

# COURSE MATERIALS COSTS AS A BARRIER FOR STUDENT SUCCESS: LOCAL, STATE, AND NATIONAL EFFORTS TO ASSESS THE IMPACT

5 APRIL 2025

DR. JEFF SEAMAN – BAY VIEW ANALYTICS  
DR. JULIA SEAMAN – BAY VIEW ANALYTICS



# WHO WE ARE



# BAY VIEW ANALYTICS

Bay View Analytics offers a comprehensive suite of consulting services in survey design and statistical research. Our services build on nearly two decades of education research and survey design, sampling, and statistical analysis expertise.



Julia Seaman, Ph.D.  
*Director of Research*



Jeff Seaman, Ph.D.  
*Director*



THIS IS IMPORTANT



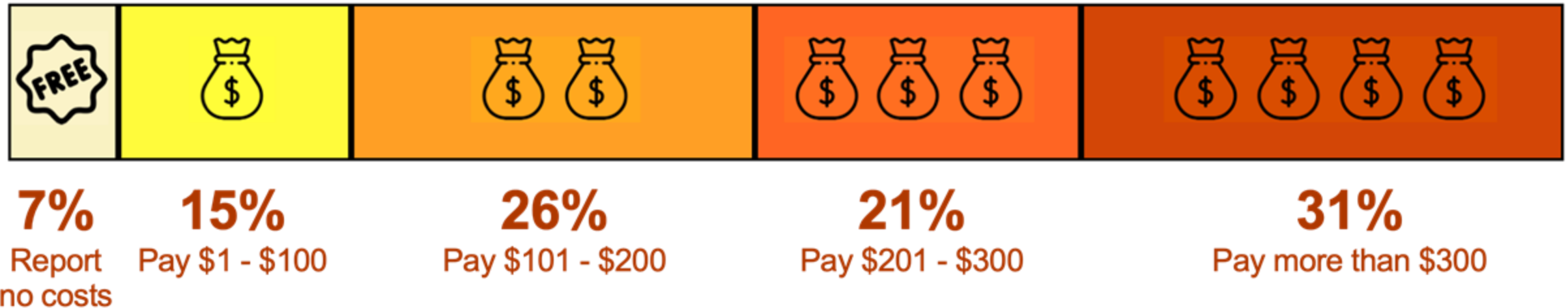
# SOME CONTEXT

- Courseware materials remain a core component of student education
  - No longer just a print textbook (digital versions, online homework system, etc)
- Materials are a direct commercial interaction between the student, institution (book store), and publishers
- Students purchase the materials, but faculty and administrators decide what is required
  - Faculty are more aware of costs to students than ever before, and efforts across many levels to reduce student costs (ZTC, OER, course marking, etc.)

**We have a lot of information from publishers, market research, and faculty/administrator surveys...but what is the student experience?**

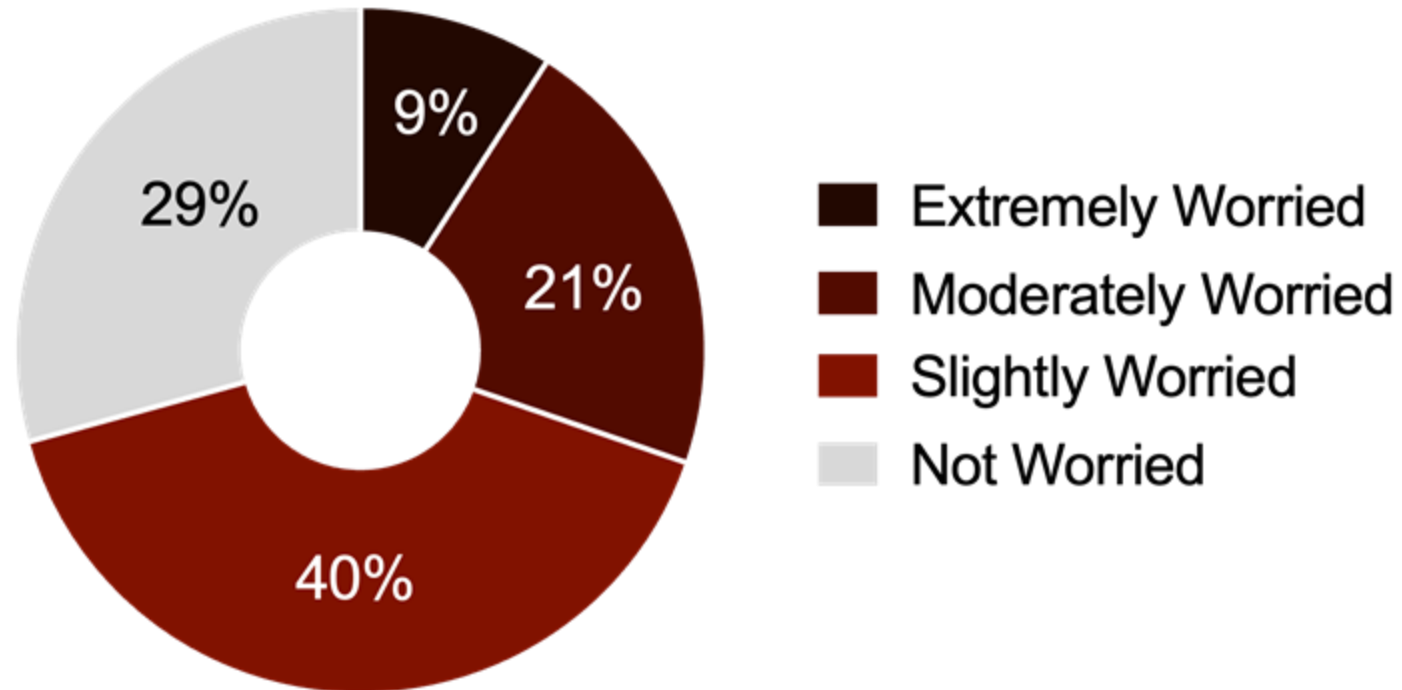
# COURSE MATERIAL COSTS CAN BE SUBSTANTIAL

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

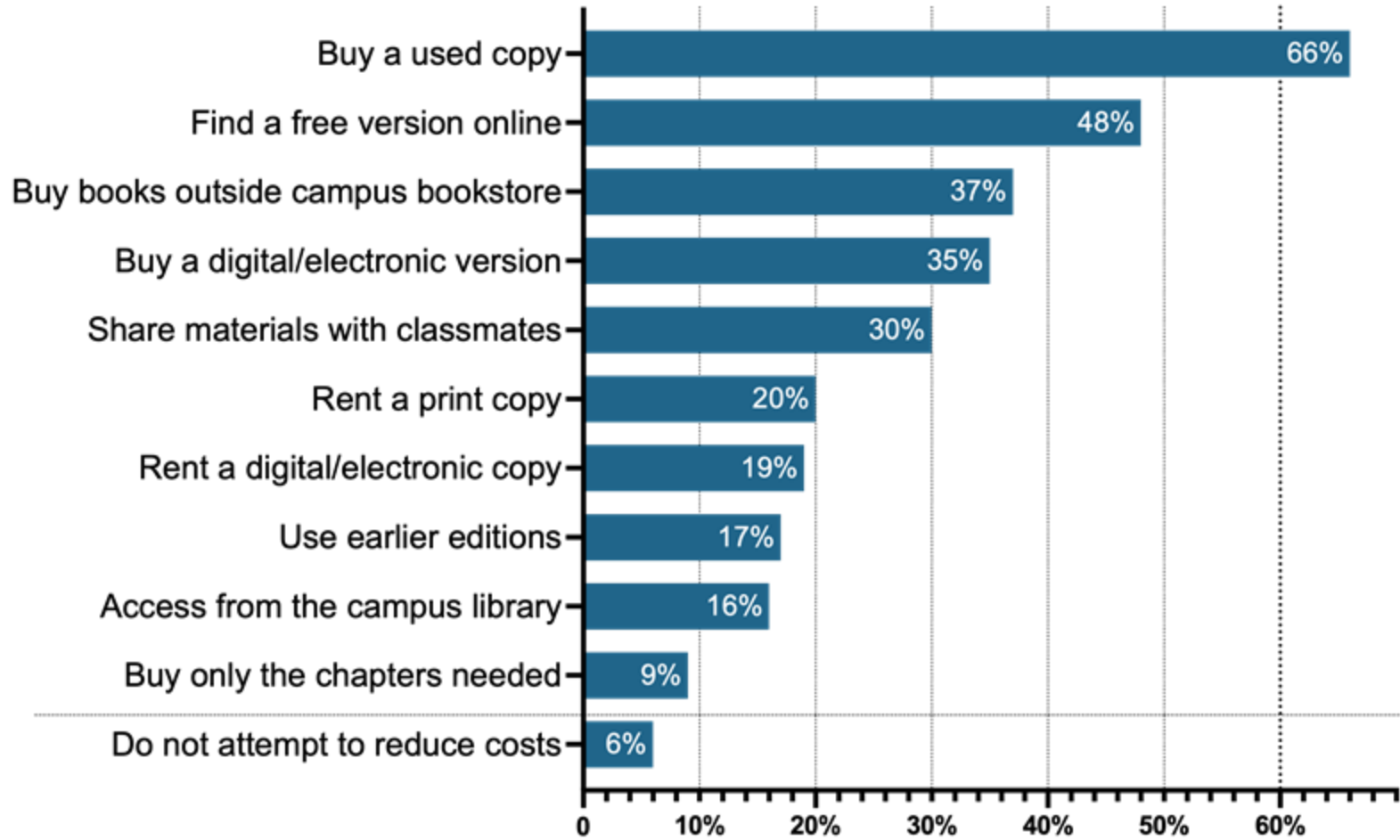


# MOST STUDENTS ARE WORRIED

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



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

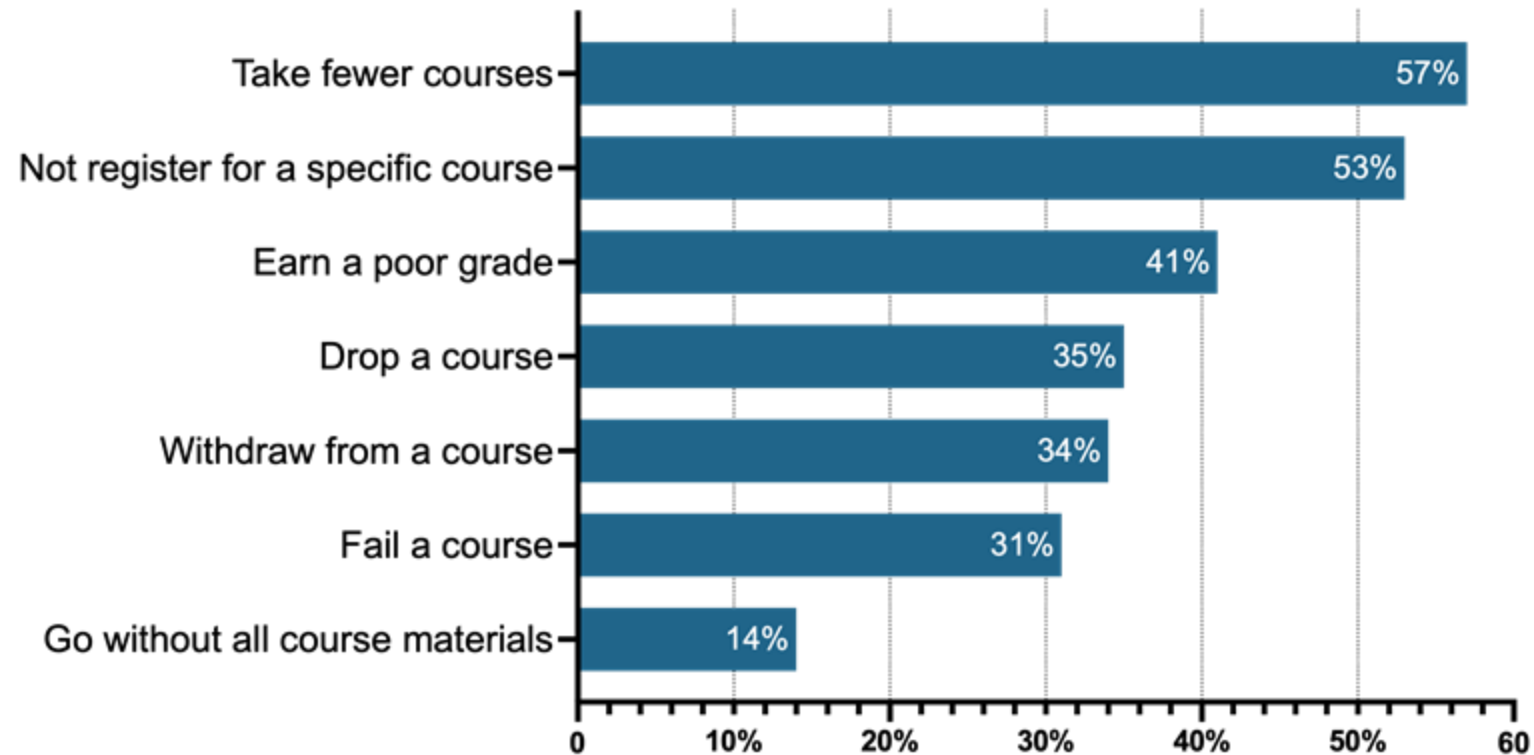


Virtually all students are taking steps to reduce or avoid the costs of course materials

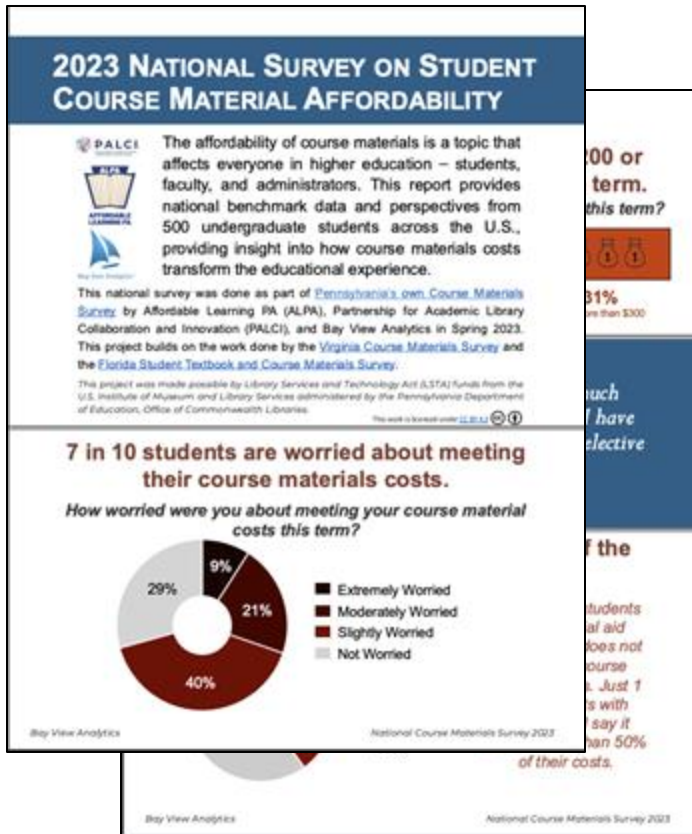


# COURSE MATERIAL COSTS HAVE A DIRECT NEGATIVE IMPACT ON STUDENT ACADEMIC PROGRESS

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



# FOR MORE INFORMATION



Full report (PDF & HTML) available for free:

[bayviewanalytics.com/CourseMaterials](https://bayviewanalytics.com/CourseMaterials)

# THE BEST TOOLS TO EFFECT CHANGE



# WHAT WORKS?

Those who have completed state-level efforts report that **direct comments from students** demonstrating the impact on their education and **where their state lags behind others** are among the most compelling incentives for legislators to consider enhanced policies and funding.

# COMPARATIVE DATA

**“We needed persuasive data** on the impact of expensive course material costs on Pennsylvania’s college students. Publicizing the survey results through the media has **proved incredibly valuable** to our efforts.”

“The results of the survey gave us direct insight into the Virginia student experience and enabled us to **share their stories with stakeholders**, further highlighting the importance of open and affordable course content initiatives across the Commonwealth.”

**“Our institutional data** demonstrated that our students are feeling the impact of high course material costs even more significantly than students in the state overall. Making that known to our academic administrators has **enabled us to capture their attention.**”

# STUDENT VOICES

*I had to take a semester off to work full time in order to have money for books for the upcoming semesters.*

*I wasn't focused on just one Major, I went for the most cheapest one because I have limited funds.*

*It has caused me to determine what college to attend because of the price.*

*It has caused me to fail so many things and caused me to be held back in my course hours and I can't afford that.*

*Two jobs just to afford book, then I can't study properly because I'm too busy working.*

*I think textbooks are a scam.*



# A SHORT HISTORY



# FLORIDA

## The FLVC Textbook & Course Materials Survey

- The first state-wide survey of course material affordability
- Provides a snapshot of the state of textbook and materials costs and their impact on student success, choices, and degree completion.
- Administered in 2012, 2016, 2018, and 2022
- Institutions: State University System (SUS) and Florida College System (FCS)
- Participants
  - 21,430 Public College and University students participated in 2018
  - 13,831 Public College and University students participated in 2022





# FLORIDA – 2022 FINDINGS

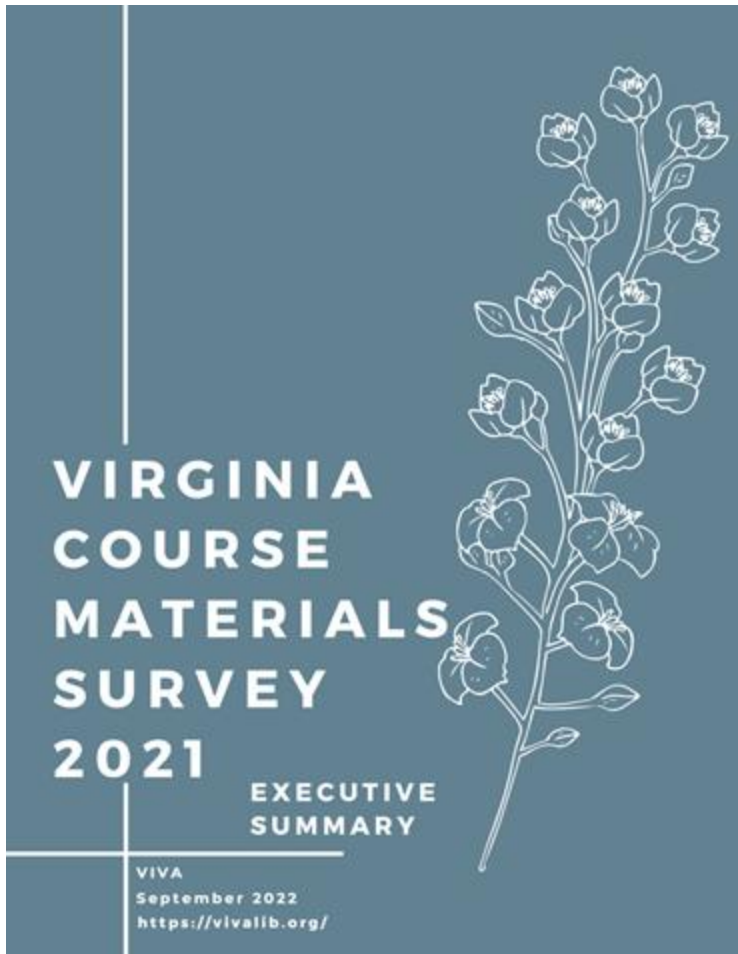
- Textbook costs are still negatively impacting student academic progress.
- Student responses indicate that they are spending slightly less on textbooks.
  - Increase in “inclusive access” purchasing programs offered through campus bookstores
    - The decline in availability of used physical textbooks
    - More study of fee-based purchasing programs are needed
- Universities have increased the use of open educational resources.
- Strong student desire for the option to purchase low-cost physical textbooks.

# FLORIDA AS THE MODEL

- Multiple other states and institutions have embraced the Florida survey design and conducted similar studies of their own student populations
  - Colorado
  - Illinois
  - Oregon
  - Pennsylvania
  - Tennessee
  - Virginia
  - And others
- These studies have found that students are **concerned about the cost** of course materials, they are taking steps to **mitigate the impact**, and it is having a **negative effect on student success**.



# VIRGINIA AND PENNSYLVANIA



**VIRGINIA  
COURSE  
MATERIALS  
SURVEY  
2021**

EXECUTIVE  
SUMMARY

VIVA  
September 2022  
<https://vivalib.org/>



**VIVA** Virginia's Academic Library Consortium

Home | VIVA | Collections | E-Resource Management | Resource Sharing | Open and Affordable Initiatives | News & Events

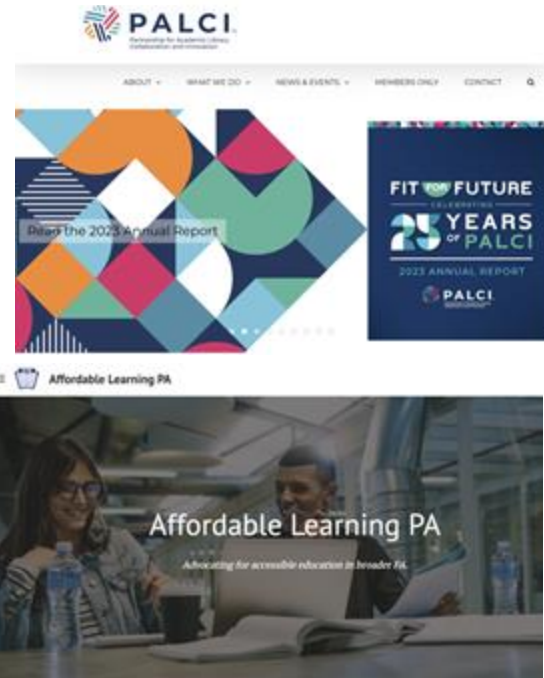
### Virginia Course Materials Survey

In Fall 2021, in cooperation with our member institutions, VIVA conducted a Course Materials Survey for Virginia students in higher education. The survey, approved by the George Mason University IRB as 1736731, built on the work of previous states and regions and included a special emphasis on educational equity. More than 5,600 valid student responses from 41 institutions were received, reflecting an overall response rate of 33%.

The overarching research questions were:

- What is the impact of course material costs on educational equity among Virginia students?
- What course content materials do students find to be most beneficial to their learning?

The survey was completely anonymous and took approximately ten minutes to complete. Respondents were able to choose to be entered into a random drawing for five \$200 Amazon gift cards and 250 \$25 Amazon gift cards.



**PALCI**  
Partnership for Academic Library Collaboration and Innovation

ABOUT | WHAT WE DO | NEWS & EVENTS | MEMBERS ONLY | CONTACT




Read the 2023 Annual Report

**FIT FOR FUTURE**  
CELEBRATING  
**25 YEARS**  
OF PALCI  
2023 ANNUAL REPORT

**Affordable Learning PA**

Affordable Learning PA  
Advocating for accessible education at broader PA.

### Pennsylvania Course Materials Survey 2023

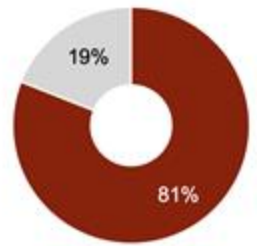
Affordable Learning PA (ALPA) and the Partnership for Academic Library Collaboration and Innovation (PALCI) aim to understand the impact of course material choices on students' academic and general life. Together with Bay View Analytics, they conducted a survey of Pennsylvania students in Spring and Fall 2023. There were 4,306 student responses from 14 participating institutions.

This project builds on the work done by the [Virginia Course Materials Survey](#) and the [Florida Student Textbook and Course Materials Survey](#). The survey used in Pennsylvania expands and updates those surveys for the state's students.

This project was made possible by Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds from the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Office of Commonwealth Libraries.

### Widespread Student Worry about Meeting Their Course Material Costs

Almost half of all students say their worry is "moderate" or "extreme."

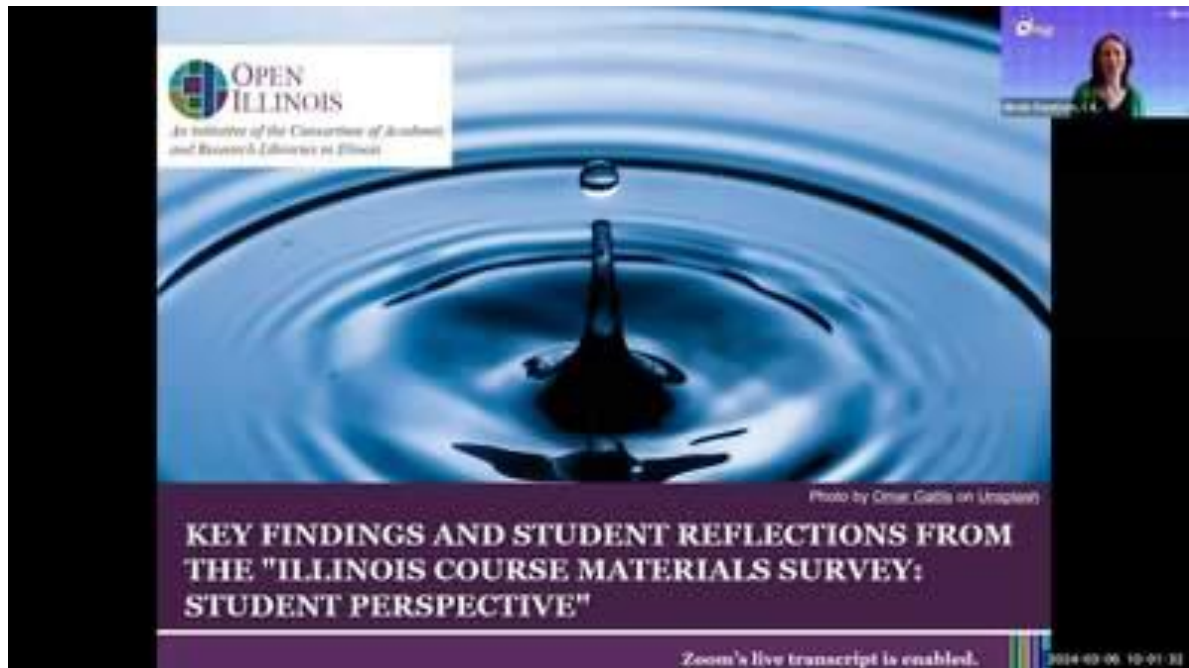


Worry Level	Percentage
Not Worried	19%
Worried	81%

*Not all students have the same level of worry. Students that reported even higher levels of worry were: Black, Hispanic, women, had a full-time job off campus, or were a Pell Grant recipient.*

For more information, the project webpage is [https://www.bayviewanalytics.com/course\\_materials.html](https://www.bayviewanalytics.com/course_materials.html)  
This work is licensed under CC BY 4.0

# ILLINOIS AND OREGON



## **2022 Oregon State University Student Textbooks and Course Materials Survey: Results and Findings**

Stefanie Buck, Director, Open Educational Resources Unit

Mary Ellen Dello Stritto, Director, Ecampus Research Unit

Naomi Aguiar, Assistant Director, Ecampus Research Unit

March 27, 2023

# OTHER IMPORTANT RESEARCH IN THIS AREA



**| FIXING THE BROKEN TEXTBOOK MARKET**

THIRD EDITION

**U.S. PIRG** | Education Fund

**InclusiveAccess.org**



**| AUTOMATIC TEXTBOOKS BILLING**

an offer students can't refuse?

**U.S. PIRG** | Education Fund



Bay View Analytics®



# OUR VISION: SUPPORT AND STARTER KITS



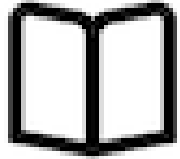
# LESSONS LEARNED

- These studies are incredibly valuable and effective!
- They take considerable planning and effort.
  - Feedback from both Virginia and Pennsylvania is that while they consider the results extremely important, they had serious issues in launching and running their projects, many of which could have been avoided with knowledge from others that had gone before.
- We can build on what has gone before:
  - No need to reinvent the wheel
  - Easier and faster startup
  - Allows for critical comparisons

# THE OPEN TEXTBOOK PROJECT

**Coming Soon!**

[www.OpenTextbookProject.org](http://www.OpenTextbookProject.org)

 Open  
Textbook  
Project





# BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

- Information and **links to all student affordability projects.**
- Access to the **building blocks** if you want to go it alone.
- Ability to **reach out to others** to learn and partner.
- Links to support the **comparison and sharing** of the results.
- **National comparative** data.

# BUILDING BLOCKS TO GET YOU STARTED

- **Example project timelines** and tasks with specific examples.
- **Rationale** on why the research is critically important.
- **Example questionnaires** showing previous questions asked of students.
- Information on the **IRB approval process**, how to determine if it is needed, what information will be required, and sample IRB submissions.
- Best practices for **recruiting participating institutions** with sample communications.
- Best practices for **student outreach** to ensure you get a representative sample.
- A guide for the **analysis steps** with sample tables and charts from prior studies.
- Information on adding **comparative data** from other states, national samples, etc.
- Suggestions for **sharing your results** with the wider community.



# Q&A

FEEL FREE TO REACH OUT: [JEFF@BAYVIEWANALYTICS.COM](mailto:JEFF@BAYVIEWANALYTICS.COM)  
OR [BAYVIEWANALYTICS.COM/CONTACT](https://BAYVIEWANALYTICS.COM/CONTACT)

# IMPORTANT LINKS

Bay View Analytics: [https://www.bayviewanalytics.com/course\\_materials.html](https://www.bayviewanalytics.com/course_materials.html)

Colorado: [https://cdhe.colorado.gov/sites/highered/files/2024\\_Colorado\\_OER\\_Report.pdf](https://cdhe.colorado.gov/sites/highered/files/2024_Colorado_OER_Report.pdf)

Connecticut: <https://ctdigitalarchive.org/node/3778148>

Florida: <https://dlss.flvc.org/research>

Illinois: <https://www.carli.illinois.edu/illinois-course-materials-survey-student-perspective>

Oregon: <https://openoregon.org/collecting-local-data-to-advocate-for-oregon-state-students/>

Pennsylvania: <https://palci.org/services/projects/>

Pennsylvania: <https://www.affordablelearningpa.org/news-events>

Tennessee: <https://cehhs.utk.edu/elps/new-perc-report-highlights-trends-in-community-college-course-material-costs-and-their-impact-on-student-success/>

Virginia: <https://vivalib.org/va/open/survey>





# THANK YOU

[WWW.BAYVIEWANALYTICS.COM](http://WWW.BAYVIEWANALYTICS.COM)