Florida College System Institutions
Textbook and Instructional Materials
Affordability Report

November 16, 2016
Acknowledgements
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# Contents

- Executive Summary .................................................................................................................. 1
- Background and History .......................................................................................................... 2
- Implementing College Access and Affordability ...................................................................... 2
  1. Materials Selection Process ................................................................................................. 3
  2. College Initiatives .................................................................................................................. 3
  3. Colleges Policies and Guidelines ........................................................................................ 4
  4. Colleges Posting Deadlines to Websites ............................................................................ 4
  Additional reported information ................................................................................................ 4
- Best Practices in Florida ........................................................................................................... 5
  Textbook Variances ................................................................................................................ 5
  Standing Textbook Affordability Committees ....................................................................... 5
  Open Educational Resources .................................................................................................. 5
  Price Comparisons .................................................................................................................. 6
  Price Matching ......................................................................................................................... 6
  Bulk Purchasing ....................................................................................................................... 6
  Rentals ..................................................................................................................................... 6
  LibGuides ................................................................................................................................. 6
  Reserves and Loans ................................................................................................................ 6
- Textbook Affordability in the Future ....................................................................................... 7
  Actual Costs and Access Concerns ......................................................................................... 7
  Colleges Initiatives ................................................................................................................ 7
  Statewide Discussion .............................................................................................................. 7
Executive Summary

The College Access and Affordability bill passed during the 2016 legislative session requires Florida College System (FCS) institutions to implement innovative practices to ensure students have access to textbooks and instructional materials critical to success in college. Section 1004.085(8), Florida Statutes, requires FCS institutions to annually report current practices for the selection of textbooks and cost-saving innovations to the Florida College System Chancellor.

Each FCS institution was provided with a report template to complete by September 30, 2016, delineating the strategies implemented by the colleges to reduce the cost of textbook and instructional materials. Reporting requirements include:

1. materials selection process for general education courses with a wide cost variance identified;
2. specific initiatives of the institution designed to reduce the costs of textbooks and instructional materials;
3. policies implemented; and
4. the number of courses and course sections that were not able to meet the textbook and instructional materials posting deadline for the previous academic year.

All 28 FCS institutions complied with the reporting requirement and submitted their reports by the September 30 deadline.

A review of the reports found that all of FCS institutions focused on college affordability through the development of policies and procedures for textbook adoption and the implementation of initiatives to reduce the cost of textbook and instructional materials for students. All FCS institutions employ initiatives designed to reduce the cost of textbooks and instructional materials.

A summary of responses is compiled and presented in this report.
Background and History

In 2008, Florida enacted legislation to address the rising costs of textbooks by creating section (s.) 1004.085, Florida Statutes (F.S.), charging colleges with implementing policies to promote the availability of textbooks to students unable to afford the cost of required course materials. The State Board of Education approved rule 6A-14.092, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), to implement the statute. The rule established a workgroup consisting of members from eight Florida College System (FCS) institutions. The workgroup surveyed the colleges and determined that more than half had a textbook affordability policy in place. Other colleges indicated the use of procedures and guidelines to reduce the costs of textbooks. Colleges expanded the length of usage for a textbook allowing the opportunity for used textbooks and rental textbooks. In addition, procedures and guidelines outlined the selection process and set standards related to costs. A number of college foundations offered funding for students unable to afford textbooks as verified by the completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, commonly called the FAFSA. Results of the survey indicate that all colleges maintained copies of required textbooks on reserve at the library.

Rising costs forced many students to forego college textbooks in order to meet other competing obligations. Currently, the cost of textbooks and supplies for students at public two-year institutions is approximately $1,364 per year.

Governor Scott’s College Access and Affordability bill that passed during the 2016 legislative session dealt with textbook affordability. The law went into effect July 1, 2016, and required colleges to expand efforts to reduce textbook and instructional material costs. Primary changes to legislation included increasing the number of days colleges are required to post textbooks and instructional material 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 best suited to the student’s learning preferences.

Implementing College Access and Affordability

Florida Colleges System institutions historically focused on college affordability through the development of policies and procedures for textbook adoption and the implementation of initiatives to reduce the cost of textbook and instructional materials for students. This report has been developed in accordance with s. 1004.085 (8), F.S., which states:

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1 s. 1004.085, F.S. found at https://www.flsenate.gov/Laws/Statutes/2016/1004.085
The board of trustees of each Florida College System institution and state university shall report, by September 30 of each year, beginning in 2016, to the Chancellor of the Florida College System or the Chancellor of the State University System, as applicable, the textbook and instructional materials selection process for general education courses with a wide cost variance identified pursuant to subsection (4) and high-enrollment courses; specific initiatives of the institution designed to reduce the costs of textbooks and instructional materials; policies implemented in accordance with subsection (6); the number of courses and course sections that were not able to meet the textbook and instructional materials posting deadline for the previous academic year; and any additional information determined by the chancellors. By November 1 of each year, beginning in 2016, each chancellor shall provide a summary of the information provided by institutions to the State Board of Education and the Board of Governors, as applicable.

Each institution was provided with a report template to complete by September 30, 2016, delineating the strategies implemented by the colleges to reduce the cost of textbook and instructional materials. The following is a summary of college responses for each category.

1. Materials Selection Process
FCS institutions examined and submitted details for the selection process for textbook and instructional materials with a wide cost variance to general education courses and high enrollment courses. FCS institutions provided lists of courses with wide variances in cost among sections. Some college policies require that all sections of the same course must adopt the same textbook and other course materials unless the instructor opts for open educational resources (OER) or does not require students to purchase course materials opting for other no-cost options of providing access to course materials. Colleges may require faculty to request exceptions from a dean and provost in instances where cost variance for textbook costs exceed a designated level. As a result, these processes focused on keeping college affordable are ensuring that FCS students have access to the most affordable classroom materials. The use of open educational resources, such as textbooks and materials contributed to the variances within some colleges. To address these variances, colleges are working with faculty and bookstores.

2. College Initiatives
All FCS institutions employ initiatives designed to reduce the cost of textbooks and instructional materials. Using OER, one of the most common initiatives, provides quality and affordable textbook solutions. Colleges have also established committees and/or task forces charged with monitoring textbook cost and ensuring awareness of quality and affordable textbook options available to faculty and students. The majority of colleges mentioned textbook rentals as another means of ensuring access to low cost textbook options. One of the most innovative initiatives included in the reports was offering entire programs with no textbook costs. Colleges are facilitating this strategy by paying for textbooks through grants or offering all textbooks and materials in a digital format. Other colleges are working with faculty to develop course materials to reduce costs to students. Grants to support these efforts
include Gates Next Generation Courseware Challenge and Achieving the Dream Open Educational Resources Degree Initiative.

Faculty development opportunities allow faculty time to review new formats for textbooks and course materials. In some situations, workshops teach faculty how to effectively select, create and use technology-based resources. Other cost saving measures are book loans, iPad initiatives and using one textbook for a sequence of courses such as one book for ENC 1101 English Composition I and ENC 1102 English Composition II.

3. Colleges Policies and Guidelines
Each college listed policies and guidelines for reviewing processes related to textbook and instructional materials. In addition, policies and guidelines have been established and maintained to ensure the process of textbook and instructional materials selection is in compliance with all state and federal laws. To improve outcomes, colleges have implemented two or three year adoption periods for textbook and instructional materials. In the event an unforeseen circumstance necessitates a change in the suitability or availability of the textbook and instructional materials, changes shall be decided by faculty members who currently teach the course.

4. Colleges Posting Deadlines to Websites
Colleges posted textbook and instructional materials on the college website, the bookstore website, a student portal, and a course registration system or course catalog. In many cases, colleges work closely with bookstores to ensure materials are properly posted. In the fall of 2016, 22 of 28 FCS institutions met the posting requirement of 45 days before the first day of class for at least 95 percent of all courses and course sections offered at the institution. Seven colleges reported 100 percent of courses and course sections met posting requirements. Two colleges ranged between 90 to 94 percent of the posting requirement, and four colleges ranged between 78 to 87 percent of individual courses and course sections meeting the posting requirement.

Varying factors hindered the ability of some of the FCS institutions to meet the posting deadline, and stemmed primarily from unexpected circumstances. These included the addition of new classes within the 45 day posting requirement. One college experienced delays in posting caused by the transition from one bookstore vendor to another. All colleges that did not meet the posting requirements noted efforts to ensure courses and course sections meet posting requirements in the future.

Additional reported information
Some FCS institutions reported specific cost savings for individual textbook formats ranging from $20 to $300. One example of these saved students $2.8 million over a three-year period by using OpenStax, an online resource for free open textbooks, which are available in both printed and digital formats.
Best Practices in Florida

A review of the reports submitted by FCS institutions revealed many effective strategies, which included working with retail stakeholders and libraries, actively engaged in reducing textbook and instructional materials costs for students. College practices are innovative and offer a variety of formats and options for students. Bookstores, most of which are third-party entities, work closely with colleges to ensure student access to textbooks and instructional materials and to provide affordable options. Libraries and sometimes tutoring centers offer free access to textbooks and instructional materials for students. Addressing student access to textbooks and instructional materials is critical to continue to make the FCS an affordable option for students and assisting students with achieving their dreams. When they enter the classroom, college students have access to faculty members, desks and technology, but they have to spend time, money and effort to acquire some of the most important resources for learning.

The following collection of practices is by no means comprehensive, but the list is indicative of the local opportunities colleges develop and implement and the many ways in which they lead textbook affordability initiatives.

Textbook Variances
To specifically address the issue of cost variances between course material selections, one FCS institution collected and developed a report to track and identify any variance in the cost of General Education textbooks and instructional materials among different sections of the same course, and the percentage of textbooks and instructional materials that remain in use for more than one term.

Another college worked to develop their own learning materials platform which is being provided free to their students. Although these types of pilot programs can create wide variances in the prices of textbooks across campuses, the institution supports these efforts in an attempt to lower overall cost to students. It is the hope that if these piloted programs prove successful it can be expanded and used at the other campuses.

Standing Textbook Affordability Committees
Many colleges have standing textbook affordability committees to explore the best means of reducing costs while providing quality materials for students. Committees consist faculty, administrators, bookstore personnel, librarians and students. The priorities of the committees focus on responding to specific concerns and undertaking proactive projects to achieve outcomes.

Open Educational Resources
Open Educational Resources is one of the most commonly reported methods for reducing and sometimes eliminating 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. Some colleges are participating in Rice University’s OpenStax, which are free, peer-reviewed collections of online and digital materials and allows students the opportunity to also access print copies for a small fee.

**Price Comparisons**

Colleges post information allowing students the opportunity to comparison shop for the best price for each textbook. Bookstores and websites often compare the price of different formats. Some sites feature Meta search engines which gather prices from a variety of different online book vendors and help students locate the most affordable option. The easy-to-access tools not only assist students, but also expose faculty and administrators to user-end textbook costs.

**Price Matching**

A strategy more common with big box retailers, bookstores have implemented price matching policies where a student may bring in a receipt for a textbook purchased elsewhere that was less expensive and receive store credit for the difference between the receipt and the bookstore price of the book. In addition to bringing students into the bookstore, price matching gives bookstores access to information about the vendor from which students are purchasing materials.

**Bulk Purchasing**

In addition to price matching in the form of store credit, bookstores are also purchasing textbooks in bulk to reduce costs, which is most feasible in situations where colleges have policies where all sections of a course use the same materials. Bulk purchasing is also a useful strategy for establishing a rental inventory.

**Rentals**

Bookstores and online sites offer textbook rental options for students. The advantage of book rentals is the reduced pricing. Some of the disadvantages include a limitation of the time the student may use the book and the pricing may not be as inexpensive as purchasing a used book and selling it to a friend who will take the course a following semester.

**LibGuides**

LibGuides also known as Research Guides, one of the newer strategies for instructional material access, are curated by librarians who work closely with faculty to identify the resources needed for a course. These resources are free to the student and may be easily updated to meet the needs of a changing discipline such as information technology.

**Reserves and Loans**

Desk copies of textbooks may be placed on reserve by faculty members 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. 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.
Textbook Affordability in the Future

FCS institutions continue to implement innovative strategies to provide access to course materials and maintain cost saving strategies.

Actual Costs and Access Concerns
The options available to students for selecting a textbook are vast with little information regarding the benefits, the actual costs, and the disadvantages for selecting a textbook format. Although some formats including customized textbooks, loose leaf and rentals are initially less expensive for students, the lack of opportunity to sell a new or used book back to the bookstore should be factored into the cost. Access to materials may also be an issue. For example, digital textbooks are often accessed by a code which may be time limited. In situations where students need continued access to the materials as a reference, time limited access may not be the best option.

Colleges Initiatives
Colleges described next steps for addressing affordability and access issues. Standing textbook committees are exploring strategies such as student fee models and tablet pilot tests. Student fees models include the cost of the textbooks and instructional materials in order to ensure students have access to the materials on the first day of class. Fees models may be structured in a variety of ways to allow the student to retain the materials or essentially to provide a textbook on loan or access to technology. Digital technology programs are designed so the textbooks for the semester are preloaded on the device or students may download the needed materials. Devices help to ensure that all students have equal access to the materials.

Statewide Discussion
FCS Council of Instructional Affairs, whose members represent each FCS institution, convene three meetings a year which provides opportunity to expand discussions on textbook and instructional materials affordability to a statewide stakeholder audience. Chief academic officers in the FCS and other interested attendees will share strategies, initiatives and best practices that could result in the basis for future policy recommendations.