
3. Panelist Discussion



**Julia Seaman**  
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**Elizabeth Nelson**  
Steering Committee, ALPA &  
Reference & Instruction Librarian,  
Penn State Lehigh Valley



**Molly Kennelly**  
Student, Temple University

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# PROJECT INTRODUCTION

## How do course material costs affect students?

Research indicates that when all students have equitable access to their course materials, it increases retention and persistence to graduation, potentially reducing overall student debt.

Additionally, prior student survey research from Florida and Virginia have shown that students report:

- A large degree of worry about meeting course material costs
- Their academic careers are impacted negatively by course material costs



# PROJECT DETAILS

## Goal:

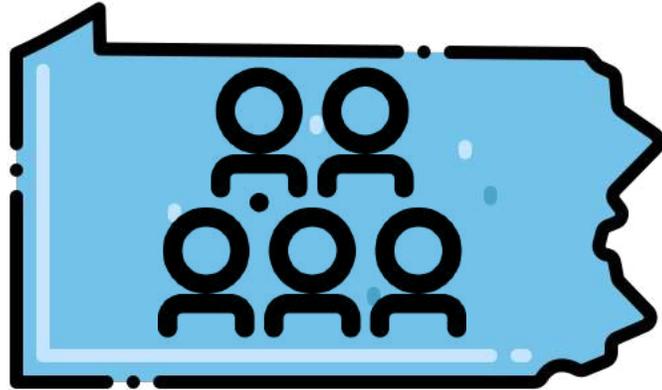
To present a **compelling narrative and benchmark data** that resonates with decision makers, students, higher education administrators, parents, and other stakeholders.

The ultimate aspiration is that stakeholders in affordable education can use the survey results **to enhance affordability initiatives in meaningful ways**, creating a more affordable and equitable course material landscape for students

# PROJECT DETAILS

Method:

①



Student survey across  
Pennsylvania institutions

②



A smaller national  
sample using the same  
survey instrument for  
direct comparison



# PROJECT DETAILS

## Process:



Institutions voluntarily participate.



Each institution responsible for communications to their own students.



All institutions use a common questionnaire.



Central organization administers the surveys and processes the data.



Central organization produces reports and presentations of the findings.



Collaboration between ALPA, PALCI, and Bay View Analytics



# RESEARCH TIMELINE

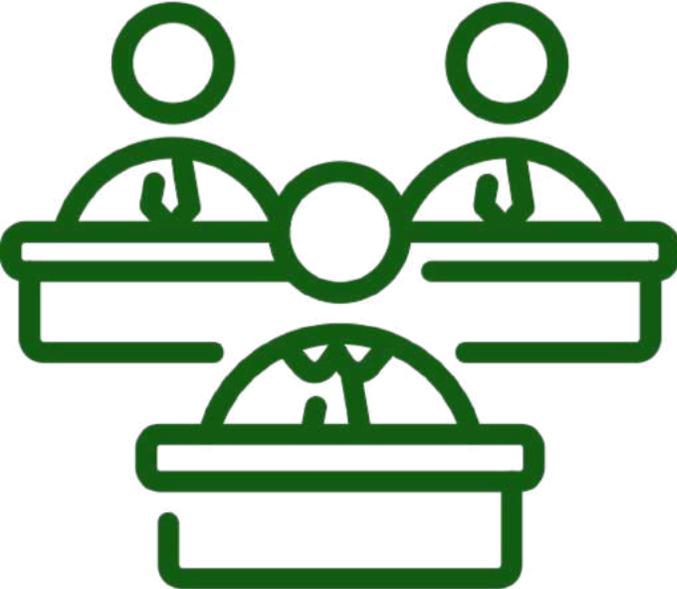
Research and report was completed in one year, including two survey time periods (Spring 2023 and Fall 2023).

Jan	Project Initiation
Feb	Research, Survey Creation, Outreach to institutions
Mar	
Apr	IRB approvals, <b>Spring Surveys Launch</b>
May	Data Analysis, National Survey
Jun	Initial Results shared back to institutions
Jul	Outreach to institutions, IRB approvals
Aug	
Sep	<b>Fall Surveys Launch</b>
Oct	Data Analysis
Nov	Public Report Release
Dec	Full data shared back to institutions

# PROJECT RESULTS



14 Institutions



4,306 Students

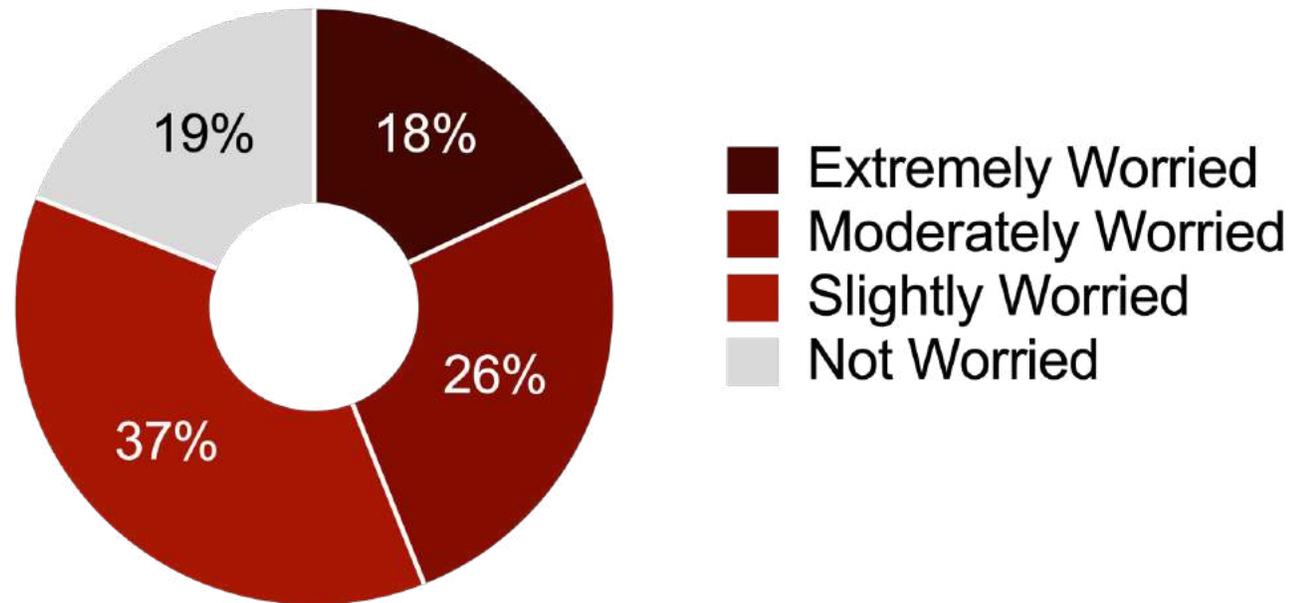
National

500 Students

A vertical rectangular box containing the word "National" at the top, a map of the United States with a location pin in the center, and a smaller box at the bottom containing the text "500 Students".

# STUDENTS WORRY ABOUT COURSE MATERIAL COSTS

*How worried were you about meeting your course material costs this term?*



**81% of students are worried at some level**

Not all students have the same level of worry. Students that reported higher levels of worry were:

- Black
- Hispanic
- Women
- Had a full-time job off campus
- Were a Pell Grant recipient.



# MAJORITY SPEND HUNDREDS PER TERM

*How much did you spend on course materials during this term?*

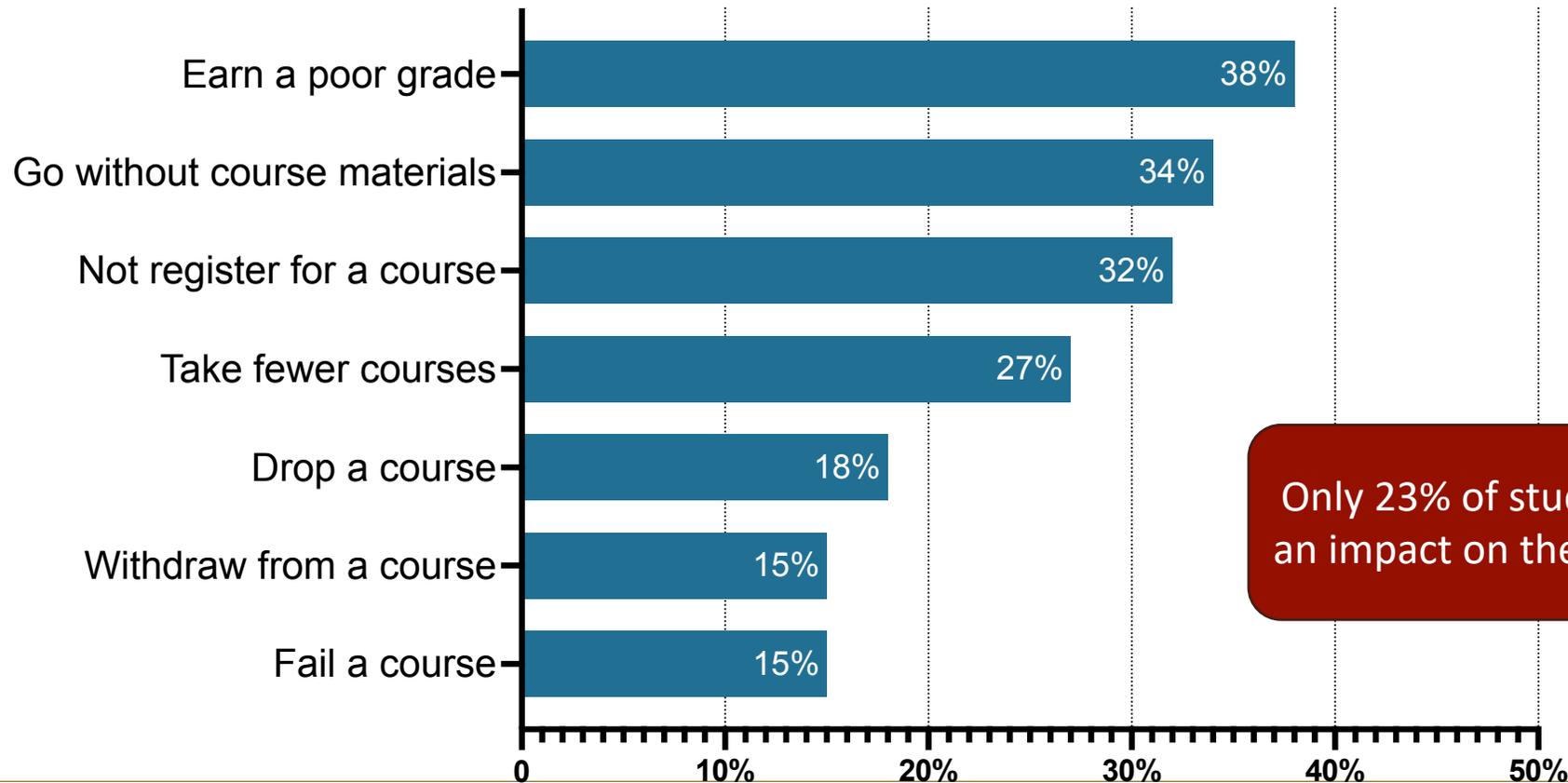


**Majority of students do have financial aid, but for many it does not cover course materials costs. Only 13% of students report financial aid covers over 50% or more of their costs**

Course Load	Average Cost
1	\$90
2	\$180
3	\$270
4	\$360
5	\$450

# COURSE MATERIAL COSTS DIRECTLY AND NEGATIVELY IMPACT STUDENT ACADEMICS

*In your academic career, has the cost of required course materials caused you to:*



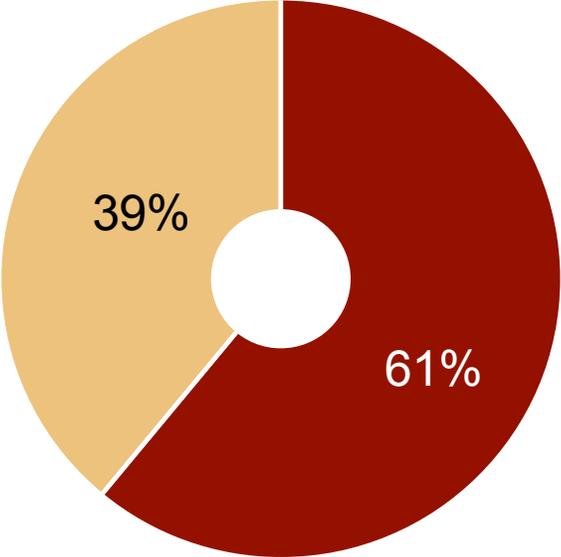
Only 23% of students have not had an impact on their academic career.



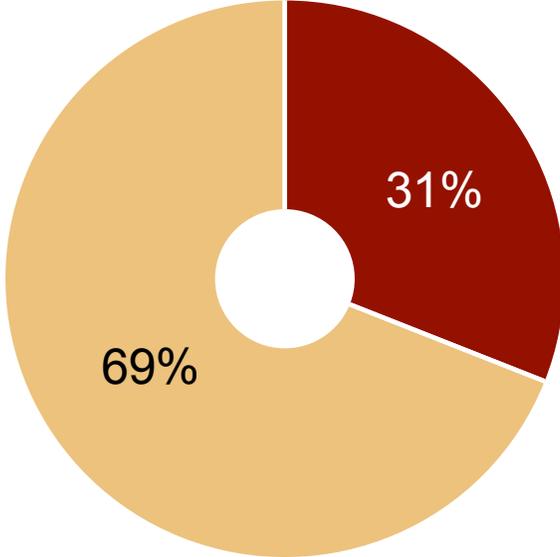
# MATERIAL COSTS IMPACT ACADEMIC DECISIONS, TOO

*In your academic career, has the cost of required course materials affected:*

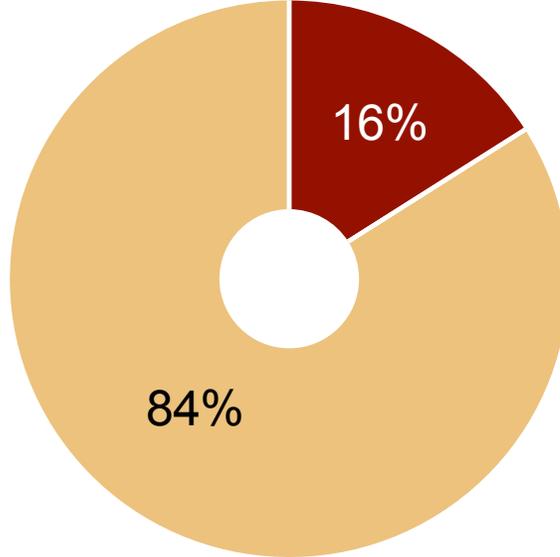
**Selecting your Institution**



**Selecting your Major**

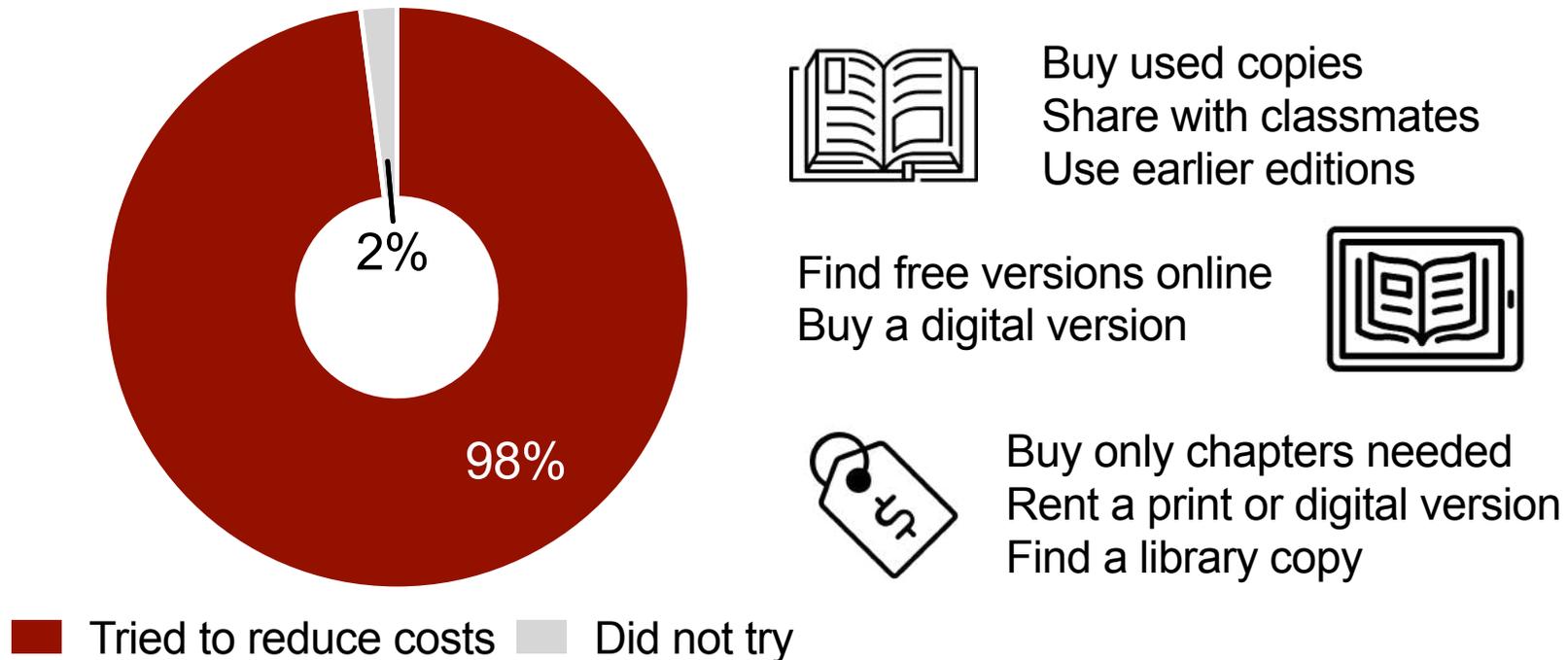


**Selecting your Minor**



■ Yes, affected      ■ No, not affected

# STUDENTS ACTIVELY WORK TO REDUCE COSTS

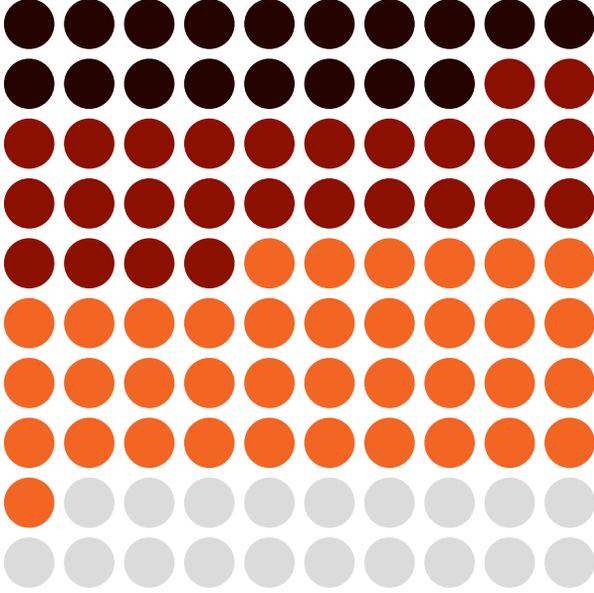
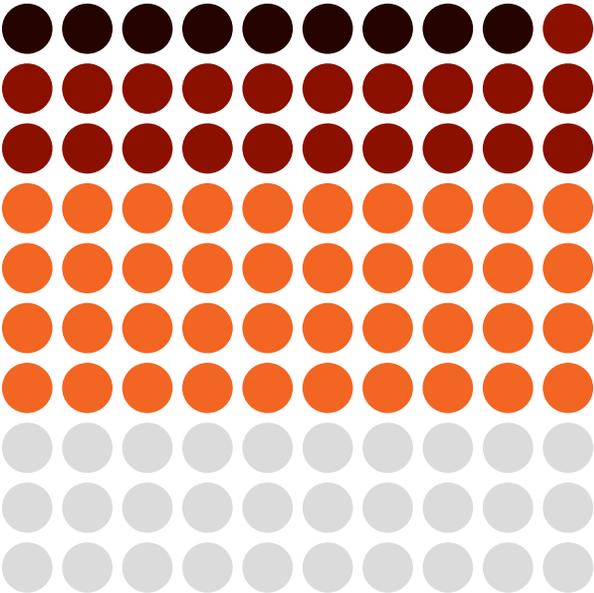


# PA STUDENTS FACE UNIQUE CHALLENGES

*How worried were you about meeting your course material costs this term?*

*National*

*Pennsylvania*

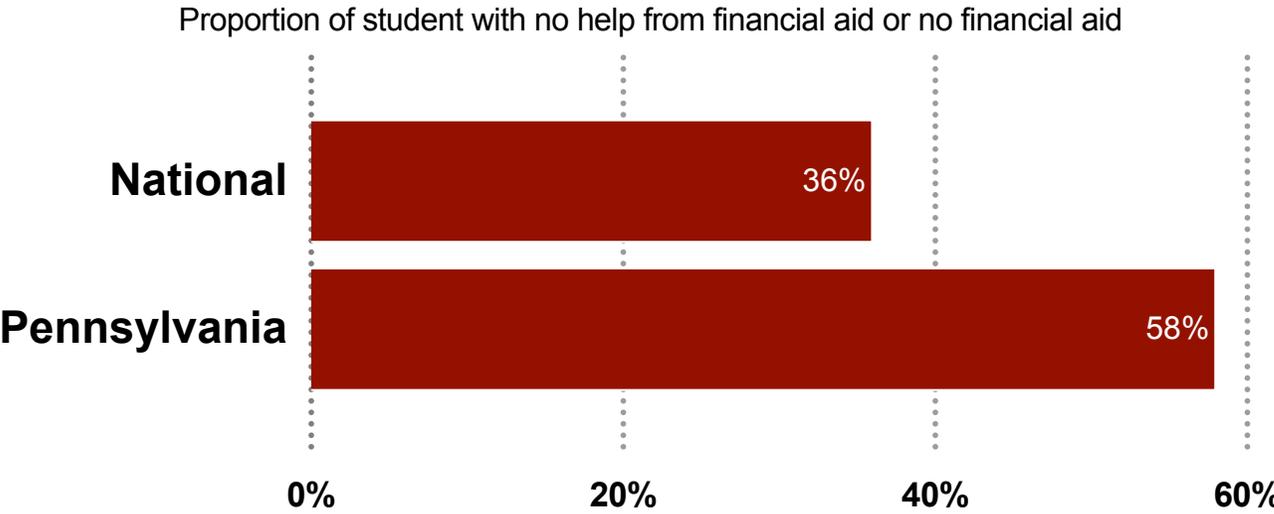


The overall level of worry is **11% higher** in Pennsylvania compared to the national level. Pennsylvania students report **2x levels of “extremely worried.”**

■ Extremely Worried   ■ Moderately Worried   ■ Slightly Worried   ■ Not Worried

# PA STUDENTS PAY MORE THEMSELVES

*More students in PA have no help from financial aid for course material costs.*



**More Costs for PA students**

**+6%** PA students report more courses require purchasing materials.

**-16%** PA students report they take courses with no costs.

# CONCLUSION

**Course materials costs** are a **significant issue** for students. The high cost of materials causes **high levels of worry** and impacts their academic success negatively and directly.

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# DISCUSSION



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Penn State Lehigh Valley



**Molly Kennelly**  
Student, Temple University

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How do you see the cost of course materials affecting students?  
How worried are you about these costs for students?
- How are you currently working to address the burden of high course materials costs, and how can these results help with your efforts?
- What is one action that webinar attendees can take right now to address this issue at their institutions?

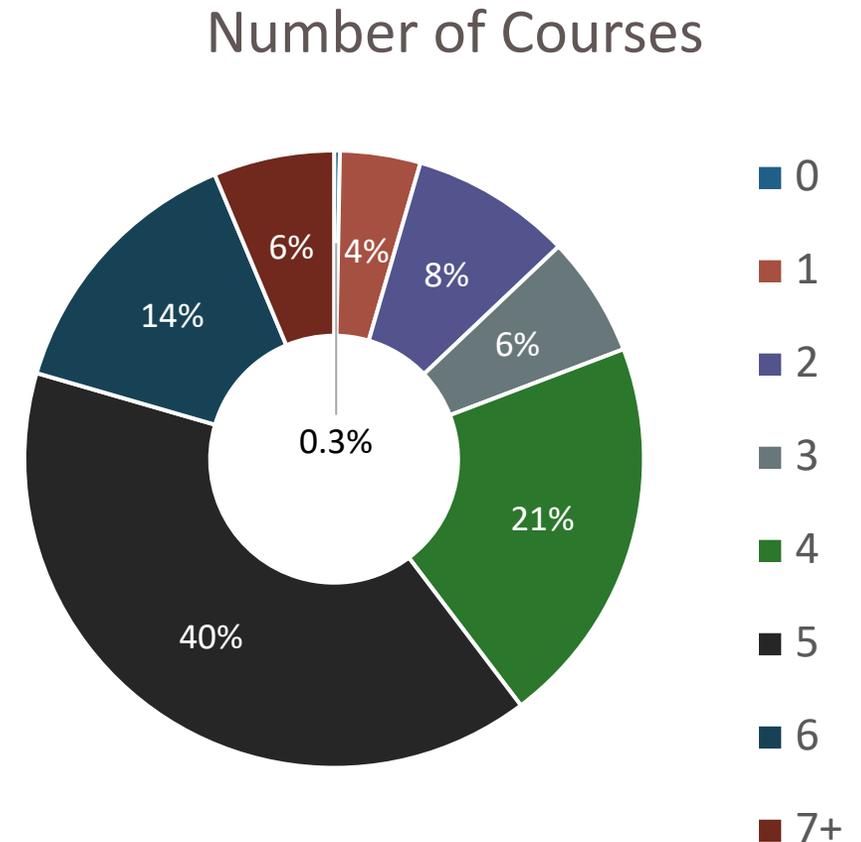
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# APPENDIX



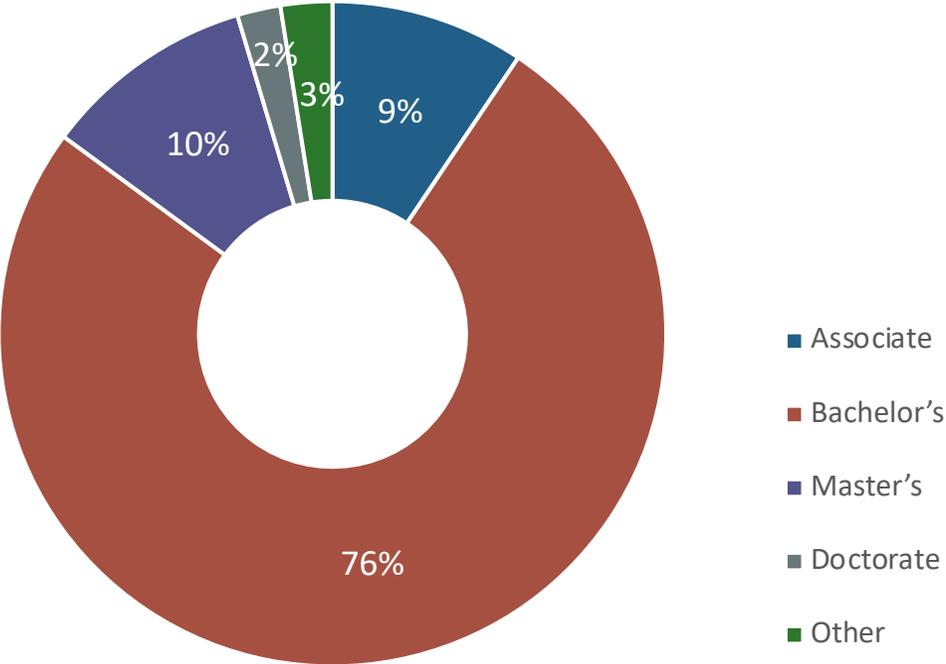
# FULL-TIME UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS MAKE UP THE MAJORITY OF STUDENT RESPONSES

- Majority are **undergraduate students**, evenly split across year (freshman to senior)
- Over 80% of students are **full time** and report taking **at least 4 courses**
- There are a wide variety of majors, though Health, Business, Education, and Psychology make up almost half, and 44% of students report STEM majors

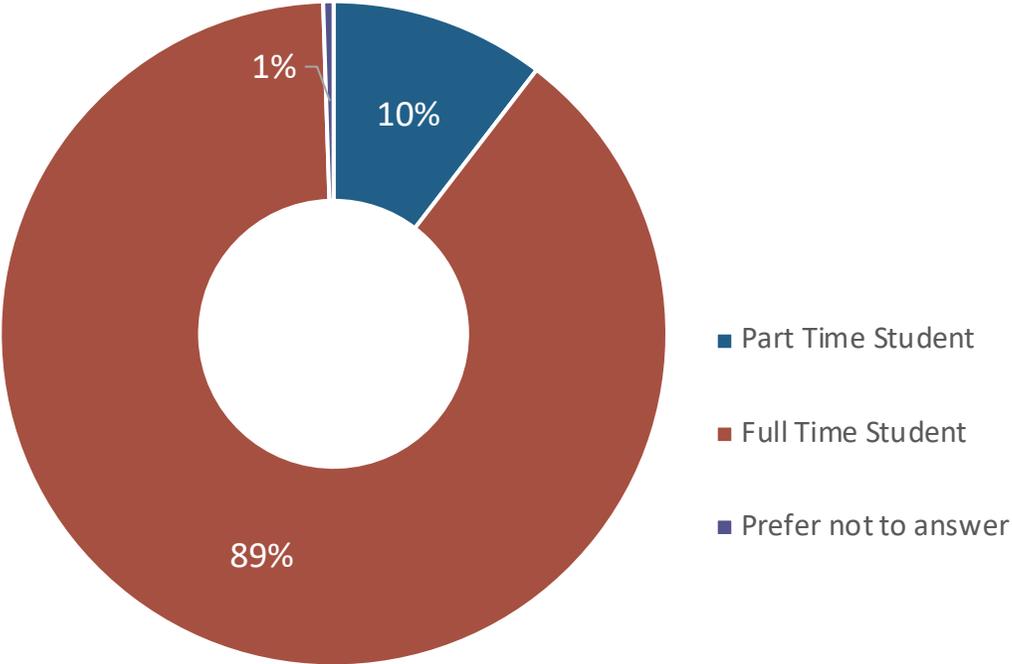


# MAJORITY OF PA STUDENTS ARE FULL TIME BACHELORS

### Degree Pursuing

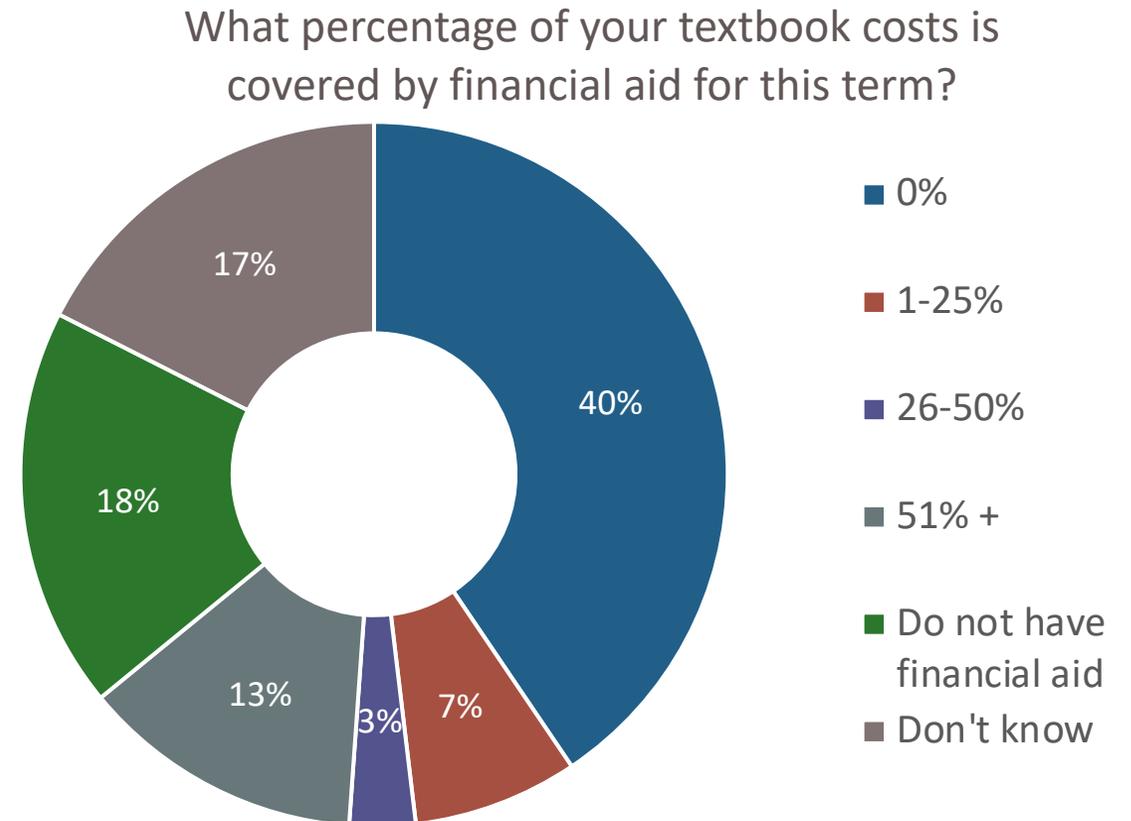


### Current Status



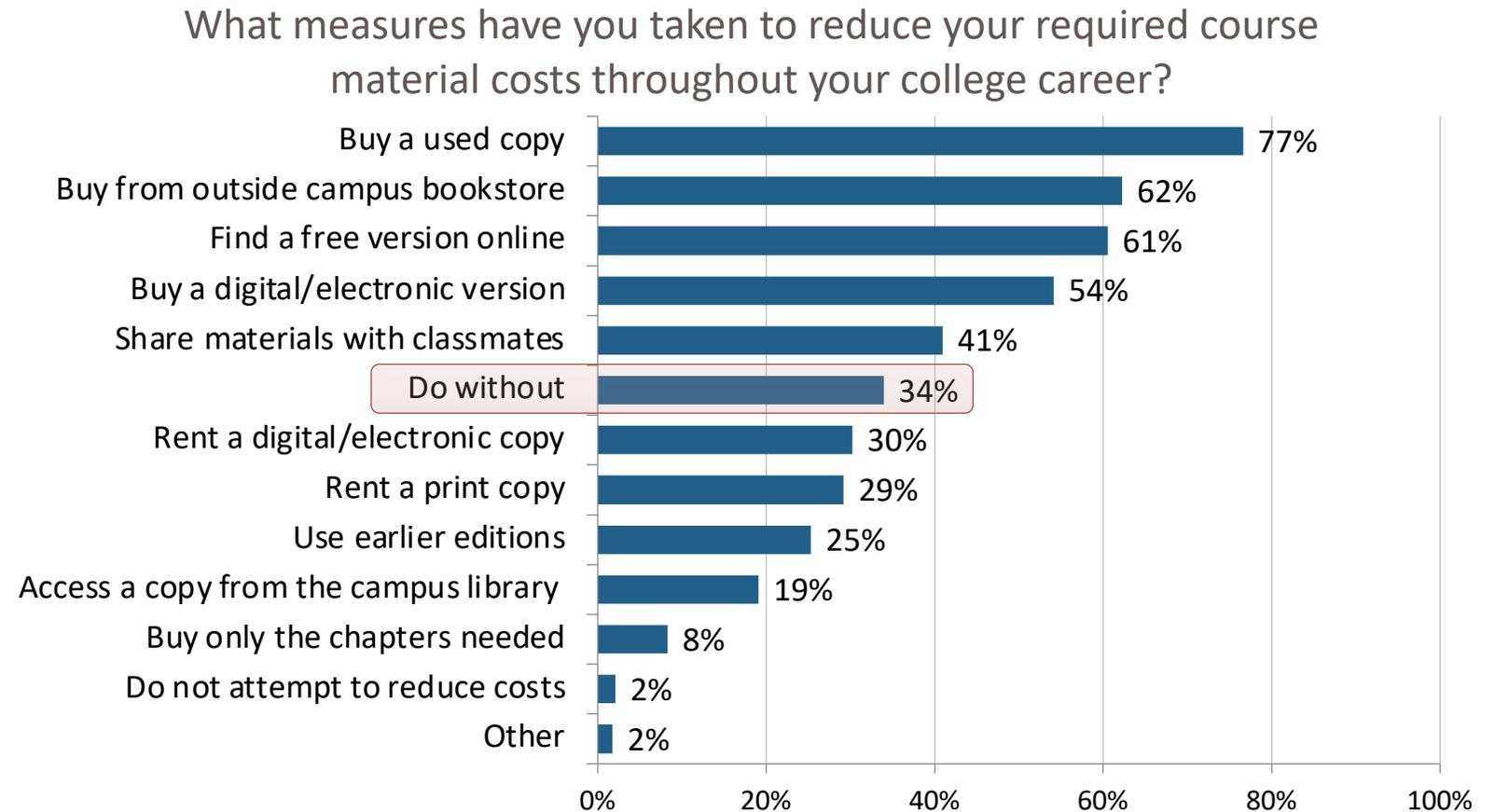
# JUST UNDER HALF OF ALL STUDENTS PAY FOR ALL MATERIAL COSTS

- While many students report having financial aid, only a small portion say it covers some or all of material costs
- 68% of students (18% “Do not have” + 40% “0% covered”) are solely responsible for the whole cost of their materials



# STUDENTS ACTIVELY TRY TO REDUCE COST THROUGH VARIOUS METHODS

- 98% of students report trying at least one method
- A third of students have gone without materials because of cost
- Methods include legal and non-legal solutions



# BACKGROUND: STUDIES IN FLORIDA AND VIRGINIA

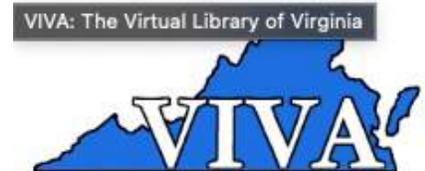
- Florida Distance Learning Consortium - Florida Virtual Campus

- <https://dlss.flvc.org/colleges-and-universities/research/textbooks>
- Surveys in 2010, 2012, 2016, 2018, and 2022
  - The 2022 report surveyed **13,800 students**
- Most questions remained the same to explore changes over time
- Some questions dropped, added, or revised



- Virginia (VIVA)

- <https://vivalib.org/va/open/survey>
- Survey conducted in Fall 2021 with over **5,600 respondents**
- Questionnaire based on recent Florida version with some small modifications



# PENNSYLVANIA PROCESS FOR INSTITUTIONS

- Each institution is responsible for deciding how best to reach their students
  - Full control of the messaging (ALPA provides sample you can use or modify)
  - Control of sample (all students or a sample)
- Each institution will have its own unique survey link
  - Full control of wording on the survey landing page (ALPA provides sample to use or modify)
  - Regular reports of response status
  - All personal information removed before combining with state-wide data
  - Control of data collection period start and stop (within overall project timeline)
- All institutions will have access to weekly updates on survey completions and top-level data summaries during the data collection process
- All institutions with 50 or more completed student surveys will receive an Excel workbook of charts and tables comparing their results to the state-wide data