COURSE MATERIALS COST STUDENTS MORE THAN MONEY

PREPARED FOR OLC

PRESENTED JANUARY 2024
WELCOME

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

bayviewanalytics.com/CourseMaterials

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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

FL: https://flvc.libguides.com/c.php?g=936415&p=7395517
VA: https://vivalib.org/va/open/survey
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.
Method:

① Student survey across Pennsylvania institutions

② A smaller national sample using the same survey instrument for direct comparison
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 and report was completed in one year, including two survey time periods (Spring 2023 and Fall 2023).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>Project Initiation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb</td>
<td>Research, Survey Creation, Outreach to institutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar</td>
<td>IRB approvals, <strong>Spring Surveys Launch</strong></td>
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<td>Apr</td>
<td>Data Analysis, National Survey</td>
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<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>Initial Results shared back to institutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jul</td>
<td>Outreach to institutions, IRB approvals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug</td>
<td><strong>Fall Surveys Launch</strong></td>
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<td>Sep</td>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct</td>
<td>Public Report Release</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov</td>
<td>Full data shared back to institutions</td>
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<td>Dec</td>
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**PROJECT RESULTS**

- **14 Institutions**
- **4,306 Students**
- **National**
- **500 Students**
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.

81% of students are worried at some level.
**Majority Spend Hundreds per Term**

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

- **4%** Have report no costs
- **15%** Pay $1 - $100
- **26%** Pay $101 - $200
- **26%** Pay $201 - $300
- **29%** Pay more than $300

$90
Average Cost of Materials Per Course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Load</th>
<th>Average Cost</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>$90</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>$180</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>$270</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>$360</td>
</tr>
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<td>5</td>
<td>$450</td>
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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.
In your academic career, has the cost of required course materials caused you to:

- Earn a poor grade: 38%
- Go without course materials: 34%
- Not register for a course: 32%
- Take fewer courses: 27%
- Drop a course: 18%
- Withdraw from a course: 15%
- Fail a course: 15%

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: 39% Yes, affected, 61% No, not affected
- Selecting your Major: 31% Yes, affected, 69% No, not affected
- Selecting your Minor: 16% Yes, affected, 84% No, not affected
Students actively work to reduce costs

- 98% Tried to reduce costs
- 2% Did not try

- Buy used copies
- Share with classmates
- Use earlier editions
- Find free versions online
- Buy a digital version
- Buy only chapters needed
- Rent a print or digital version
- Find a library copy
How worried were you about meeting your course material costs this term?

The overall level of worry is *11% higher* in Pennsylvania compared to the national level. Pennsylvania students report *2x levels of “extremely worried.”*
More students in PA have no help from financial aid for course material costs.

Proportion of student with no help from financial aid or no financial aid

National

Pennsylvania

0% 20% 40% 60%

36% 58%

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 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?
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
- 76% Associate
- 3% Bachelor’s
- 9% Master’s
- 2% Doctorate
- 10% Other

Current Status
- 89% Full Time Student
- 10% Prefer not to answer
- 1% Part Time Student
- 10% Prefer not to answer
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

What measures have you taken to reduce your required course material costs throughout your college career?

- Buy a used copy: 77%
- Buy from outside campus bookstore: 62%
- Find a free version online: 61%
- Buy a digital/electronic version: 54%
- Share materials with classmates: 41%
- Rent a digital/electronic copy: 30%
- Rent a print copy: 29%
- Access a copy from the campus library: 25%
- Use earlier editions: 19%
- Buy only the chapters needed: 19%
- Do not attempt to reduce costs: 34%
- Do without: 2%
- Other: 2%
BACKGROUND: STUDIES IN FLORIDA AND VIRGINIA

• Florida Distance Learning Consortium - Florida Virtual Campus
  - [https://dlss.flvc.org/colleges-and-universities/research/textbooks](https://dlss.flvc.org/colleges-and-universities/research/textbooks)
    - 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](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