

College and Textbook Affordability in the Florida College System 2020

November 2020



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Introduction

Florida College System (FCS) institutions are recognized as being among the nation's best colleges. The FCS is the primary access point to undergraduate education for Floridians, including recent high school graduates and returning adult students. The 28 member colleges respond quickly and efficiently to meet the demands of employers by aligning certificate and degree programs with regional workforce needs.

The FCS provides a cost-effective and efficient avenue for raising the state's educational level and economic status of Florida citizens, consistent with Executive Order 19-31 that aims at making Florida the number one state in the country for workforce education by 2030. To keep college affordable, FCS institutions developed multiple initiatives to reduce costs and increased strategies that promote affordability.

This report is submitted in accordance with section (s.) 1004.084, Florida Statutes (F.S.) by identifying and sharing institutional strategies that promote college affordability for all FCS students. In addition, this report includes sections on current practices for the selection of textbooks and cost-saving innovations in accordance with s. 1004.085(8), F.S. This report is the first to merge the college and textbook affordability requirements, which was done to increase efficiencies and streamline college reporting.

To better understand college and textbook affordability, the Division of Florida Colleges (division) analyzed quantitative data from federal and statewide datasets. Additionally, the division disseminated a survey to collect quantitative and qualitative data from the 28 institutions in the Florida College System (Appendix A). The report is divided into three sections: tuition and fees, financial assistance and textbook affordability.

Tuition and Fees

FCS institutions are some of the most affordably priced options for higher education in Florida. To provide affordable higher education to FCS students, institutions are committed to different strategies and programs to promote affordability. Institutions may reduce or hold tuition flat, a step they have taken in recent years. Additionally, FCS institutions regularly review course fees as required in s. 1009.23, F.S. Such evaluations may result in the reduction or elimination of student fees.

In the following section, affordability data related to institutions' cost per credit hour, student tuition and fees, and cohort default rates over the last three years are presented. These data are from various publicly available sources including the FCS Fact Book, the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and the U.S. Department of Education's Federal Student Aid Cohort Default Rates Database.

FCS Cost per Credit Hour

As seen in Figure 1, the average cost per credit hour has stayed relatively consistent over the last five years, increasing by around \$5 per year. It is important to note that while most of the 28 FCS institutions have costs per credit hour ranging from \$180-\$250, there is variability in college costs, with some falling below and others falling above the system-level average.

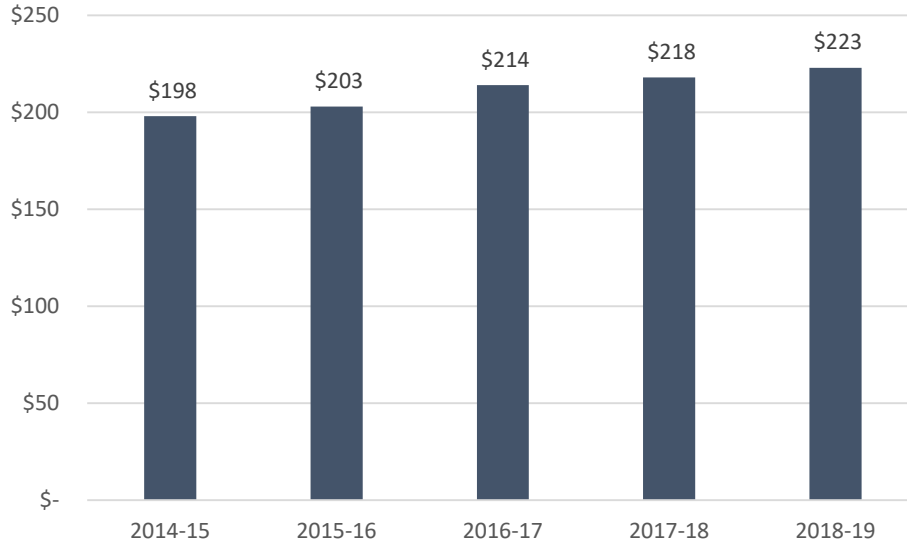


Figure 1. FCS Cost per Credit Hour
Source: FCS Fact Book 2016-2020

FCS Tuition and Fees

Figure 2 shows the system-level average cost for the academic year, defined as the costs of taking 30 credit hours during the school year. Similar to the data in Figure 1, the cost to students has been relatively stable with small increases and decreases over the last five years. While tuition at the majority of the colleges is under \$3,200, there are institutions that have costs below or above system-level averages.

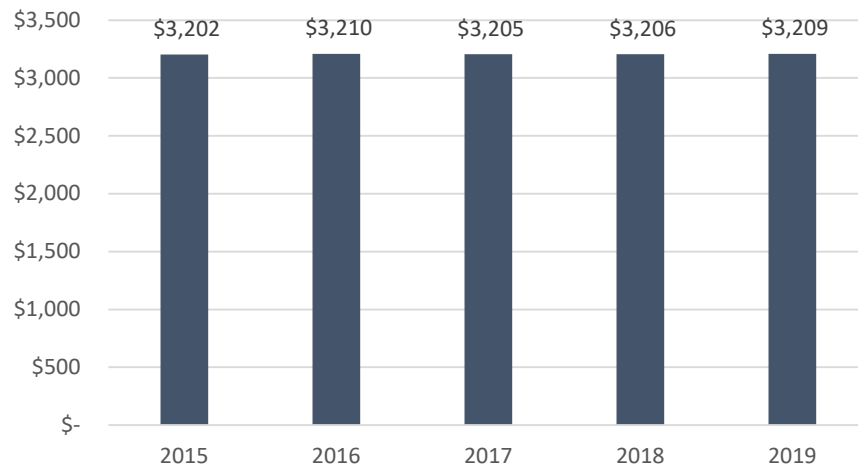


Figure 2. FCS Academic Year (30 hours) Tuition and Fees, weighted mean
 Source: FCS Fact Book 2016-2020

As mentioned previously, annual tuition and fees have remained relatively stable between 2014-15 and 2018-19. Figure 3 displays the system-level average difference in costs, as a percentage, for both lower- and upper-level courses. As seen in Figure 3, the average system-level academic year tuition and fees have remained almost the same over the last four years as most schools have held tuition and many fees flat. Any change in the system-level average has typically stemmed from small price changes from about three colleges per year.

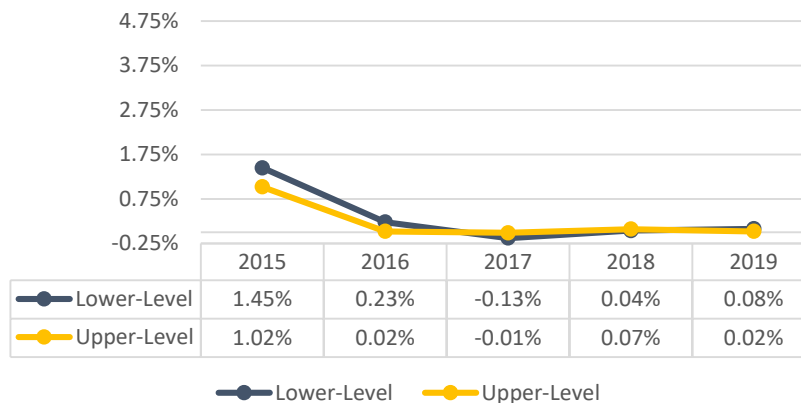


Figure 3. FCS Fall Tuition and Fees Comparison, Percent Change from Previous Fall
 Source: FCS Fact Book 2016-2020

Institutional Strategies to Reduce Tuition and Fees

Figure 4 provides a summary of institutional responses to the division survey related to changes in tuition and fees at the 28 institutions. Five questions focused on changes in tuition, administrative fees and user fees.

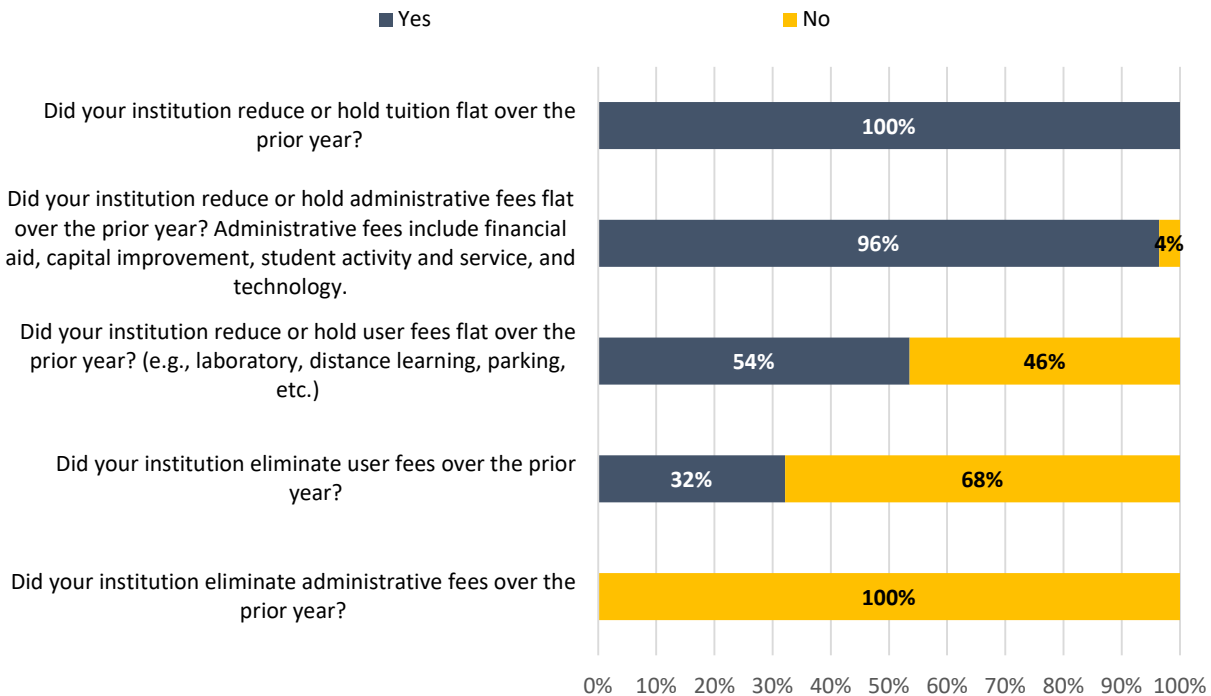


Figure 4. Percent of institutions reducing, holding or eliminating tuition and/or fees. N=28

As shown in Figure 4, all institutions indicated that tuition was reduced or held flat over the prior year. Additionally, 96 percent of institutions indicated that administrative fees were reduced or held flat over the prior year. However, no institutions eliminated administrative fees. User fees, which include laboratory, distance learning or parking fees, were held flat or reduced by 54 percent of institutions and 32 percent of institutions eliminated user fees over the prior year.

Student Financial Assistance

FCS students are awarded a variety of financial aid through federal, state and local financial aid programs. The following information is publicly available through IPEDS for the 2015-16 through 2017-18 academic years. Financial aid programs to promote affordability are also available at many FCS institutions, including:

- Targeted aid to students close to completing (including Last Mile).
- Targeted aid to students who were in need, but not eligible for Pell Grants.
- Emergency financial aid grant to students (CARES Act).
- Emergency student aid fund for students in emergency financial situations with unplanned costs (non-CARES Act).

- Single online scholarship application management system for all institutional scholarships.
- Partnerships with community-based organizations.

Student Aid by Type

Student financial aid can be awarded from federal sources, including the need-based Pell Grant and federal student loans. Additionally, Florida and local municipalities and institutions can award financial aid to students in the FCS. Figure 5 uses IPEDS data from 2015-16 through 2017-18 to provide an average award for undergraduate students in the FCS.

The average amount received from the Pell Grant increased between 2015-16 and 2017-18, with the average award amount being \$3,971 in the 2017-18 academic year. Federal student loan award amounts increased between 2015-16 and 2016-17 but decreased in 2017-18 to an amount below the amount in 2015-16. Federal, state and local grant aid awards followed an opposite pattern with an initial decrease and then an increase in 2017-18.

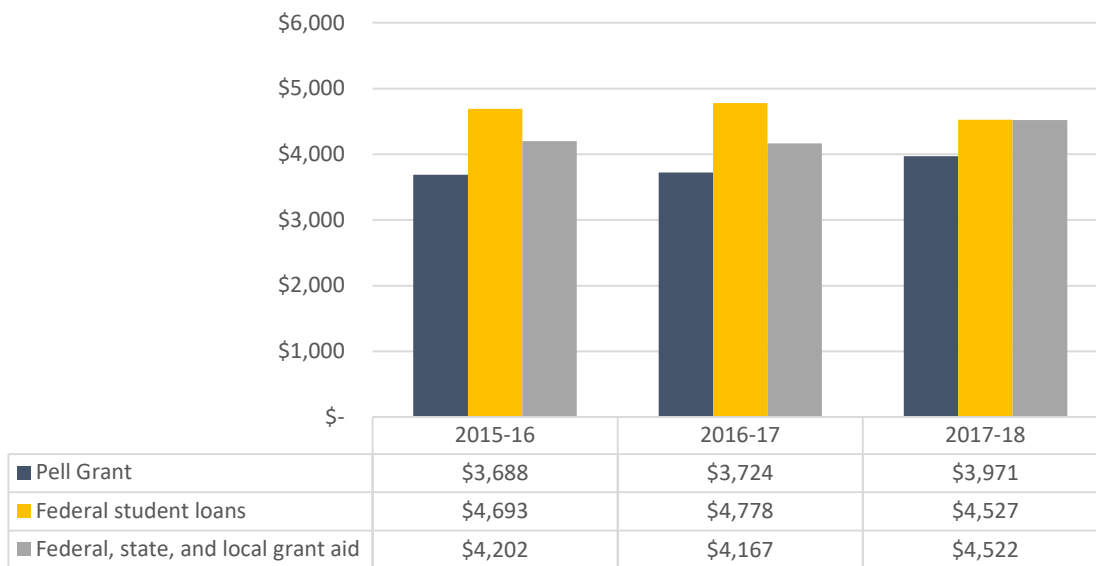


Figure 5. FCS Student Aid by Type
 Source: IPEDS, 2015-16 through 2017-18

Military and Veterans Benefits

In addition to student aid provided to all students, Figure 6 and Figure 7 highlight the financial aid benefits for military and veterans through the Post-9/11 GI Bill. These data available from IPEDS provide the number of FCS students receiving these benefits from 2015-16 through 2017-18 (Figure 6) and the total amount of Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits awarded annually to students in the FCS.

The number of FCS students receiving Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits was relatively stable with a small increase and decrease between 2015-16 to 2016-17 and 2016-17 to 2017-18, respectively (Figure 6). In the 2017-18 academic year more than 15,000 FCS students received Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits.

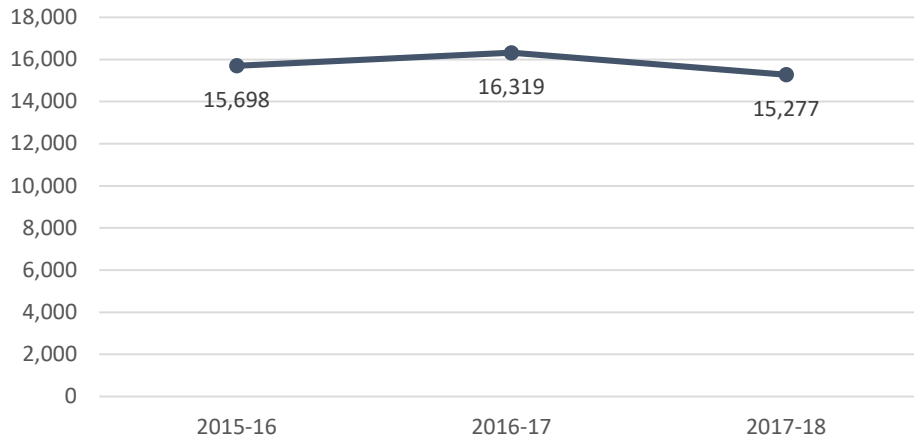


Figure 6. Number of FCS Students Receiving Post-9/11 GI Bill Benefits
 Source: IPEDS, 2015-16 through 2017-18

Figure 7 provides the total amount of Post-9/11 GI Bill Benefits awarded to students in FCS institutions. As shown in the figure below, the total amount awarded to students decreased between 2015-16 and 2017-18. While there was a decrease in the total amount, more than \$31 million was awarded to students in 2017-18.

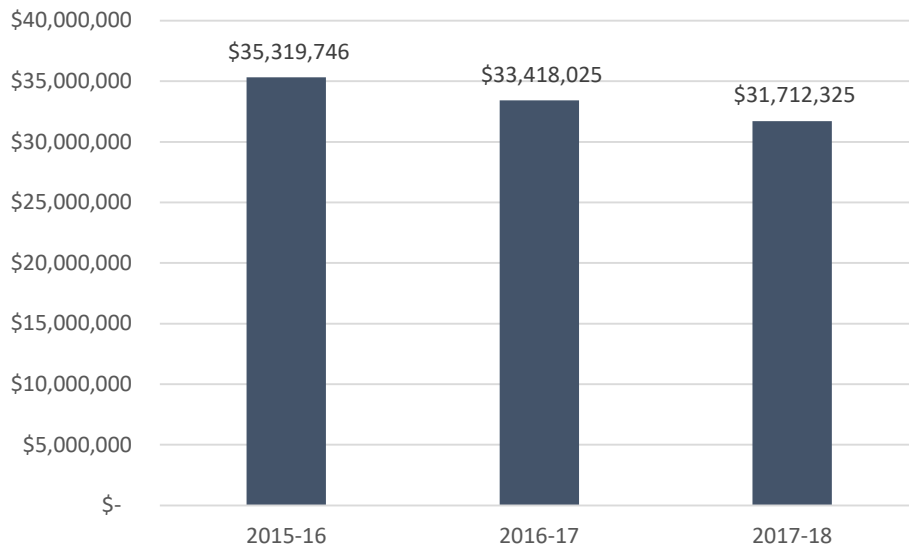


Figure 7. Total Amount of Post-9/11 GI Bill Benefits Received by FCS Students
 Source: IPEDS, 2015-16 through 2017-18

Net Price

Previously in Figure 2, the average amount in tuition and fees in the FCS was \$3,209 for 2019. In addition to tuition and fees, the total cost of attendance can include books and supplies and room and board. The net price amount presented in Figure 8 reflects the total cost of attendance minus the average award for federal, state or local government and institutional grant and scholarship aid provided to students. In Figure 8, the average net price for the FCS decreased over the most recent three years available in IPEDS. In 2017-18, the average net price was \$5,606.

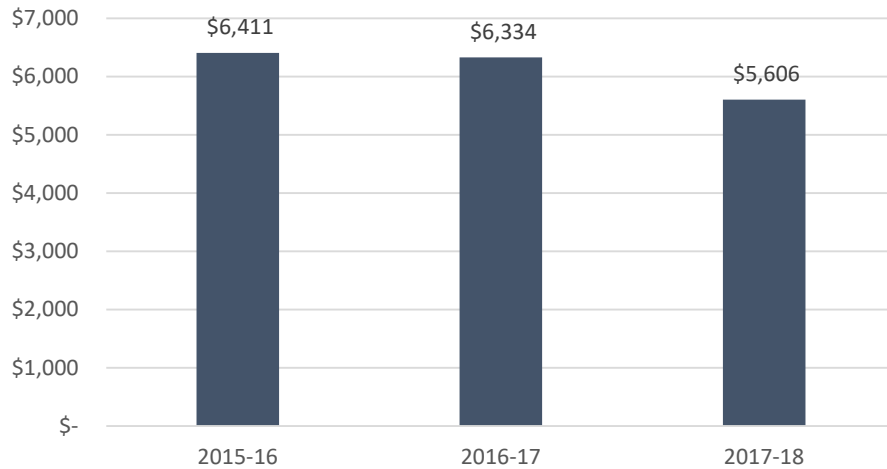


Figure 8. FCS Average Net Price
Source: IPEDS, 2015-16 through 2017-18

Cohort Default Rates

Previously in Figure 5, the average amount of student loans borrowed by a student in the FCS remained relatively steady from 2015-16 to 2017-18. The U.S. Department of Education provides a database of cohort default rates through the Federal Student Aid website. The most recent available data related to cohort default rates for FCS institutions are for fiscal years 2015-2017. The cohort default rates are calculated by dividing the number of borrowers who entered repayment during a cohort fiscal year and defaulted by the number of borrowers who entered repayment during a cohort fiscal year. Figure 9 includes all FCS colleges where students can receive federal student loans (N=27).

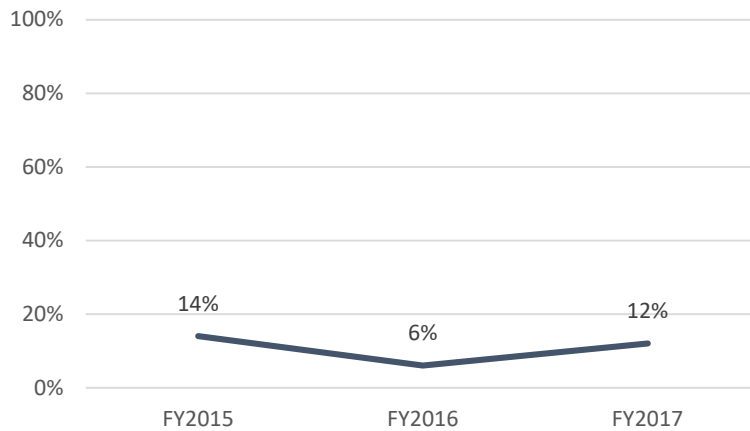


Figure 9. FCS System-level Cohort Default Rates, FY2015-FY2017
 Source: U.S. Department of Education, Federal Student Aid Cohort Default Database

Exemptions and Waivers

Colleges have the authority to grant fee exemptions and waivers for their students under ss. 1009.25 and 1009.26, F.S. For fiscal years 2014-15 through 2018-19, colleges have consistently increased the number of students (Figure 10) and related amounts of fee exemptions and waivers (Figure 11) year over year. Over 80 percent of those fee exemptions and waivers are in three major categories of dual enrollment, apprenticeship and out-of-state fees.

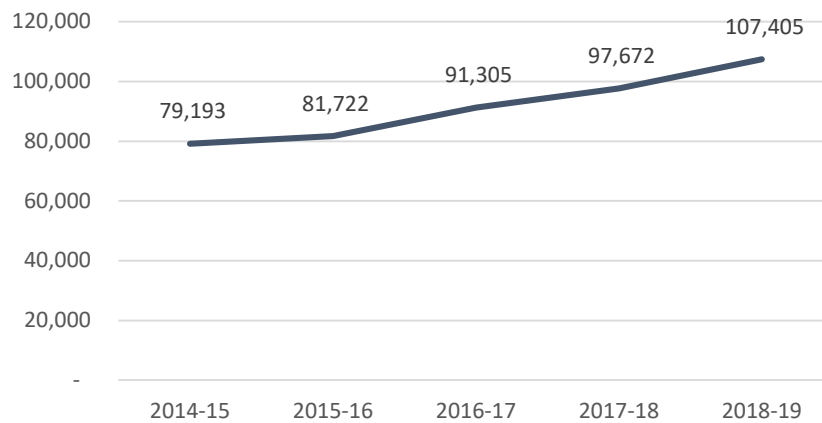


Figure 10. FCS System-level Unduplicated Headcount, 2014-15 through 2018-19
 Source: FCS Budget Office

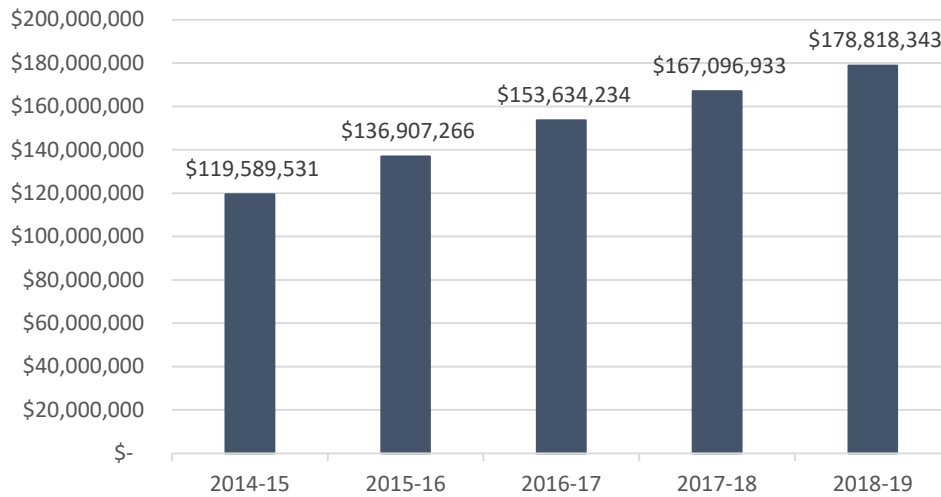


Figure 11. FCS System-level Exemptions and Waivers Total, 2014-15 through 2018-19
 Source: FCS Budget Office

Institutional Strategies to Increase Financial Aid Initiatives and Programs

In addition to textbook affordability policies and initiatives, institutions used a variety of financial aid initiatives and programs, both targeted and general, to promote affordability for their students. Figure 12 describes the number of institutions that used each of the programs.

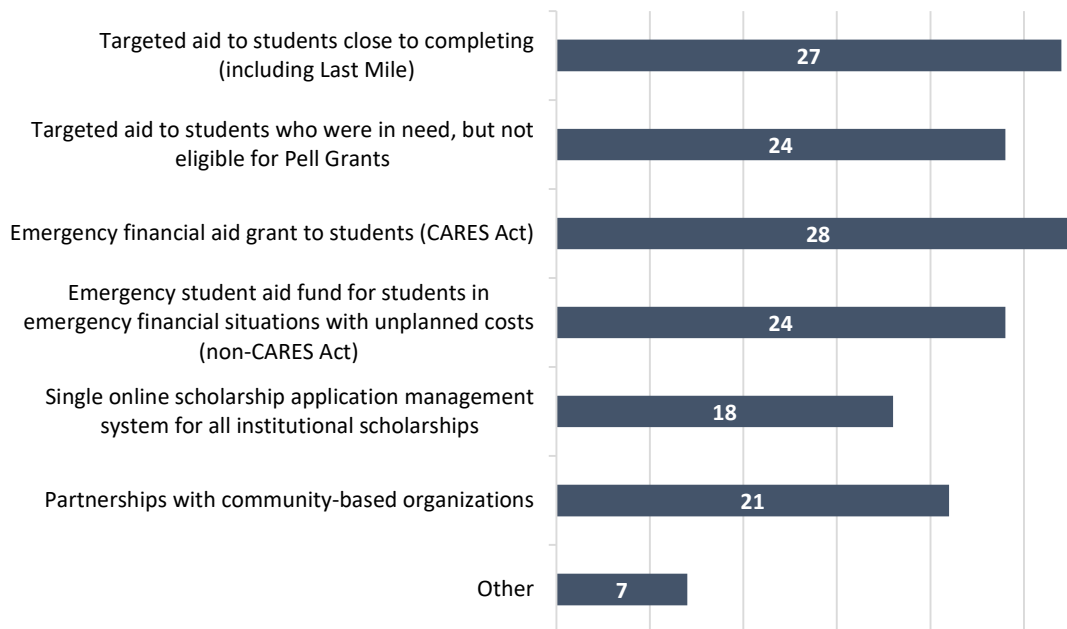


Figure 12. Number of institutions utilizing financial aid initiatives and programs. N=28

The CARES Act was included as an option and all institutions reported using those funds for emergency financial aid grants to students, as the data collection time period was 2019-20. Another common

financial aid policy used by 27 of the 28 institutions was targeted aid to students close to completion of their programs. Seven institutions indicated that other financial programs were used during the academic year to promote affordability. Those measures included local financial aid opportunities with local municipalities, institutional aid and institutions' foundations.

Textbook Affordability

Books and Supplies

As mentioned in the net price calculation, books and supplies cost is included in the total cost of attendance in IPEDS. There is additional interest in books and supplies cost in Florida as it relates to textbook affordability and evaluating how to make course materials more affordable for FCS students. In Figure 13, the average cost of books and supplies for a student in the FCS is described for years 2015-16 through 2019-20. The average cost for books and supplies has increased over the last five years. In the most recent year, 2019-20, the average cost for these materials was \$1,479. This amount in 2019-20 reflects a six percent increase in books and supplies cost from 2018-19.

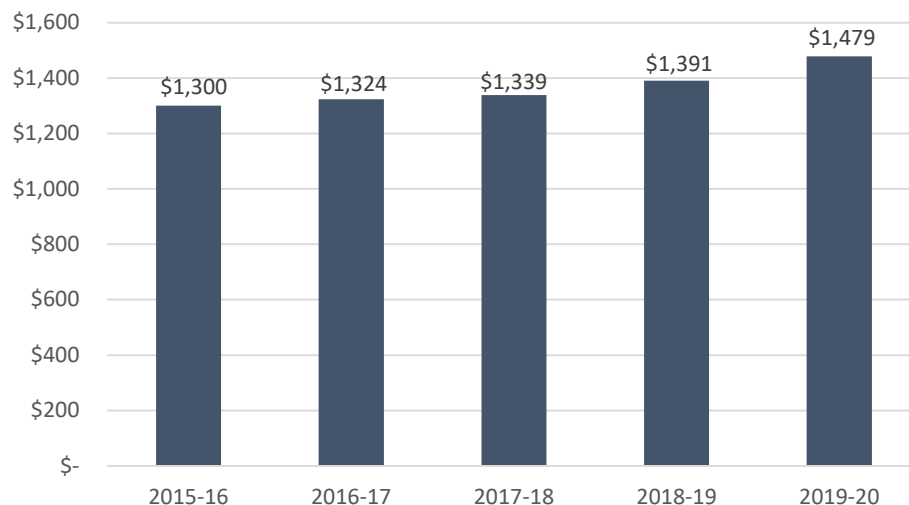


Figure 13. FCS Average Cost of Books and Supplies

Source: IPEDS, 2015-16 through 2019-20

Institutional Strategies to Promote Textbook Affordability

Each FCS institution develops its own selection process for textbook and instructional materials for all high-enrollment courses and any general education courses with a wide cost variance. Based on the survey responses, two main practices regarding the textbook and instructional materials selection and adoption process emerged as trends: 1) textbook and instructional materials selection is done at the course level, and 2) textbook and instructional materials selection is at the discretion of faculty.

For colleges where the selection of course materials is done at the course level, they reported very little to no variance in the cost of textbooks and instructional materials in high enrollment and general education courses. At these institutions, the selection and adoption process is done by: 1) discipline-specific faculty, 2) a combination of faculty and administrators, and 3) as a department.

For colleges where the selection of textbooks and instructional materials is done at the discretion of faculty, there exists the potential for a wide cost variance between different sections of the same course. These colleges reported encouraging faculty, particularly faculty teaching high enrollment courses, to consider course-wide adoptions and other efforts to minimize the cost of textbooks and instructional materials.

Regardless of the different selection and adoption practice, colleges reported having processes in place that consider cost-saving initiatives, such as:

- Limiting the number of courses using customized textbooks.
- Creating an approval process for justification of wide cost variance.
- Conducting periodic departmental reviews of adopted textbook prices.
- Working in conjunction with institutional research to look at bookstore data trends.

Additionally, Figure 14 provides insight into how colleges are using various initiatives to increase affordability of textbooks and course materials. As shown in Figure 14, the adoption of open education resources and use of digital textbooks and materials are utilized by all the FCS institutions. In addition to the initiatives indicated below, multiple colleges explained other ways to increase textbook affordability including textbook price matching, providing textbook and course materials in the library and developing initiatives to incentivize faculty to use low- or no-cost course materials.

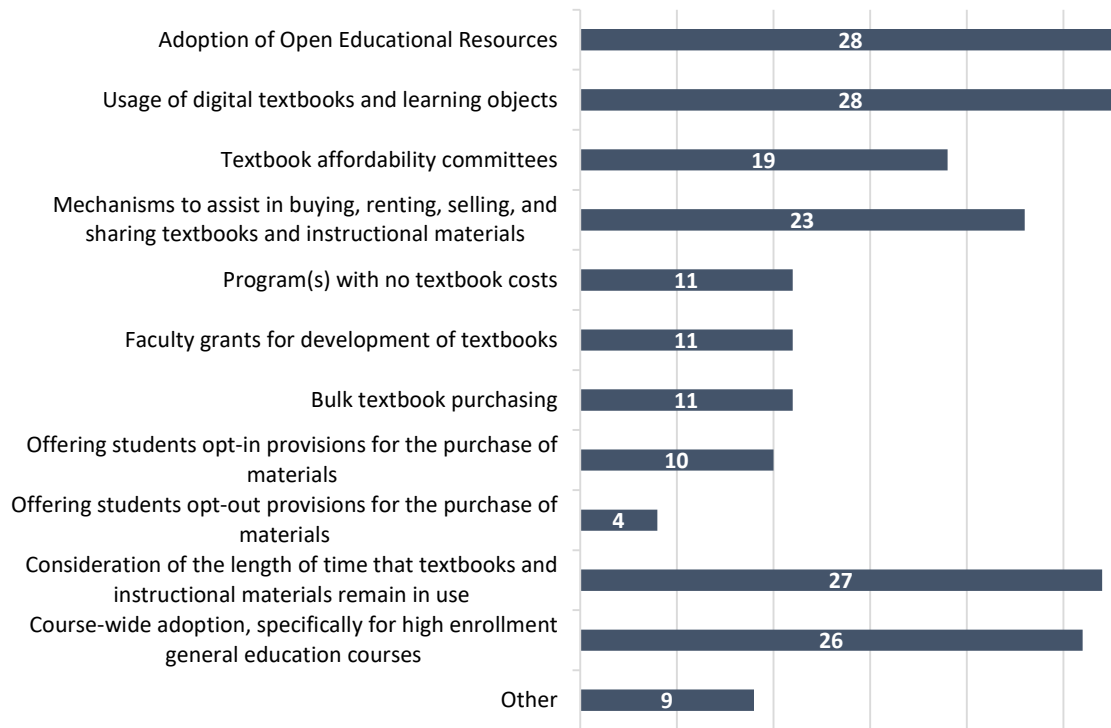


Figure 14. Number of institutions utilizing strategies to increase textbook affordability. *N*=28

In the effort to provide adequate time to acquire textbooks and course materials, institutions post these materials 45 days prior to the first day of class. Most institutions meet the requirement of posting material requirements for at least 95 percent of all courses and course sections. Ninety-three percent and 96 percent of institutions reported meeting this requirement for fall 2019 and spring 2020, respectively. Figure 15 describes some examples of why courses and course sections did not meet the 45-day requirement. The most common examples for posting after the 45-day window were due to changes in course schedules and new teaching assignments.

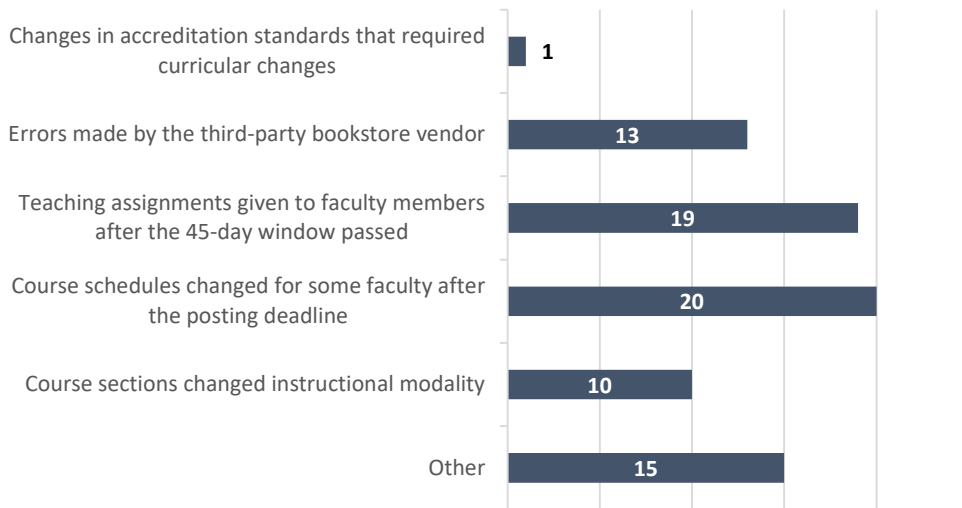


Figure 15. Number of institutions indicating each example for courses and course sections not meeting the 45-day requirement. *N*=28

Conclusion

Every hard-working student deserves a real opportunity to earn an affordable, high-quality degree or credential that offers a clear path to civic engagement, economic security and success. The 21st century workforce demands the best education to meet the needs of a diversified state economy. The Florida College System continues to meet those needs in the most affordable manner for students. All 28 colleges will continue to innovate and implement strategies that result in cost-saving measures. Ensuring that our colleges remain the primary access point to higher education for all students will always be a top priority.

Appendix A: 2020 Division of Florida Colleges Template for College Affordability Reports

2020 Florida College System Affordability Report Template



Affordability remains a top priority for all 28 Florida College System (FCS) institutions. The Division of Florida Colleges requests data and information related to college affordability initiatives and textbook and instructional material affordability pursuant to sections (ss.) 1004.084 and 1004.085, Florida Statutes (F.S.). By September 30, 2020, each college must input institutional responses for the 2020 FCS Affordability Report via <https://www.research.net/r/2020FCSAffordability>. If you have any questions about completing the report, please contact Hayley Spencer, Director of Research and Analytics, at Hayley.Spencer@fldoe.org.

This Word template is provided for planning purposes only. All responses must be uploaded in the survey instrument.

Contact Information

1. College Name

Click or tap here to enter text.

2. Contact Information

Name	Click or tap here to enter text.
Title	Click or tap here to enter text.
Email Address	Click or tap here to enter text.

Tuition and Fees

3. Did your institution reduce or hold tuition flat over the prior year?

- Yes
 No

If you answered “no,” provide a short description (250 words or less) of how the decision to increase tuition was made. Specify the amounts and identify the estimated number of students impacted.
Click or tap here to enter text.

4. Did your institution reduce or hold administrative fees flat over the prior year? Administrative fees include financial aid, capital improvement, student activity and service, and technology.

- Yes
 No

If you answered “no,” provide a short description (250 words or less) of how the decision to increase administrative fees was made. Specify the amounts and identify the estimated number of students impacted.
Click or tap here to enter text.

5. Did your institution eliminate administrative fees over the prior year?

- Yes
 No

2020 Florida College System Affordability Report Template



If you answered “yes,” provide a short description (250 words or less) of how the decision to eliminate fees was made. Specify the amounts and identify the estimated number of students impacted.

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

6. Did your institution reduce or hold user fees flat over the prior year? (e.g., laboratory, distance learning, parking, etc.)
- Yes
 - No

If you answered “no,” provide a short description (250 words or less) of how the decision to increase user fees was made. Specify the amounts and identify the estimated number of students impacted.

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

7. Did your institution eliminate user fees over the prior year?
- Yes
 - No

If you answered “yes,” provide a short description (250 words or less) of how the decision to eliminate fees was made. Specify the amounts and identify the estimated number of students impacted.

Textbook Affordability

8. Describe your institution’s selection process for textbook and instructional materials for all high-enrollment courses and any general education courses with a wide cost variance.

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

9. Identify specific institutional policies or initiatives designed to reduce the cost of textbooks and instructional materials. Select all that apply.
- Adoption of Open Educational Resources
 - Usage of digital textbooks and learning objects
 - Textbook affordability committees
 - Mechanisms to assist in buying, renting, selling, and sharing textbooks and instructional materials
 - Program(s) with no textbook costs
 - Faculty grants for development of textbooks
 - Bulk textbook purchasing
 - Offering students opt-in provisions for the purchase of materials
 - Offering students opt-out provisions for the purchase of materials
 - Consideration of the length of time that textbooks and instructional materials remain in use
 - Course-wide adoption, specifically for high enrollment general education courses
 - Other (please specify) [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

2020 Florida College System Affordability Report Template



10. Describe the policies implemented regarding the posting of textbook and instructional materials for at least 95% of all courses and course sections 45 days before the first day of class.

Click or tap here to enter text.

11. Report the number and the total percentage of courses and course sections that were not able to meet the textbook and instructional materials posting deadline for the academic year. We recognize that COVID-19 may have impacted spring 2020 posting deadlines, as DOE ORDER NO. 2020-EO-01 suspended the 45-day requirement in section 1004.085(5), F.S., for course sections that were modified to virtual or remote delivery modalities.

Fall 2019 Number	Click or tap here to enter text.
Fall 2019 Percent	Click or tap here to enter text.
Spring 2020 Number	Click or tap here to enter text.
Spring 2020 Percent	Click or tap here to enter text.

12. Identify examples of why the posting deadlines were not met, if applicable. Select all that apply.

- Changes in accreditation standards that required curricular changes
- Errors made by the third-party bookstore vendor
- Teaching assignments given to faculty members after the 45-day window passed
- Course schedules changed for some faculty after the posting deadline
- Course sections changed instructional modality
- Other (please specify) Click or tap here to enter text.

Financial Aid Policies

13. Identify specific institutional financial aid policies or programs that promote affordability. Select all that apply.

- Targeted aid to students close to completing (including Last Mile)
- Targeted aid to students who were in need, but not eligible for Pell Grants
- Emergency financial aid grant to students (CARES Act)
- Emergency student aid fund for students in emergency financial situations with unplanned costs (non-CARES Act)
- Single online scholarship application management system for all institutional scholarships
- Partnerships with community-based organizations
- Other (please specify) Click or tap here to enter text.

Other Affordability Strategies

14. Provide any additional information about any innovative or new affordability strategies. Optional.

Click or tap here to enter text.