

Florida College System Textbook and Instructional Materials Affordability Report

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THE *Florida*
COLLEGE SYSTEM

Acknowledgements

The Division of Florida Colleges gratefully acknowledges the 28 colleges within the Florida College System for their continued efforts in providing affordable educational opportunities for Floridians.

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Contents

Executive Summary.....	1
Background and History.....	2
Enhancing Textbook and Instructional Materials Affordability: Summary of College Responses.....	3
1. Textbook and Instructional Materials Selection Process.....	4
Students	5
Curriculum.....	5
College Costs	6
Bookstores	6
Publishers.....	6
Learning Centers	6
2. Colleges Posting Deadlines Publicly.....	7
3. College Textbook and Instructional Materials Affordability Initiatives	8
4. Factors Considered when Selecting Materials through Cost-Benefit Analyses.....	9
5. Open Educational Resources in General Education Core Courses	10
Textbook and Instructional Materials Affordability Summary	11
Appendix A 2018-19 Reporting Year Textbook and Instructional Materials College Reporting Template ...	12

Executive Summary

Florida College System (FCS) institutions remain an affordable option for Floridians to pursue a postsecondary education. The FCS provides a cost-effective and efficient avenue for raising the state's educational level and economic status of Florida, consistent with Executive Order 19-31 that aims at making Florida the number one state in the country for workforce education by 2030. In an effort to keep college affordable, FCS institutions developed multiple initiatives to reduce and, in some courses and programs, eliminate textbook and instructional materials costs.

Section (s.) 1004.085(8), Florida Statutes (F.S.), requires FCS institutions to report annually current practices for the selection of textbooks and cost-saving innovations to the FCS chancellor. All colleges have adoption processes in place that consider the cost of textbooks and instructional materials. Among those considerations are policies that require or language that encourages all sections of the same course, most commonly general education courses, to adopt the same textbook and other course materials unless the instructor: (1) opts for open educational resources (OER); or (2) does not require students to purchase course materials.

Each college noted efforts to meet posting requirements for lists of required and recommended textbooks and instructional materials. Among those efforts were colleges that set earlier deadlines for textbook and instructional materials than specified in s. 1004.085(6), F.S., which provided students more time to identify the most affordable options; established a three-year adoption cycle and/or established a two-year adoption cycle.

FCS institutions were required to report the number and percent of course sections that were not able to meet the 45-day textbook and instructional materials posting deadline. Colleges posted textbook and instructional materials on college websites, bookstore websites, student portals, course registration systems or course catalogs. Section 1004.085(6), F.S., required FCS institutions to post at least 45 days before the first day of class for each term, a hyperlink to the lists of required and recommended textbooks and instructional materials for at least 95 percent of all courses and course sections. For the 2018-2019 reporting year, the number of colleges that met the 95 percent or above criteria for posting lists of textbooks and instructional materials ranged from 22 in summer 2018 to 24 in fall 2018 to 27 in spring 2019.

Background and History

Rising costs force many students to forego college textbooks or reduce the number of courses taken per semester in order to meet other competing obligations. In 2008, the Florida Legislature addressed the rising costs of textbooks by creating s. 1004.085, F.S., charging colleges and universities with implementing policies to promote the availability of textbooks to students unable to afford the cost of required course materials.¹ The State Board of Education approved Rule 6A-14.092, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), to implement the statute. During the 2016 legislative session, additional modifications were made that required colleges to expand efforts to reduce costs. The primary change to statute increased the number of days colleges are required to post textbooks and instructional materials information prior to the beginning of a course from 30 to 45 days, allowing students additional time to secure the most affordable option and the format, print or digital, best suited to the student's learning preferences. The State Board of Education revised Rule 6A-14.092, F.A.C., in October 2017 to extend the number of days institutions must submit textbook and instructional material information to bookstores from 45 to 75 days prior to the first day of classes. The rule also made changes to align with the revised statute.

Currently, the cost of textbooks and supplies for students at U.S. public two-year institutions is approximately \$1,440 per year, which is higher than the same textbooks and supplies cost at public and private universities.² Further, to highlight the issue with textbook affordability, a VitalSource survey of students in the U.S. and Canada found that 50 percent of students who delayed buying textbooks because of high prices saw their grades suffer as a result.³ One study found that half of all students surveyed indicated textbook costs impacted how many and which courses they took.⁴

In 2019, as a result of textbook affordability-related findings from 2017-2019 operational audits conducted by the state Auditor General (AG), the Division of Florida Colleges (DFC) requested a consulting engagement with the Florida Department of Education Inspector General (IG). As a result of the consulting engagement, the IG recommended that DFC:

- Define a wide cost variance and include the definition in the reporting template used by the institutions;
- define high enrollment courses and modify the survey instrument to address adoption policies for materials with wide cost variances and high enrollment courses;
- create a process by which to document timely posting of required materials; and
- specify reasonable exceptions to the 45-day window to post required textbooks and materials.

¹ Source: www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&URL=1000-1099/1004/Sections/1004.085.html

² Source: trends.collegeboard.org/college-pricing/figures-tables/average-estimated-undergraduate-budgets-2018-19

³ Source: press.vitalsource.com/study-confirms-costs-lead-students-to-forgo-required-learning-materials-grades-suffer-as-a-result

⁴ Source: uspig.org/sites/pig/files/reports/NATIONAL%20Fixing%20Broken%20Textbooks%20Report1.pdf

To address these recommendations, the DFC is in the process of convening a statewide Textbook Affordability Workgroup to develop technical guidance and assistance to implement the applicable textbook affordability laws.

Enhancing Textbook and Instructional Materials Affordability: Summary of College Responses

Florida College System institutions historically focused on textbook affordability through the development of policies and procedures for textbook adoption, as required in statute and rule, and the implementation of initiatives to reduce the cost of textbook and instructional materials for students. Staff from the Division of Florida Colleges developed this report in accordance with s. 1004.085 (8), F.S., which requires the district boards of trustees to report annually to the Florida College System chancellor on textbook and instructional materials affordability. The report, capturing data for 2018-19, included the colleges’:

- textbook and instructional materials selection process;
- policies implemented regarding posting textbooks and instructional materials prior to the 45-day deadline;
- number and percent of course sections, by semester, that were not able to meet the textbook and instructional materials posting deadlines for the 2017-2018 year with explanations;
- specific initiatives designed to reduce the costs of textbooks and instructional materials;
- cost benefit analyses factors; and
- percent of general education courses using OER.

The Division of Florida Colleges provided each institution with a report template to complete and submit via SurveyMonkey delineating their initiatives to reduce the cost of textbook and instructional materials. Appendix A includes the report template the division used to collect information. FCS institutions employed a number of initiatives designed to reduce the cost of textbooks and instructional materials:

- **28** colleges used OER;
- **27** colleges used textbook rentals;
- **19** colleges developed committees designed to monitor textbook costs;
- **16** colleges offered entire programs at no cost for textbook and instructional materials; and
- **12** colleges provided stipends to faculty to develop textbooks and course materials.

All FCS institutions conducted cost-benefit analyses to select textbook materials that considered a number of factors:

- **27** colleges expanded the use of OER;
 - **25** colleges used OER for general education core courses;
- **27** colleges increased the availability and use of affordable digital textbooks and learning materials;

- **28** colleges set minimum lengths of time textbooks and instructional materials remain in use;
- **19** colleges developed mechanisms to assist in buying, renting, selling and sharing textbooks;
- **17** colleges purchased digital textbooks in bulk; and
- **10** colleges offered students opt-in provisions for the purchase of materials.

1. Textbook and Instructional Materials Selection Process

With regard to college policies on selection and adoption, almost all FCS institutions reported adopting practices that encouraged faculty and those involved in the adoption process to consider cost when selecting required textbooks. Some colleges required that all sections of the same course must adopt the same textbook and other course materials, unless the instructor opted for OER or did not require students to purchase course materials, there by opting for other no-cost options of providing access to course materials. In other college policies, course-wide textbook selections allowed faculty to select from up to three textbook options for their sections. Some colleges noted the adoption policy allows faculty to work with and through deans and provosts in instances where there is a wide cost variance for textbooks of different sections of the same courses. Some colleges reported reviewing cost variations on a semester or yearly basis to inform the textbook selection and adoption process.

Many colleges have standing textbook affordability committees to explore the best means of reducing costs while providing quality textbooks and materials for students. Committees consist of faculty, administrators, bookstore personnel, librarians, and students. The committees focus on responding to specific concerns and undertaking proactive initiatives to address affordability concerns. Committees paid special attention to courses with higher cost textbooks and large enrollment numbers due to the impact on a large number of students. Policies, including the adoption of course-wide textbooks and materials and opting for the use of OER, eliminated variance among sections.

In addition to price matching in the form of store credit, bookstores also purchased textbooks in bulk to reduce costs, which is most feasible in situations where college policies required all sections of a course to use the same materials. Bulk purchasing is also a useful strategy for establishing a rental inventory. When bookstores have a substantial rental inventory, students are able to reap advantages, such as reduced pricing. Some of the disadvantages include a limitation on the time the student may use the book and the pricing may not be as economical as purchasing a used book and selling it to another student who will take the course a following semester.

District boards of trustees' policies identified factors used in the selection process. These factors include certifications from course instructors or academic departments that they used approved textbooks and instructional materials including items in a bundled package. Policies also included a review of the extent to which a new edition differed from earlier versions and the value of changing to a new edition, as required in statute. As part of the textbook and instructional materials adoption process, faculty members and departments considered numerous factors, which varied by institution. The factors primary fall into six categories and are impacted by federal and state guidelines: students, curriculum, faculty, colleges, bookstores, and publishers.

Students

When colleges considered textbook and instructional material adoption, concern for students focused on costs and access. Colleges reviewed the overall cost to students while considering availability of OER, resale opportunities, opt-in provisions that allow students to get their course materials electronically at a reduced cost, and other less expensive options including digital or loose-leaf formats. OER can eliminate textbook costs for students. Resale opportunities allow students to recuperate money on a textbook they do not wish to keep after the course ends. Opt-in provisions are a less expensive, typically digital, form of access to course related materials. A benefit of opt-in is that students have access to the materials on the first day of courses. Colleges also consider how textbooks and related materials are designed to accommodate students with disabilities.

High enrollment courses are important to consider in the adoption process because so many students are impacted. When addressing textbook issues, colleges often begin with these courses to ensure the largest impact on affordability. Additionally, high enrollment courses are included in statute for consideration in the process.

Quality factors included not only the accuracy of textbook and materials, but also the quality of printing and graphics and the quality of binding so a book will last whether the student chooses to keep or sell the book after the course ends.

In this year's report, colleges considered appropriateness for university transfer as well as membership in Affordability Counts, which is a project hosted by Florida International University that is designed to serve as a database across Florida colleges and universities of syllabi for courses that meet the "affordable" criteria. "Affordable" is defined as course materials that cost no more than \$20 per credit hour.

Curriculum

Faculty and administrators reviewed curriculum frameworks and student learning outcomes to ensure alignment with textbooks and instructional materials. Requirements for industry certifications impact the textbooks and materials students need to earn the certification. When course objectives change, faculty members reconsider textbooks and instructional materials to ensure continued congruency with the desired outcomes.

In addition to alignment, the depth and breadth of the information included in a textbook mattered when adopting textbooks. The publishing date speaks to the relevancy of the material. The appropriate reading level, not too low or not too high, plays a role in the depth and breadth of the material. Along with reading level, ancillary materials or the additional content included with a textbook, increase a student's depth and breadth of understanding through videos, PowerPoint, test banks, worksheets, and other digital items. Course delivery methods, whether the course is face-to-face, hybrid or online, play a role in selecting materials. In online courses, students often access digital materials and colleges consider support for students to access the textbooks and materials. If students are working late at night

or early in the morning, a help desk or means of reaching someone to provide technical support allows students access to the material related to curriculum.

College Costs

For dual enrollment textbooks and materials, the costs are not borne by the students, but rather school districts, private schools or postsecondary institutions, depending on the articulation agreement. With this in mind, the cost of dual enrollment textbooks and materials is in the realm of consideration for colleges as they worked to provide access for high school students. Extending the length of time textbooks and instructional materials continued to serve as the required materials reduced the cost to the college as well as to the school district. With recent changes to statute, many colleges are covering a portion of the cost of textbooks and instructional materials for home education dual enrollment students depending on prorated allocations from the state.⁵

The shift to OER has the potential to eliminate the student cost of textbooks and materials while the institution provided support through reassigned time, stipends or grants for faculty who developed textbooks and instructional materials. Maintenance of faculty-created textbooks and materials is an ongoing investment for the college.

Bookstores

Beyond the college, bookstores hold a significant role in the textbook and instructional materials process. Colleges own some bookstores, whereas others are subcontracted through national companies or local bookstores. Bookstore processes and software affect the colleges' ability to follow policy and procedure to meet the deadlines included in statute. Colleges work with bookstores to determine the availability of obtaining sufficient quantities of materials while taking into account that publishers purchase outdated editions to remove them from the market.

Publishers

More and more, publishers are working directly with colleges as opposed to working through bookstores. The overall experience with a publisher, in particular reliability, informs future adoptions of textbooks and instructional materials. Further, a publisher's ability to provide discounts on the costs to students and the college may influence selection. Publishers who provide greater support to faculty through teaching materials often receive higher consideration. Some of the adoption policies, colleges limited the selection of publisher-customized textbooks because of issues with resale.

Learning Centers

Colleges may evaluate the availability of textbooks and materials for learning centers to ensure copies of textbooks are available at the centers for students. Learning centers provide students with support for academic success including one-on-one tutoring, study groups and academic success workshops.

⁵ Source: S. 1007.271, F.S. www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&URL=1000-1099/1007/Sections/1007.271.html

Further, in the adoption process, colleges accounted for the availability of free, equivalent or supplemental materials through learning centers or online repositories.

These categories and factors are not exhaustive, nor do all FCS institutions consider these factors when selecting and adopting textbooks and instructional materials. However, they provide a context for understanding the processes colleges implemented as they worked to balance affordability while providing high quality textbooks and materials that support student success. To meet this goal, colleges required faculty to adhere to the same selection requirements as student-purchased materials when selecting no-cost or low-cost textbooks and materials. Colleges allowed exceptions to the textbook and materials selection process for approved pilot projects, honors classes, grant-related activities, and other innovations, allowing faculty to meet the needs of students.

2. Colleges Posting Deadlines Publicly

FCS institutions reported policies and procedures related to the 45-day posting deadline that specified responsibility as well as information required for posting including title, author, publisher, edition, copyright date, publication date and other relevant information. Colleges posted textbook and instructional materials on college websites, bookstore websites, student portals, course registration systems or in course catalogs. All colleges established benchmarks to identify courses still pending adoption where they set a date and collected the number of course sections without posted textbook and instructional information. Bookstores often run reports at 75, 60 and 50 days prior to the first day of class to identify course sections that have not posted information.

Colleges worked closely with bookstores and many institutions set adoption deadlines well in advance of the statutory deadline to ensure they posted textbook and materials information in a timely manner. Colleges also worked to ensure bookstores trained faculty members on how to use software to enter textbook and instructional materials selections.

Overall, the number of colleges meeting the textbook and instructional materials posting requirement of 95 percent of course sections posted 45-days prior to the first day of class increased from 22 to 27 over the course of the reporting year as noted in Table 1, which increased each semester from the previous year’s report.

Table 1. Number and Percent of Colleges Above the 95 percent threshold by the 45-day Textbook and Instructional Materials Posting Requirement

	95% and Above	
	N	%
Summer 2018	22	79
Fall 2018	24	86
Spring 2019	27	96

Source: FCS institution Textbooks and Instructional Materials Affordability Reports.

Of the colleges that did not meet the 95 percent posting deadline, the colleges' stated reasons for not meeting the deadline included:

- adding the course after the posting deadline/cancelled sections;
- delayed assignment of faculty to course and/or instructor change;
- changes in editions/textbooks/publisher information/publisher release date;
- specially-created directed independent study sections of a course;
- student needs for courses to meet deadlines such as graduation;
- utilization of new bookstore vendors as well as new software;
- technical and/or system errors/data reporting error/human error;
- departmental leadership transition/bookstore transition; and
- no textbook requirement/instructor use of web resources.

Such issues affected numerous colleges that were unable to meet the posting requirements. Colleges also noted efforts to ensure courses and course sections meet posting requirements in the future. Examples of efforts for meeting posting requirements included increased time for adoption, enhanced course scheduling and implementation of new bookstore software.

3. College Textbook and Instructional Materials Affordability Initiatives

In the reports, colleges described initiatives for addressing affordability and access issues. All FCS institutions employed at least one initiative in the past year designed to reduce the cost of textbooks and instructional materials. Over half of the colleges employed four or more strategies.

All 28 colleges indicated they used OER to reduce the textbook costs to students and provide quality and affordable textbook solutions, and 25 colleges reported using OER for general education core courses. Nineteen FCS institutions established committees charged with monitoring textbook costs and ensuring awareness of quality and affordable textbook options available to faculty and students. Twenty-seven institutions indicated they provided textbook rentals as another means of ensuring access to low cost textbook options.

Sixteen colleges offered entire programs by paying for textbooks through grants or offering all textbooks and materials in a digital open format. Twelve colleges worked with faculty to develop course materials to reduce costs to students. Other colleges provided stipends for faculty to develop course materials, which compensated faculty for the time needed to research and select OER. A strategy commonly used by FCS institutions is the implementation of two or three year adoption periods for textbook and instructional materials.

Many colleges are encouraging faculty to participate in professional development on how to build OER and providing stipends to faculty for the development of OER. To ensure students have access to the material they will use in the course, colleges are selecting textbooks used for sequential courses or working with publishers to customize the textbook into volumes in cases where students commonly only take the first course in a sequence.

To recognize faculty who are selecting high-quality teaching materials at little or no cost to students, one institution created an initiative to award faculty. The purpose of the award is to increase the number of faculty using affordable instructional materials and support faculty members' use of new and innovative resources. Additionally, the purpose of the award is to positively impact student time-to-degree, retention, completion, and successful transition to the career of their choice. The award levels relate to whether the faculty member selects or develops the instructional materials.

Some colleges either implemented or piloted a First Day Textbook Access Program in partnership with their bookstores and publishers or through a Learning Management System (LMS). The programs allow students to opt-in and receive textbook and instructional materials through the course management system at a reduced cost.

Some colleges are encouraging the use of LibGuides with OER for high enrollment courses. Librarians worked closely with faculty to curate course materials in LibGuides, a strategy for sharing free online materials with students. Faculty may easily update information in LibGuides to meet the needs of a changing discipline such as information technology. Additionally, the resources are easily accessible in one place and do not require students to pay for access since the library has access. Further, these online resources are available when students need them.

Faculty members placed desk copies of textbooks on reserve for students to review at the library or checkout on loan. This no-cost option may place the student at a disadvantage if the textbook is required during face-to-face course meetings and if copies are limited when others are reviewing the information. Libraries may also offer access to e-books and textbooks through a password-protected site where students may use the needed materials as long as they have an internet connection. Learning centers may also offer reserved copies of textbooks and instructional materials.

4. Factors Considered when Selecting Materials through Cost-Benefit Analyses

Colleges considered multiple factors when selecting textbooks and instructional materials through cost-benefit analyses. FCS institutions implemented the following factors when selecting materials:

- expanded use of OER (n=27);
- increased availability of digital texts and learning objects (n=27);
- extended/setting the length of time textbooks remained in use (n=28) ;
- purchased digital textbooks in bulk (n=17);
- developed mechanisms to assist in buying, renting, selling and sharing textbooks (n=19 institutions); and
- offered individual students opt-in provisions for the purchase of materials (n=10).

Colleges also reported other initiatives implemented to reduce costs, which included a price matching policy where bookstores would credit students who showed a textbook with a lower cost than what the student paid. Students were given the choice to opt-in to course materials, which is an easy way for students to access the required recommended textbooks and instructional

materials. With opt-in, students are able to pay for their books through links in the learning management system as opposed to searching for textbooks through a bookstore or online. Colleges negotiated with publishers and established agreements for reduced costs to students.

5. Open Educational Resources in General Education Core Courses

General education core courses have the highest enrollments due to the requirements for students to use these courses as a foundation in associate of arts degree programs. The general education core courses include a specific list of courses in the following subject areas: communication, humanities, mathematics, natural sciences, and social sciences.⁶ Many institutions implemented coursewide adoption for general education courses. Another common strategy used by FCS institutions was the development of forms that faculty completed to track and identify any variance in the cost of general education textbooks and instructional materials among different sections of the same course. Considering the high enrollments in general education core courses, colleges are using OER for textbooks and instructional materials as a way to address cost concerns and save students money. In this year's report, 25 colleges, or 89 percent of the colleges, indicated the use of OER in general education core courses.

OER is at the top of the list, with textbook rentals at a close second, as the most commonly reported initiatives colleges employed to reduce or eliminate the cost of textbooks and instructional materials. The increased availability of OER allows faculty more options from which to select appropriate high-quality resources. In addition to reducing costs, this format gives students access to a variety of tools including videos, audio clips and other interactive media. Two colleges are participating in *OpenStax*, which are free, peer-reviewed collections of online and digital materials, and allows students the opportunity to access print copies for a small fee. Some faculty also used Creative Commons to access open educational resources. Another college continues to fund OER development initiatives from a grant from Complete Florida.

⁶ Source: Rule 6A-10.0303, Florida Administrative Code. www.flrules.org/gateway/ruleNo.asp?id=6A-14.0303

Summary

As noted in the individual college reports, textbook and instructional materials policies, procedures and initiatives served to reduce costs for students and provided access to the learning resources students need to succeed in courses and, ultimately, throughout their educational journeys. In addition to adjusting adoption policies and procedures to ensure the college meets the required public posting deadline, colleges are also reviewing a large number of factors in the adoption process as well as cost benefit analyses. Colleges reported new initiatives to address issues related to accessing materials on the first day of class as well as creating awards to recognize the outstanding efforts of faculty in reducing textbook and instructional materials costs. In terms of OER, colleges prioritized use for general education core courses and other high enrollment courses to offer textbooks and instructional materials at no cost

Appendix A
2018-19 Reporting Year
Textbook and Instructional Materials College Reporting Template