In the following report, Hanover Research examines textbook affordability in higher education. We reveal a variety of strategies used by colleges and universities to mitigate the financial burden imposed on students by textbook purchases.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

According to the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), from 2002 to 2012, textbook prices rose at an average rate of 6 percent per year, compared to average annual increases of 7 percent for tuition and fees and 2 percent for consumer prices in general. As a result, higher education places a greater financial burden on students and their families. More students point to textbook costs, in particular, as a barrier to their pursuit of higher education. A survey conducted by the Student Public Interest Research Group (SPIRG) found that seven in 10 students had not purchased a required textbook due to cost, with many of those students fearing that their grades will suffer as a result. According to the SPIRG’s textbooks program director, “[t]extbooks really can be the difference between affording higher education and dropping out.”

The Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 recognized the need for stakeholders to work collaboratively to find ways to cut the cost of textbooks for students. As a result, publishers must share pricing information with faculty to permit them to take cost into consideration when choosing textbooks and other instructional materials for their courses. In addition, publishers must unbundle packages of textbooks and supplementary materials to enable students to buy required items separately.

State boards of higher education, college and university systems, and individual institutions are increasingly engaged in efforts to lower textbook costs. The remainder of this report proceeds as follows. Section I reviews the most common cost-reduction strategies, namely digital textbooks, open-source textbooks, textbook rentals, textbook subsidies and rebates, peer-to-peer bookselling, policies directed at faculty textbook adoption, and efforts to leverage library resources. Section II profiles textbook affordability initiatives in California, Florida, and Virginia. First, we present our key findings.

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4 Ibid.
KEY FINDINGS

- No singular, best-practice approach to textbook affordability exists. To have the greatest possible impact, institutions are advised to take a varied approach to textbook affordability. Institutions should consider developing digital textbook collections, whether through partnerships with publishers or through the campus library. Robust rental programs through the campus bookstore or in partnership with an online vendor are often well-received by students and continue to increase in popularity. The use of open-source materials represents another option, though some concerns about the reliability of the information contained in such items persists.

- Institutions should develop policies to influence faculty textbook selections, as this often has the most immediate bearing on costs. Faculty choice is addressed in nearly all of the policies examined for this report. Faculty members are advised to take cost into consideration when selecting texts, avoid choosing new editions unless completely justified, choose unbundled items when appropriate, and report textbook choices to the bookstore as early as possible so that used items can be sourced.

- Institutions should negotiate favorable pricing and distribution options with publishers. An institution can form partnerships with publishers, guaranteeing the sale of a certain number of resources at a decreased cost—an attractive option to booksellers who face uncertain revenues in the face of an increasing demand for free, digital, and used resources. Multiple institutions may enter into consortia and act collectively to enhance their negotiating power.

- Students must be made aware of alternative, less costly means of accessing textbooks. Awareness campaigns should be launched, with, for example, literature disseminated during orientation and registration periods. Students also should be encouraged to provide feedback on various textbook purchasing options.

- State governments and systems of higher education can promote and implement effective textbook affordability initiatives. For example, Florida and California have developed statewide repositories of digital resources. In addition, Florida requires faculty to submit textbook adoptions to campus bookstores no later than 45 days prior to the first day of classes.

- Other less common textbook affordability strategies include: subsidizing purchases for students with demonstrated financial need; offering payment plans to spread the cost of purchases across a semester; guaranteeing buyback prices; offering price-matching guarantees with online retailers; and lowering the campus bookstore’s revenue margin on textbook sales.
SECTION I: COMMON APPROACHES TO TEXTBOOK AFFORDABILITY

In this section, we discuss strategies used by colleges and universities to decrease the financial burden placed on students by textbook purchases. The strategies place responsibility on a range of stakeholders, from students and faculty to bookstores and publishers. More specifically, the strategies we examine include:

- Use of digital textbooks
- Use of open-source and open-access materials
- Textbook rental programs
- Textbook rebates and subsidies
- Peer-to-peer bookselling initiatives
- Policies restricting or guiding faculty textbook selection
- Innovative library practices

DIGITAL TEXTBOOKS

Digital textbooks are an alternative to print textbooks, offered under the premise that, without printing expenses, the cost of the textbook will be reduced. Digital textbooks are increasingly popular. Online purchases of such resources rose 11 percent from 2011 to early 2013. However, adoption remains low. According to a survey of 940 Follett Higher Education Group-run campus bookstores, only two percent of textbooks sold are fully digital titles.

Digital textbooks typically come with a set of limitations. For instance, some publishers will restrict access to one semester, revoking a student’s right to access the material afterward. Additionally, students may have limited ability to print pages from the book or not be permitted to print at all. Publishers tend to make digital textbooks available through a sign-in restricted portal on the company’s website, meaning that students are forced to study where there is an internet connection. This is not only potentially inconvenient for students, but also increases the likelihood that students will be distracted while studying. Students report that they are more likely to check email and social networking websites when they are studying on an internet-connected device.


Although the number of students purchasing digital textbooks is on the rise, **overall student satisfaction with the products they receive is declining.** According to one source, “from 2011 to 2012, students reported a four percent decrease in customer satisfaction when purchasing digital textbooks.” This is largely due to the restrictions that publishers place on digital textbooks.

There are also downsides to digital textbooks over which publishers have no control—for instance, a survey of students revealed that studying from digital textbooks often results in eyestrain and that “in an increasingly digital age, students like the feeling of holding a hard copy book in their hands.” Additionally, **digital textbooks do little to drive down the cost of textbooks** and can be only nominally cheaper than their printed counterparts—printing and shipping costs do not account for much of a publisher’s overhead.

Still, despite such downsides, digital textbooks are a growing market, and many **institutions of higher education are forming partnerships with digital publishers to help supply them to students.** Southern New Hampshire University entered into a partnership with Missouri-based textbook supplier MBS Direct and Barnes & Noble to offer students more used, rental, and digital textbook opportunities. Availability of digital textbooks expanded under the partnership from 25 percent of courses to 70 percent of courses. The partnerships are expected to save students $2.5 million. The University of South Carolina also relies upon Barnes & Noble to supply digital textbooks to its students.

**Other partnerships are being formed and leveraged to persuade publishers to bring down the cost of digital textbooks.** Internet2, a consortium of 221 colleges and universities, announced in January 2012 that it had entered into an agreement with McGraw-Hill aimed at offering students digital textbooks at lower prices. The ability to negotiate lower prices comes with the force behind a multi-institution partnership, according to the chief executive officer (CEO) of Internet2. Without collaborative efforts to lobby for lower prices, publishers have little incentive to change pricing strategies as long as students must purchase specific resources for classes.

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9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
14 “Textbooks.” The Division of Information Technology, University of South Carolina. http://www.sc.edu/it/resources/textbooks/
Meanwhile, a pilot project is presently underway at the undergraduate level across the University of Wisconsin at Madison, the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, the University of Virginia, Cornell University, and the University of California at Berkeley to examine the outcomes of conducting classes with only digital texts. If the pilot program is well-received by students, it is expected that other members of Internet2 will add all-digital classes. With more universities, according to Internet2’s CEO, “their negotiating position with publishers stands to improve.”

Even without the power of a consortium, colleges and universities can leverage a significant amount of purchasing power to vie for lower prices from publishers. **Institutions have the ability to purchase materials from publishers on behalf of students**, amounting to guaranteed sales equal to the number of students enrolled in particular courses. Given their inability to predict student demand for new textbooks over used and rented textbooks, “publishers are willing to pay dearly for that kind of security.”

Indiana University (IU), with multiple campuses and more than 100,000 students, has a robust set of partnerships with publishers to provide students with digital textbooks, stemming from a 2009 pilot project which found that a majority of students preferred digital textbooks to print. Founding partners include McGraw-Hill Education, John Wiley & Sons, W.W. Norton & Company, Flat World Knowledge, and Bedford, Freeman, and Worth. Partnerships are still being negotiated, and, in March 2013, SAGE and Cengage Learning were added to the list. In total, 11 publishers are part of IU’s eTexts initiative. Ultimately, the push for universal digital textbook adoption at IU is not about a preference for digital over printed materials. It aims to ensure that students have access to the best, most up-to-date resources at the best price. According to IU’s Vice President of Information and Technology, Brad Wheeler, “Our goal was to enable all the mechanics of making it very easy if faculty chose digital educational materials—that we could buy them at the best prices, ... that the billing for it would be very simple for the students.” After three semesters, the program was estimated to have saved students $200,000 over the next-cheapest options.

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16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
PROVIDERS

A majority of digital textbooks are available directly from the publisher. Additionally, a large number of secondary websites offer students the ability to search for and comparison shop digital textbook offerings. These include websites such as Textbooks.com, eCampus.com, and Amazon.com, among others.

CourseSmart is a longstanding competitor in the digital textbook market. Five of the largest textbook publishers—Cengage Learning, Macmillan Higher Education, McGraw-Hill Education, John Wiley & Sons, and Pearson—joined together in 2007 to form CourseSmart, a resource originally intended for faculty who needed timely access to textbooks for evaluative purposes. By 2008, the company recognized the growing student demand for digital textbooks and developed a service model by which students are able to purchase temporary access to digital textbooks. CourseSmart calls its digital textbook collection “the world’s largest.”

CourseSmart has worked to overcome some of the most common complaints students have about digital textbooks. Students are able to read the digital material without an internet connection, expanding their opportunities for study time. Texts support assistive technologies to improve accessibility for users with vision and hearing impairments. Students can interact with the texts, despite their digital nature, by highlighting, searching, printing, and taking notes directly in the text.

Digital textbooks are also made available by creators of mobile devices. Barnes & Noble, Amazon, and Apple all sell access to digital textbooks in their online stores, formatted for reading on e-readers and mobile devices. Apple became a player in the market last year, when it released an updated iPad e-reader app allowing students to view digital textbooks. Apple partners with Pearson, McGraw-Hill Education, and Houghton Mifflin Harcourt to take advantage of the 1.5 million iPads presently used in educational institutions.

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23 “About CourseSmart.” CourseSmart. http://www.coursesmart.com/overview
**Open-Source Materials**

Open-source educational materials “offer a promising solution to the most pressing problem currently facing education systems in the United States and around the world—delivering better results with fewer resources.”<sup>25</sup> Similar to digital textbooks, open-source materials are generally made available online. However, unlike digital textbooks, open-source materials are commonly, though not universally, free. Content in open-source materials is collaboratively developed, “sort of like Wikipedia,” states Thomas Beadle, a U.S. Representative from North Dakota, who is pushing for greater use of open-source textbooks.<sup>26</sup> After a certain period of time, however, the ability to edit resources is restricted, so that students and faculty may use a static, reliable resource.

According to the textbook advocate for the Student Public Interest Research Group (SPIRG), open-source textbooks are a response to the price of traditionally-published textbooks, not their content.<sup>27</sup> Textbook prices can impact students’ class selections, resulting in enrollment patterns that reflect what a student can afford, rather a student’s interests. Print textbook prices have skyrocketed, according to the SPIRG, “because students don’t have any choice but to buy their books.” Open-source textbooks aim to change this market dynamic. Student advocates state that open-source textbooks can “radically lower college costs.”<sup>28</sup> Digital textbooks, in contrast, often do not lower costs enough to make a significant impact on student finances—for instance, in one community college course, students were able to save only $1 by choosing a digital textbook over a traditional one.<sup>29</sup>

**Open-source textbooks also benefit from being quickly and easily updated.** Traditional textbooks often fall out of date, whereas an open-source textbook can reflect new knowledge as soon as an individual makes an edit to an online document. This is particularly valuable in scientific fields, where knowledge changes relatively rapidly.

**However, some detractors of open-source textbooks question the reliability of the information they contain,** since crowd-sourcing content without rigorous control can lead to the dissemination of incorrect information.<sup>30</sup> Early pushes for the adoption of open-

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

source textbooks met with criticism because the materials had not been peer-reviewed, their accuracy could not be verified, and they lacked supplementary materials. As J. Bruce Hildebrand, Executive Director for Higher Education of the Association of American Publishers states, “the issue always, however, is the quality of the materials.”

Despite the potential downsides, student groups and a growing number of faculty support adoption of open-source textbooks. In 2011, a textbook rebellion, “where officials from the Student Public Interest Research Groups, student leaders, and an Obama administration official rallied for more open-source textbook options,” occurred at the University of Maryland. According to the University of Maryland’s SPIRG representative, the cost of textbooks “is the one issue that students universally care about.” Since the textbook rebellion, an increasing number of faculty members at the University have adopted open-source textbooks. One psychology professor created his own textbook, piece by piece, over a series of weeks while teaching introductory courses. According to the professor, creating his own open-source text was “liberating,” in that he was able to think about what he really wanted students to learn, rather than “having to think about the course the way somebody else outlined it.” The University encourages faculty to use and create open-source resources and is planning on giving incentives to those who do.

Some state-level encouragement of open-source textbooks is underway. Washington state’s technical and community colleges host a library of open-source texts and resources, enabling students, for example, to pay $30 for an open-source version of an otherwise $200 chemistry textbook. In Ohio, the state university system’s Board of Regents partnered with Flat World Knowledge to expand the use of open-source resources. Over time, Flat World Knowledge also will “provide administrators with data about the impact...on student retention and academic achievement.” As an example of the partnership’s benefits, students in an “Introduction to Psychology” course at the University of Cincinnati can read the main textbook online for free or access a mobile format or black-and-white print version for only $35—a significant cost savings in comparison to the traditional hard-copy edition’s $200 price tag. The partnership grew from a pilot study in which the Board of Regents purchased 1,000 student licenses for Flat World Knowledge’s content. A total of 987 students used the licenses, saving a collective $121,000 on textbook costs (or $122.95 per student per course) in a single semester.

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31 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
PROVIDERS

The **College Open Textbooks Collaborative** addresses quality concerns by implementing a rigorous peer-review process for open-source materials. A grouping of 29 educational non-profit and for-profit organizations affiliated with more than 200 colleges, the College Open Textbooks Collaborative developed as a way to help save “students millions of dollars by increasing the number of open high-quality textbooks available online as alternatives to expensive printed textbooks sold by publishers.” 39 The College Open Textbooks Collaborative has peer reviewed more than 100 open-source textbooks for use in community colleges and identified more than 550.40 In addition, the College Open Textbooks Collaborative trains instructors in the use of open-source textbooks and creates networking opportunities for authors interested in opening their resources.

**OpenStax College**, an open-source provider, also addresses quality concerns by following a rigorous peer-review process for its sources. At present, the development and review process spans approximately 18 months. OpenStax College also partners with for-profit companies that make supplementary materials available, albeit at a cost.41 Within five years, OpenStax College expects to make available textbooks for 20 of the most common college courses. The company also sells physical versions of the open-source materials. Students may access them online for free or pay a small charge for the cost of printing.42

**Flat World Knowledge** is another of the largest providers of open-source textbooks. The company offers “expertly authored content” which is available to students in a variety of formats. Flat World Knowledge offers several innovative benefits to using its open-source texts. Faculty can personalize content to reflect syllabi and course structures and monitor student progress through several analytical tools.43 Flat World Knowledge has implemented a licensing model for university systems, enabling them to provide students with access to the entire catalogue of open-source materials “for a low annual fee or at no charge.”44 Students purchase access to textbooks for just under $20.45 One critic states that, unlike free open-source textbook providers, Flat World Knowledge “may be financially sustainable,” as long as students do not choose to use only their free materials.46

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39 “Who are we?” College Open Textbooks Collaborative. http://www.collegeopentextbooks.org/about-us/who-are-we
40 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
TEXTBOOK RENTALS

Print textbook rentals are another popular option for students who do not wish to pay full retail price for a required text. Rentals cost less, but, like many digital textbooks, are only available to students for the duration of the course. Students must read the terms of the rental agreement carefully, or they ultimately may incur an additional cost close to that of a traditional textbook purchase. For example, some rental programs impose steep fees if books are not returned on time, while others charge students the full cost of a textbook if it is annotated in an unacceptable manner.

Some institutions offer homegrown rental programs, whereas others rely on the resources of their corporate bookstores backed by organizations such as Barnes & Noble and Follett Higher Education Group. In general, institutions are increasingly partnering with larger bookselling organizations to meet student demand for rental options.

Many websites with no physical presence offer rental services, including Amazon.com, Chegg.com, and CourseSmart.com. Some institutions form textbook rental partnerships with such companies. For example, the University of Nevada, Reno established a partnership with Chegg.com in June 2010. To place orders, students use the company’s website directly. Moreover, at the beginning and end of each semester, Chegg.com places several rental stands on campus for students who wish to complete transactions in person. According to the director of the University’s bookstore, the decision to partner with the company was made as “it’s smarter to bring this program to campus rather than students taking their business off-campus.” Chegg.com also maintains similar textbook rental partnerships with California State University, Fresno and California State University, Long Beach. Under these agreements, the company shares a portion of its revenue with the campuses’ bookstores.

Xavier University initiated a partnership with Follett Higher Education Group’s Rent-A-Text to fulfill its students’ demand for textbook rentals. Rent-A-Text offers rentals at 50 percent or less of the cost of a new textbook and makes available over 400 titles. The University states that Rent-A-Text offers students benefits unmatched by other rental services, including the allowance for “real-life usage: students have the freedom to highlight and take notes all within the normal wear and tear associated with coursework,” as long as the books are kept in reusable condition.

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48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
Rental programs run by campus bookstores are typically very similar. They offer rentals at a fraction of the cost of a new textbook, although the average discount varies by institution. Students generally respond well to rental programs, prompting their expansion. Bookstores are careful to repeatedly inform students of the repercussions of late returns or damaged books, however, as the financial penalties are often steep and non-negotiable.

The bookstore at Sinclair Community College introduced rental textbooks in winter 2011, offering students access to just five textbooks. The program has since grown in response to “overwhelmingly positive” response from students. Sinclair states that rental prices are up to 55 percent less than the cost of a new textbook and reminds students that, to avoid fees, rentals must be returned on time and in good condition.51

The rental program at the University of Dayton also has expanded in response to student demand, and the University currently offers more than 200 textbooks under the program.52 Rental costs 40 percent of the new textbook price. In addition to the 200 on-site rental titles, the University partnered with Follett Higher Education Group to offer an on-demand rental service to supplement the existing program. These are managed online, though students may return Follett Higher Education Group titles to the campus bookstore. Again, students are reminded that they will face fees if they return books late or damaged.

The University of North Carolina (UNC) at Charlotte published a report on textbook affordability in early 2012. In the report, the Campus Committee on Textbooks advised the University to expand its textbook rental program.53 Renting routinely saves students 50 percent of the cost of a new textbook, and at least half of the textbooks in the Barnes & Noble at UNC Charlotte bookstore are also offered as rentals. The Committee set forth specific criteria which must be met before a title can be offered as a rental:

- The book cannot be bundled with software, access codes, or other packaged items.
- The book cannot be a “consumable” item—i.e., with perforated or loose pages.
- If the book does not have high national resale potential (based on Barnes & Noble analysis), the faculty member and department chair will be asked to commit in writing to use the same edition for 4 consecutive semesters.54

The rental program saved students $392,000 across fall 2010 and spring 2011.55 However, despite its success, the program has faced challenges. Despite a clearly-communicated policy regarding fees imposed for late returns, there is a significant problem with students not returning books at the end of the semester. During the rental program’s first semester in fall 2010, the program experienced a non-return rate in line with Barnes & Noble’s

51 “Textbook Affordability.” Sinclair Community College.  
http://tartanstore.sinclair.edu/site_textbook_affordability.asp
52 “Textbook Affordability.” University of Dayton.  
http://www.udayton.edu/bookstore/textbooks/textbook_affordability.php
54 Bulleted points taken verbatim from: Ibid.
55 Ibid., p. 2.
national non-return rate of 21 percent. The Committee stated that this occurred despite “several rounds of emails, text messages, and other communications to students.”\textsuperscript{56} The following year, the non-return rate dropped to just 7 percent, due to more communication and greater familiarity with the program.\textsuperscript{57}

**Textbook Subsidies and Rebates**

Other approaches to textbook affordability include subsidies and rebates. In some cases, institutions provide textbook subsidies to students with demonstrated financial need. In other cases, institutions negotiate textbook rebates that apply to all students.

At San Jose State University, students who receive need-based financial aid are eligible for rental textbook vouchers of up to $60 per semester.\textsuperscript{58} Students may redeem their vouchers for as many rentable textbooks as needed, as long as the total cost does not exceed $60. Textbooks must be returned in good condition at the end of the semester, or students may be required to pay fees.

At Kennesaw State University, commuter students with demonstrated financial need are eligible to participate in a lottery-style textbook subsidy program. The program is offered by Student Development’s Adult Learner Program, which “seeks to support and promote the student learning experience by providing funding to purchase the textbooks and supplies necessary for a successful college experience.”\textsuperscript{59} Each semester, the college makes available 15 awards of $300 each, redeemable at the on-campus bookstore. The college awards a total of $9,000 in subsidies per year.

Australia’s University of Western Sydney (UWS) awards a A$50\textsuperscript{60} textbook subsidy for all students who were enrolled at UWS in 2012 and are continuing their studies in 2013, regardless of level, degree program, or need.\textsuperscript{61} The subsidy only can be used toward the purchase of the following items at the central campus store: textbooks, stationery, uniforms, first aid supplies, and gym memberships and classes.\textsuperscript{62} The wide range of items supported ensures that students who do not require textbooks every semester still benefit from the program.

Students who attend the University of Iowa and buy textbooks at the University Book Store can receive the sales tax from their purchases back through a state tax refund program.\textsuperscript{63}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{56} Ibid., p. 4.
\item \textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{58} “A.S. Affordable Textbook Program.” San Jose State University. http://www.sjsu.edu/faso/Resources/as_affordable_textbook_program/
\item \textsuperscript{59} “ALP Book Subsidy Lottery.” Kennesaw State University. http://www.kennesaw.edu/stu_dev/alp/booksubsidy.shtml
\item \textsuperscript{60} This denotes that the awarded amount is in Australian dollars.
\item \textsuperscript{61} “Student Textbook Subsidy.” University of Western Sydney. http://www.uws.edu.au/currentstudents/current_students/managing_your_study/student_textbook_subsidy
\item \textsuperscript{62} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{63} “Textbook Tax Rebate.” University of Iowa Student Government. http://uisg.uiowa.edu/initiatives/textbook-tax-rebate/
\end{itemize}
Students must attach their receipts to a refund claim form and submit the documentation to the state. Refunds will not exceed the seven percent state sales tax charged on all purchases.

In 2008, Clovis Community College (CCC) offered a 10-percent rebate on textbooks bought at the CCC Bookstore, as long as students kept their original receipts, were enrolled full-time, and only purchased textbooks identified by instructors as required or suggested. The textbook rebate applied to students’ CCC accounts. If a student’s balance had been paid, then (s)he received a reimbursement check. Reimbursements potentially impacted the student’s unmet need for financial aid purposes.64

The University of Washington (UW) offers a similar 10 percent “customer rebate,” which is based on purchases made at the University Book Store.65 Unlike the program at Clovis Community College, however, the rebate is issued in the form of a gift card. All UW, as well as Cascadia Community College, students, faculty, and staff are eligible for the rebate as long as they were enrolled in or employed by one of the two institutions at the time of purchase. Unlike other rebate programs, participants are not required to keep track of their receipts. Instead, purchases are tracked electronically through the use of an institutional identification card.

**Peer-to-Peer Bookselling**

In some cases, students buy and sell textbooks directly from and to their peers. This gives students greater control over textbook pricing than they can obtain through other channels. Not only can students set their own prices, but they also can ensure that no third-party organization is charging a fee for facilitating the transaction. However, many students find peer-to-peer book selling to be too time consuming, and, as a result, it is not the most popular option.

Several websites and organizations exist to help reduce the administrative burden of peer-to-peer book selling. For example, Darin Gross, a recent graduate of Michigan State University (MSU), created Booklify, a peer-to-peer textbook marketplace.66 He felt campus bookstores often treat students unfairly by selling them textbooks at inflated prices and buying them back for far less than their value. Booklify enables students to circumvent campus bookstores. It appeals to both bargain hunters who otherwise would order cheaper textbooks online and students who appreciate the convenience of shopping on campus. Using Booklify, students are able to make deals in person on campus and avoid having to wait for textbooks to arrive through the mail.67

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Booklify primarily operates via a mobile app, although students can access the marketplace through a traditional website as well. It permits students to create lists of desired books and receive alerts when other students are selling them. Students must have a valid university email address to use the system and are encouraged to sign up via Facebook and meet in common places to exchange textbooks. A side benefit of the system, according to the site’s founder, is that it connects individuals who have completed a course with those who are just embarking on it—potentially facilitating tutoring relationships.68

While the site started among students at MSU last year, it already has been taken up by Central and Western Michigan Universities as well.69 Some have expressed concerns that the peer-to-peer book buying and selling model will not appeal to a majority of students who are “too lazy to sell their books to other students” and prefer simply to walk to the bookstore and drop off their books.70

Booklify is only one facilitator of peer-to-peer bookselling. Although they are not universally successful, students can organize textbook sales and swaps in online forums or on bulletin boards and hold them locally.71 Moreover, students wishing to deal locally also list textbooks on popular websites such as Craigslist.org, make and post flyers, or place ads in campus periodicals. Other websites that facilitate peer-to-peer bookselling may require students to ship their textbooks to other locations or wait for their books to arrive in the mail. Such systems still may be advantageous, however, as students exercise a degree of control over the prices at which they buy and sell their textbooks. Examples of such resources include The Book Exchange Network72 and ShelfRelief73.

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68 Ibid.
73 ShelfRelief. http://shelfrelief.com/home/main
INFLUENCING FACULTY TEXTBOOK CHOICES

Institutional leadership can demonstrate its commitment to making textbooks more affordable by recommending changes in faculty resource-selection processes. For example, students cannot choose to pursue one of the lower-cost textbook options (e.g., digital textbooks, open-source textbooks, textbook rentals, etc.) unless instructors require texts which are available in these formats. Thus, it is imperative that institutional leadership develop a policy encouraging faculty to make text selections that take students’ financial constraints into consideration.

In 2011-2012, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi (TAMUCC) undertook a “Making Textbooks Affordable Initiative” comprising 11 steps to be taken by faculty and staff. This plan aimed to facilitate the adoption of lower-cost educational resources and demonstrate the institution’s commitment to “making intentional efforts to utilize best practices in textbook adoption.” Dr. Chris Markwood, the University’s Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs states that the policy is “the compassionate and ethical thing to do” to help students in the face of rising educational costs. The 11 steps to making textbooks affordable at TAMUCC are as follows:

- All departments at [TAMUCC] shall develop and implement schedules for the early adoption of textbooks (requiring purchase) to allow the bookstore time to secure used textbooks and students time to order from competitively priced sources.
- The bookstore shall provide faculty who are placing book orders with current information about the retail price of selected course materials.
- To enhance the viability of used textbooks as an option...to the extent feasible and appropriate, faculty teaching the same course for multiple semesters are encouraged to use the same textbooks and course materials for multiple semesters.
- Whenever appropriate within the goals of the course, faculty and instructional staff are encouraged to order new editions of textbooks only if older editions are not of comparable educational content or are no longer available through normal distribution channels. In such cases, faculty members are encouraged to list information pertinent to previous editions which are acceptable for use.
- When available, and economically advantageous to students, faculty and instructional staff shall request unbundled versions of textbook and course materials.
- To the extent possible, if bundled materials are assigned, the bookstore shall make available both bundled and unbundled versions of the materials for purchase. In situations where bundled materials are assigned, the bookstore should clarify whether students can purchase either the bundled package or all required portions of the bundle individually.

- When appropriate, available for purchase, and economically advantageous for students, faculty and instructional staff shall encourage students to purchase electronic versions or other alternative formats of textbooks.
- Departments are encouraged, where appropriate, to collectively adopt the same or common textbook(s) for courses with multiple sections.
- Faculty and departments will balance considerations of immediate costs savings to students with custom books and loose-leaf material with the inability of students to re-sell those materials at the end of the semester.
- Where possible and appropriate, faculty and departments will consider full-year adoption of a textbook.
- [TAMUCC] shall continue to look for creative ways to lessen the financial hardship of college textbook purchases, such as, targeted scholarship and financial aid funds, expansion of economically viable textbook rental programs for selected courses, placing selected course materials on reserve in the campus library, and using information in the public domain.

These steps advocate the use of alternative educational materials, such as digital textbooks and open-source resources. As seen above, these steps place the responsibility for lowering textbook costs on faculty and the campus bookstore. Faculty choices are referenced in eight of the 11 action steps, whereas the campus bookstore’s ordering and selling practices are referenced in three.

**Figure 1.1: UC Berkeley Faculty Recommendations for Textbook Affordability**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEXTBOOK SELECTION</th>
<th>ERESOURCES AND OTHER ALTERNATIVES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commit to using the same textbook for two to three years to ensure a supply of used books.</td>
<td>Use open resource textbooks and course materials as much as possible. Provide students with links to online materials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk with colleagues about adopting the same textbook for the same or similar courses.</td>
<td>Place copies of textbooks on Library reserve for use by students. Consider contributing advance copies for that purpose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use price as a factor in the adoption process.</td>
<td>Consider whether a textbook edition is rentable. If using a textbook for multiple semesters, contact the bookstore to discuss making it rentable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let students use an older edition of a textbook.</td>
<td>Consider using electronic and open content solutions available at very low or no cost.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where possible, assign editions and translations in the public domain.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider unbundled textbook packages.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact the publisher and negotiate a lower price.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIMELY PLACEMENT OF TEXTBOOK ORDERS</th>
<th>SPREAD THE WORD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meet textbook adoption deadlines, allowing the bookstore to post required textbooks in a timely manner and source used textbooks.</td>
<td>Add Textbook Affordability Tips for Students to the faculty bspace page and link to it on the course syllabus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If using other vendors, submit your textbook list to the bookstore so the bookstore can offer buyback, used textbooks, and rental textbooks.</td>
<td>Share best practices and knowledge of more affordable options for course materials with colleagues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post required textbooks as early as possible with ISBN, author, title, copyright, and edition.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submit a partial list even if a full list is unavailable.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UC Berkeley
Faculty choice is also seen as an integral component of lowering the total cost of textbooks for students at the University of California, Berkeley (UC Berkeley). The University makes 18 related recommendations to faculty, which are summarized in the figure above.77

The themes that emerge from these sets of faculty recommendations are mirrored at other institutions. The University of South Florida, for instance, recommends that faculty use electronic textbooks, open-source materials, and library resources in their courses.78 Johns Hopkins University advises faculty to select textbooks early so students may “explore budget sensitive options.”79 West Liberty University requires faculty to consider cost when making textbook selections and choose textbooks that can be or have been used for several years without edition changes so that students can find used copies.80

According to a report published by the University of Michigan, several states including Arkansas, Minnesota, and Texas have passed legislation requiring faculty to submit textbook adoption information early enough that campus bookstores have sufficient time to source used and rental copies of needed textbooks. Early adoption reports also enable students to comparison shop and avoid excess shipping fees for last-minute delivery.81

**Faculty Incentives**

Textbook affordability policies often advise faculty to adopt certain textbook selection practices. However, getting faculty to comply with those policies represents another challenge. At the University of Arizona, the campus bookstore offers faculty gift certificates as incentives for submitting textbook choices by a certain date.82 The campus bookstore totals all textbook adoptions submitted by a department and, if at least 55 percent of faculty have submitted their textbook choices, the entire department receives a campus bookstore credit. The value of the incentive increases with the percentage of faculty adhering to the submission deadline. The campus bookstore states that the program is funded by the savings realized by having a higher percentage of early-adopting faculty.83

The University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) uses a similar strategy. Faculty who submit textbook lists by the deadline receive a 20 percent discount on books from the campus bookstore. If 75 percent of the faculty in a given department submit textbook requests on

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78 “Textbook Affordability Project.” University of South Florida. http://tap.usf.edu/
83 Ibid.
time, then faculty also receive 20 percent off other merchandise in the campus bookstore.\textsuperscript{84} According to a study of the affordability of textbooks across California’s public institutions of higher education, the incentives appear to be working—among the group of institutions studied, UCLA’s adoption rate far surpasses that of other institutions:\textsuperscript{85}

**Figure 1.2: Percentage of Textbook Adoptions Submitted, Spring 2008**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INSTITUTION</th>
<th>PERCENT SUBMITTED BY DUE DATE</th>
<th>PERCENT SUBMITTED BY END OF BUYBACK PERIOD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UC Berkeley</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UC Davis</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCLA</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSU Chico</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSU Long Beach</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSU Sacramento</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Howle, E.

The University of Toledo also recognizes that there is little incentive for faculty to redesign a course to adopt new educational resources such as digital textbooks or open-source materials. In fact, University faculty state that there is “indifference to textbook selection and cost. There are few faculty incentives to focus on student savings, particularly when those savings require extensive course redesign.”\textsuperscript{86} In response, the Office of the Provost committed to providing “Course Transformation Grants” which will be distributed to faculty who redesign courses with an eye toward adopting cost-effective resources. For instance, one redesigned course resulted in savings of $24,000 for 300 students, as the instructor moved away from a mandatory $80 textbook and instead found suitable free online resources to use.\textsuperscript{87} The Office focuses incentives on large-enrollment first-year courses to have the greatest possible impact on students.\textsuperscript{88}

\textsuperscript{84} Howle, E. “Affordability of College Textbooks.” California State Auditor, August 2008, p. 61. [http://books.google.com/books?id=FGEXR0qLcL4C&pg=PA61#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=FGEXR0qLcL4C&pg=PA61#v=onepage&q&f=false)

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., p. 51.


\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., p. 6.

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid.
LEVERAGING LIBRARY RESOURCES

While many textbook affordability initiatives attempt to influence faculty choices of required materials, others emphasize using the vast array of resources available through college and university library collections. Libraries stand to have a significant impact on textbook affordability by working with faculty to provide free access to course materials.

An obvious strategy would be to hold copies of required textbooks on reserve at the library, enabling students who do not wish to purchase a textbook to share it with others. However, this can pose a logistical challenge when there are more students than available textbooks during high-demand periods, such prior to examinations and due dates for major assignments. Some libraries alleviate student frustration over the finite copies of textbooks available on reserve by implementing a waiting system with pagers similar to those found in restaurants. Notifying a student when a book is available and assuring them a place in line can enable the student to use waiting times more productively.

One faculty member at the University of South Florida has been recognized for his support of library-available course textbooks. Dr. Autar Kaw of the University’s School of Engineering uses funds from a personal overhead incentive rebate account to purchase 25 copies of the textbook required for one of his courses each year. He places all copies on reserve at the library. Dr. Kaw calls the system “a simple program to help people.” He has made textbooks available in the library for two years and saved each student $100.

California State University (CSU), Dominguez Hills also implemented an institution-wide policy initiative aimed at making textbooks more affordable to students. Naomi Moy, former director of reference services, was appointed program coordinator for Dominguez Hills’ local incarnation of the CSU system’s Affordable Learning Solutions Initiative in 2009. Under the program, Moy expanded the library’s collection of e-books to provide low- and no-cost resources to students. Not only was the e-book collection integral to making students’ education more affordable, it was the only way to keep the CSU, Dominguez Hills library up-to-date and relevant on a low budget: “[T]his was the only way that we get books fast enough and new enough into the library when we didn’t have the staff or the funds...to provide well enough for our students.”

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92 Ibid.
Under the program, Moy examined all courses offered by CSU, Dominguez Hills’ faculty each semester to identify which courses could assign library-held resources to students who could use them for free or at reduced rates. With $108,000 in funding, Moy obtained more than 200 digital textbooks that are available through the campus “ebrary.” The following anecdote illustrates the power of library purchasing and unlimited student access:93

[A] particular textbook for a nursing course was purchased through one of [Moy’s] subscription services for $135 with permanent perpetual unlimited simultaneous access. The e-book was accessed 957 times. The cost for the same title as a physical single book was $38.50. While not each access may be by a unique user, ... the savings is tremendous, amounting to over $10,000.

Unlike most digital textbooks sourced from publishers, these resources have the benefit of being available to students indefinitely. Students can use the library’s e-books on a variety of electronic platforms as well. The program operates as follows. First, faculty submit requests for specific resources to the library. Then, library staff seek options for offering students affordable, online access. Some available titles are even customizable, allowing faculty to pick specific chapters or sections and offer access to only those portions. According to Moy, the program saved students from spending $808,949 at the campus bookstore from fall 2010 to spring 2012.94

There are other, more unconventional benefits of library-supported textbook affordability initiatives. Students who made use of Pasadena City College’s open-access textbook reserve at the library noted the environmental benefits of book-sharing—fewer books purchased equates to fewer resources used to produce new books.95 Additionally, at least one student stated that having the library hold textbooks made his backpack lighter, encouraging him to take an active route to campus by bicycle rather than by car—positively impacting the environment, society, and the student’s personal health.

93 Ibid.
SECTION II: CASE STUDIES OF TEXTBOOK AFFORDABILITY INITIATIVES

In this section, we review textbook affordability initiatives implemented by the California State University system, the state of Florida, and Virginia public institutions of higher education. Each initiative demonstrates a broad commitment to reducing textbook costs for students and uses multiple strategies discussed in Section I.

CALIFORNIA

The California State University (CSU) system supports a variety of textbook affordability initiatives, developed in response to statewide budgetary pressures. Recognizing that annual tuition increases place a significant financial burden on students, the CSU system has implemented several innovative strategies to enable students to save a considerable amount on textbooks each semester.

One recent innovation consists of free digital textbooks for common undergraduate courses. Governor Jerry Brown signed legislation in September 2012 granting students of California’s public colleges and universities free access to open-source digital textbooks for certain courses. The bill requires that a database of free textbooks for 50 of the most common undergraduate courses be established. The database is still under development and will be hosted by a new California Digital Open Source Library. The first free digital textbooks will become available during the 2013-2014 academic year. The program intentionally extends “its impact beyond California’s borders,” as all materials developed will be placed under a Creative Commons license—meaning that faculty at other institutions will be able to use them as well.

The state is also engaged in partnerships to facilitate digital textbook rental programs. CSU negotiated a system-wide partnership with Cengage Learning, CourseSmart, and Follett Higher Education Group to rent more than 5,000 digital textbooks to CSU students. The partnership aims to “ease the financial burden on students by providing access to quality online materials that are priced significantly lower than traditional textbooks.” Students will benefit from savings of 60 percent or more compared to the cost of a newly-printed textbook. The agreement also states that students will have the option of printing their

97 Ibid.
99 Ibid.
digital textbooks, although access to the digital files will expire at the end of each semester. As part of the partnership, the three booksellers also will provide CSU faculty with professional development.101 These sessions are designed to introduce faculty to the learning opportunities presented by digital textbooks and the interactive features of each company’s website.

**AFFORDABLE LEARNING SOLUTIONS INITIATIVE**

These and related CSU programs are part of a larger Affordable Learning Solutions (AL$) Initiative aimed at reducing the cost of textbooks and other learning materials for students.102 Launched in 2010, AL$ leverages the strengths of multiple content providers, including CSU libraries, open educational resources (OER), academic authors, and publishers:103

- **CSU Libraries**: Since the 1990s, the system has leveraged its size and collective demand for digital content to lower the cost of electronic journals and ebooks.
- **Open Educational Resources**: For more than 20 years, the system has provided students and faculty with access to OER through its Multimedia Educational Resources for Learning and Online Teaching (MERLOT) program. The CSU system has leveraged relationships with other California public higher education institutions, along with “other digital libraries, publishers, educational technology companies, and professional societies,” to build a growing collection of free digital materials.104
- **Academic Authoring**: CSU supports faculty in the creation of their own teaching and learning materials by providing access to authoring tools.
- **Publishers**: CSU works with publishers and technology companies to develop new services that “effectively, securely, and affordably deliver digital content” to students. Moreover, through the AL$ website, a digital textbook rental program promotes accessibility and provides approximately 60 percent savings.105

**AL$ recognizes the importance of raising awareness among students and faculty.** Students and faculty need to understand their purchasing options, even if some of those options are not yet available. “Without volume commitments to the adoption of the no/lower cost digital resources, technology and business practices will not be scalable and sustainable.”106 As a result, AL$ has taken several steps, including:107

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101 Ibid.
102 “Welcome to Affordable Learning Solutions.” California State University. http://als.csuprojects.org/
104 Ibid.
105 Ibid.
106 Ibid., p. 4.
107 Bulleted points taken verbatim from: Ibid.
- Developing and implementing systemwide communications plan with Chancellor’s Office Public Affairs and Communications group and stakeholder groups
- Developing and implementing course-specific, online faculty communities for sharing exemplary and affordable instructional practices
- Developing and implementing professional development programs with libraries, academic technology staff, faculty development centers, and student associations.
- Continuing communications to campuses concerning requirements and recommendations for implementing the textbook provisions of the Higher Education Opportunity Act

**AL$ also supports the leadership on individual CSU campuses in designing local textbook affordability policies**, particularly with respect to the use of OER. AL$ further suggests that campus leaders partner with publishers to negotiate modern pricing structures for digital content; bookstores to develop new service models; and technology companies to ensure greater accessibility, security, privacy, and accountability.\(^{108}\)

**The impact of AL$ can be seen on individual CSU campuses.** At CSU, Sacramento, Academic Technology and Creative Services and the Center for Teaching and Learning created a website to keep faculty and students informed of their options in locating low-cost or free textbooks and course content.\(^{109}\) The website also recognizes faculty efforts to reduce textbook costs and share ideas for implementing cost-mitigating strategies.

Meanwhile, at CSU, Fresno (Fresno State), the Kennel Bookstore supports AL$ by:\(^{110}\)

- Partnering with Cengage Learning to provide digital textbooks at up to half off the list price of print textbooks and individual chapters at a minimum cost of $1.99
- Maintaining the lowest revenue margin (23 percent) among CSU and University of California institutions
- Encouraging faculty choosing course materials to take price into consideration
- Initiating a textbook rental program with savings of 45-65 percent compared to standard textbook prices
- Partnering with Chegg.com to make the textbook rental program more robust
- Increasing the share of used textbook purchases (from 31.6 percent of sales in 2006-2007 to 36.5 percent in 2009-2010)

Additionally, Fresno State’s library offers access to a variety of digital textbooks and other learning materials.\(^{111}\)

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\(^{108}\) Ibid.


FLORIDA

TEXTBOOK AFFORDABILITY WORKGROUP

In 2008, Florida passed legislation in support of the federal Higher Education Opportunity Act. The legislation encourages Florida colleges and universities to reduce costs, in general, and increase the affordability of textbooks, in particular.112 A Textbook Affordability Workgroup collected information on textbook price inflation and devised strategies for colleges and universities to pursue in response. The Workgroup noted, however, that institutions alone cannot stem the rising cost of textbooks:

[I]t is important to point out that reform solely focused on policies implemented by the colleges, such as increasing used book sales or developing rental programs, neglects the viewpoint that this may in turn increase the pressure on publishers to revise their products with more frequency in order to capture future sales. Major textbook publishing companies must be willing and collaboratively involved with colleges in efforts to rectify the growing problem of textbook costs.113

The Workgroup stated that a multifaceted approach to textbook affordability is required, as no single strategy will address the issue effectively. Perhaps not surprisingly, the policies and actions recommended by the Workgroup echoed the strategies discussed in Section I. More specifically, in a Final Report issued in December 2009, the Workgroup suggested that:114

- The State Board of Education endorse further exploration of open access textbooks
- The Department of Education’s Division of Florida Colleges initiate a statewide rental program awareness campaign
- Colleges within The Florida College System collectively seek to secure e-textbook licenses in order to provide students access to textbooks at no cost
- Each college within The Florida College System will develop and monitor policies and guidelines for textbook adoption
- The Florida Junior and Community College Student Government Association promote student awareness of ways to minimize textbook costs
- The Florida Legislature should consider exempting textbooks from sales tax

Despite noting that no proven best practices to reduce textbook costs exist, the Workgroup called the above recommendations a reflection of the many “good ideas” implemented by institutions nationwide.

113 Ibid.
114 Ibid., pp. ii-iv.
The Workgroup further emphasized that any plan to reduce textbook costs needs to reflect the input of all stakeholders, including students, faculty, bookstores, libraries, and publishers. Without the input of all affected groups, effective and sustainable solutions will not be found. The following are suggestions from the Workgroup on how each stakeholder group can contribute to textbook affordability initiatives.\footnote{Bulleted points adapted from: Ibid., pp. 6-8.}

- **Students**: Students can create “book-share” programs and sell books to one another for a nominal fee. Students should receive information on how to mitigate textbook costs through brochures included with registration and orientation materials, articles published in student newspapers, and posters placed on campus.

- **Bookstores**: Bookstores should provide used books and run well-organized, well-marketed buyback programs. Bookstores also should ensure faculty understand the importance of on-time requisitions, as early adoption typically results in lower prices. Bookstores also can participate in textbook rental programs, particularly for high-enrollment classes. Finally, bookstores can examine price matching and “low-price guarantee” policies to compete with online competitors.

- **Publishers**: Publishers can reduce costs by offering digital textbooks at lower prices than print versions. Many publishers offer custom publishing services as well. In such cases, faculty customize textbooks by selecting individual modules from a publisher’s content. Printing custom material decreases costs since only necessary materials are included. In fact, “[c]ustom textbooks are consistently lower in cost for large enrollment courses.”\footnote{Ibid., p. 7.} Publishers also may offer loose-leaf, black-and-white, and abbreviated editions of textbooks to students.

- **Libraries**: Libraries can purchase textbooks and place them on reserve. E-reserves are another area of growing interest, since shelf space is a perpetual concern. In the case of e-reserves, students access course materials online through a secure website. Libraries also may promote the use of existing library resources as alternatives to required course materials.

- **Faculty**: Faculty can create custom course packs containing required information at significant cost savings to students. However, course packs rarely can be resold at the end of the semester. Thus, it is also crucial for faculty to submit required textbook lists to the bookstore in a timely fashion to facilitate negotiations with publishers. Moreover, by collaborating, faculty can use a single textbook across several courses, contributing to a greater supply of used books each semester.

**Textbook affordability, however, continues to raise concerns in Florida.** A 2012 survey of Florida students revealed that high textbook costs led 64 percent of respondents to forego purchasing a required textbook.\footnote{“2012 Florida Student Textbook Survey,” Florida Virtual Campus, 2012, p. 8. http://www.openaccesstextbooks.org/pdf/2012_Florida_Student_Textbook_Survey.pdf} Nearly one-quarter (23 percent) reported doing without required textbooks frequently. The survey found that almost all students (97.3 percent)
used one or more approaches to reducing textbook costs. The most popular strategies included shopping at retailers other than the campus bookstore (78 percent), selling used books (66 percent), and buying used books (63 percent). Sharing textbooks with classmates (43 percent) and renting printed textbooks (42 percent) also proved relatively popular. Roughly 29 percent of students surveyed had purchased a digital version of a textbook.\textsuperscript{118} Compared to the survey’s 2010 iteration, use of digital textbooks by Florida’s college and university students is increasing.\textsuperscript{119}

**Other Initiatives**

Florida has implemented an open-access textbook initiative called The Orange Grove. Launched in 2009, the initiative reflects the joint efforts of the Florida Distance Learning Consortium, the Orange Grove Digital Repository, and the University Press of Florida (UPF). The partnership makes available hundreds of textbooks, free of charge and restrictions, to Florida students.\textsuperscript{120} Resources can be integrated with institutions’ learning management systems and altered as needed by faculty.\textsuperscript{121} In addition, UPF provides rigorous peer review of all hosted material.\textsuperscript{122} Nonetheless, the previously-cited 2012 survey notes the need to raise awareness of open-source resources among Florida’s college and university students. Nearly 73 percent of students reported never having heard of open textbooks.\textsuperscript{123}

Early adoption represents another key element of Florida’s efforts in relation to textbook affordability. In 2009, the State Board of Education adopted a requirement that faculty submit textbook adoptions to campus bookstores no later than 45 days prior to the first day of classes.\textsuperscript{124} This provides campus bookstores with sufficient time to negotiate lower prices with publishers and find a sufficient supply of used textbooks to meet student demand.

**Individual Campus Initiatives**

A review of Florida’s colleges and universities points to the use of multiple textbook cost-mitigating strategies. Florida A&M University (FAMU) emphasizes the role that faculty play in reducing textbook costs. While FAMU respects “academic freedom and allows faculty to make individualized choices,” the University expects faculty to consider price, longevity, and availability when selecting course materials.\textsuperscript{125} University guidelines dictate that faculty “strive to minimize the costs of textbooks … to the extent feasible” and use as much of the

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., p. 9.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., p. 12.
\textsuperscript{121} “The Orange Grove.” Florida Virtual Campus. http://florida.theorangegrove.org/og/access/home.do
content in required textbooks as possible. FAMU also cites the importance of early textbook adoption and requires textbook submission by October 1 for spring semesters and April 1 for fall semesters. On the one hand, FAMU discourages faculty from selecting new editions and bundling items. On the other hand, FAMU encourages faculty teaching sections of the same course to select common textbooks. Common selections raise resale values and ensure a robust supply of used textbooks for future students. Finally, FAMU recommends making copies of required texts available in the library, either in a printed or a digital format.

Similar to FAMU, Florida State University (FSU) requires early textbook submission by faculty. FSU policy dictates that faculty report textbook adoptions no later than 10 days prior to the start of course registration for the semester in question. Moreover, faculty must justify the use of new editions and bundled packages, in an effort to ensure their use is academically necessary. FSU also prohibits faculty from receiving payments or other incentives from publishers in exchange for selecting a particular textbook. Department chairs are responsible for obtaining full compliance with the policies. Meanwhile, FSU assists students who cannot afford textbooks by making small loan disbursements through the Office of Financial Aid.

Lastly, State College of Florida implements several textbook policies in line with those adopted by other public institutions in the state. Textbooks and other instructional resources offered as part a bundle by the campus bookstore must be required by faculty. The campus bookstore offers used textbooks for as many classes as possible and encourages faculty to provide digital textbooks, loose-leaf editions, and customized versions as options for students. At present, the campus bookstore also is in the process of starting a textbook rental program.

**DAYTONA STATE COLLEGE**

In 2009, Daytona State College (DSC) received a grant from the U.S. Department of Education’s Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education to study four textbook distribution models: print textbook purchase, print textbook rental, e-textbook rental, and e-textbook and netbook rental. The two-year pilot program represented the first large-scale study of student and faculty perceptions of alternative textbook distribution models at a large, community needs-oriented institution. Students in several English and Economics courses participated in the study, aimed at identifying the impact of alternative

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126 Ibid.
127 Ibid., p. 2.
129 Ibid.
textbook distribution models on academic performance, student retention, and student and faculty preferences.

DSC serves a diverse student population across six campuses. In addition, more than 30,000 students participate in DSC’s distance-learning program. In light of DSC’s open admissions policy, some incoming students complete pre-enrollment developmental courses to close knowledge gaps. The alternative textbook pilot program, therefore, involved students with both “disparate educational goals and levels of attainment.”

A survey of DSC students revealed that textbook costs significantly influence academic choices and achievement. Of 327 respondents,

- 83 percent reported usually purchasing the required textbooks for their classes.
- 29 percent admitted to not purchasing a required textbook at least once because of its cost.
- 24 percent blamed textbook expenses for taking fewer credit hours than desired during one or more semesters.
- 15 percent identified textbook expenses as an influence on choice of major.
- 59 percent confirmed that the typical college textbook (new or used) costs upward of $74.

Twelve faculty members and more than 1,250 students participated in the pilot program. The following paragraph describes how participating students obtained textbooks.

Students in control sections purchased a printed book from their source of choice, while students in the print rental sections got their textbook either from the circulation desk in the campus library or from the [Bachelor of Applied Science] Club in the co-op model. In the e-text rental sections, students purchased an access code at the college bookstore and then registered online for access to the e-text. Students in the netbook rental sections registered rented e-texts online and borrowed a Dell netbook from the college’s IT staff. (Before distributing the netbooks, staff gave a short presentation on the device’s specifications and features, including the e-text’s highlighting and annotating tools.)

Students with e-textbooks often faced connectivity challenges. At times, the DSC network reported capacity constraints. Publishers’ websites also experienced technical difficulties. Faculty encouraged students to download e-textbook materials to ensure offline access. However, downloading is not always permitted in limited-access or rental scenarios. Faculty coped with occasional internet outages by displaying e-textbooks on an overhead projector to enable the entire class to view materials. Students with e-textbooks also reported lacking basic computing skills. Such challenges possibly reflect the demographics

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132 Ibid.
133 Bulleted points taken verbatim from: Ibid.
134 Ibid.
135 Ibid.
of DSC’s student population. One member of DSC’s faculty noted the steep learning curve for some students, “especially those older students or students without much [previous] opportunity to use technology.”

**The use of e-textbooks even influenced students’ course selections.** A number of students, on learning that print textbooks would be unavailable, either switched sections or dropped a class altogether. When asked why, most students did not feel they had the computer skills needed to use an e-textbook effectively. Students reported having difficulty reading from a screen and feeling inconvenienced by the digital format. Poor interactive features also caused many students to view e-textbooks less favorably than print versions. Some students admitted having read less of the digital textbook than they would have in the case of a print version. In fact, more than half of the students using e-textbooks disagreed or strongly disagreed with the following statement: “I enjoyed reading and referencing my textbook from a computer screen in place of a hard copy.” Such attitudes aside, the majority of students would consider using an e-textbook if the cost remained roughly $35.

**In sections with e-textbooks, faculty cited a need to alter their teaching practices.** Thus, a change in textbook format potentially impacts course design, lectures, assignments, and learning outcomes. For example, faculty teaching courses with e-textbooks confronted the following types of questions:

- What role should e-texts and e-readers play in the classroom—in lectures, discussions, and collaborative exercises?
- Should these technologies simply be available to students when completing their usual assignments? Or should assignments be redesigned in accordance with the skills these technologies develop and the tools they include?
- How might e-texts and e-readers motivate students to go beyond mere reading?
- How might they help create and strengthen student learning communities?
- Could e-texts and e-readers serve effectively as gateways to other technological tools such as clickers and backchannels, among others?

**In contrast, students and faculty in the print textbook rental program expressed strong support for the concept.** According to faculty, more students had a copy available in class, facilitating instruction. Students, not surprisingly, appreciated the cost savings. The savings perhaps allow students to take more courses and finish degrees sooner. As one student noted, “I feel that I can take more classes when I don’t have to spend half the cost of a class for a book.” Nearly 40 percent of the students with print textbook rentals stated that “[w]ithout the opportunity to rent my textbooks for $25, the financial burden of attending

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136 Ibid.
137 Ibid.
138 Ibid.
139 Ibid.
140 Bulleted points taken verbatim from: Ibid.
college might prevent me from finishing my degree.”\textsuperscript{141} Renters also liked not worrying about recouping expenses through textbook buyback programs at the end of the semester. Guaranteed availability of the appropriate version of a textbook represented an added benefit. Students did express some dissatisfaction with print textbook rentals, however. Some students wanted to annotate pages during the course, whereas other students voiced concerns regarding their inability to refer to the textbook again in future semesters.

A post-pilot study acknowledges that \textit{e-textbooks have evolved rapidly since the pilot program began}, and the authors appear “struck by the way many of the difficulties our e-text rental and netbook rental sections encountered have already been solved by ongoing product development.”\textsuperscript{142} Despite mixed reactions to the use of e-textbooks, in light of such developments, DSC is “moving forward with campus-wide e-text adoption” as a response to “prohibitively expensive textbooks.”\textsuperscript{143}

\textbf{VIRGINIA}

Public colleges and universities in Virginia have adopted strategies to ease the financial burden of textbook purchases on students. Virginia’s textbook affordability initiative predates passage of the Higher Education Opportunity Act. In 2005, the Virginia General Assembly tasked the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SHEV) with studying the policies and practices of state public institutions related to the buying and selling of textbooks.\textsuperscript{144} The resulting report, published in 2006, identified broad strategies used at several institutions, as well as a considerable number of unique programs, aimed at helping students access textbooks more affordably.

\textbf{Many of the study’s recommendations centered on faculty choice.}\textsuperscript{145} For example, the study encourages faculty to avoid using new editions unless absolutely necessary and not to require bundled packages unless all elements of the bundle will be used. In addition, submitting textbook selections as early as ten to 12 weeks before the start of a semester will ensure the availability of both new and used textbooks. The study further advises faculty to consider creating custom materials, a practice which “curtails student complaints that the instructor only uses a few of the chapters in a given book.”\textsuperscript{146} However, the report acknowledges that there is little to no market for used custom textbooks, thereby limiting the viability of the custom option.

\textbf{In addition to using digital textbooks and introducing textbook rental programs, the study also suggests several innovative strategies,} such as encouraging publishers to send desk

\textsuperscript{141} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{142} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., p. 3.
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., p. 5.
copies of textbooks to serve as reference copies in libraries; introducing state tax credits for textbooks; and offering financing programs that allow students to pay for textbook purchases over the course of a semester.\(^{147}\)

SCHEV found that most of Virginia’s public colleges and universities “have endeavored to take proactive steps to reduce [textbook] costs.”\(^{148}\) The most common strategies include encouraging faculty to submit textbook adoptions to the bookstore in a timely manner and fostering a robust used textbook market. The following list, meanwhile, reflects various strategies deemed “innovative:”\(^{149}\)

- Virginia Commonwealth University facilitates competition through **sharing the campus bookstore’s textbook adoption listing with private retailers** upon their request. Such competition often leads to a reduction in book prices.
- To encourage faculty to provide timely textbook adoptions, Virginia Commonwealth University awards **textbook scholarships to the best performing academic departments**. The departments then award the scholarships to the students of their choice.
- Old Dominion University has **formed a Bookstore Advisory Committee, comprised of faculty and students**, to encourage communication between faculty and bookstore management in an effort to better serve the needs of students.
- The University of Virginia’s College at Wise **provides a payment-plan option** whereby students make payments for their textbooks throughout the semester rather than paying all at once at the beginning of the semester.
- James Madison University offers a **raffle contest each semester to reward faculty** for submitting their book adoptions in a timely manner.
- Radford University instituted the “Deal Program” whereby **any book with a “Deal” sticker is guaranteed to be bought back** at 50% of the original retail price, regardless of whether the bookstore has already secured all of the used books needed in that title for the next semester.
- To increase textbook availability, the Virginia State University **library maintains a copy of textbooks for basic courses**, such as English, History, and Psychology, as well as older editions of many other textbooks.
- The Virginia Tech bookstore **discounts textbooks by 10%** of the suggested retail price of new books. Used books are marked down to 75% of the original price before applying the 10% Virginia Tech discount.
- Pepsi Bottling Company sponsors a **textbook scholarship program** at Mary Washington University. Those departments at the university with the highest on-time adoptions are randomly chosen to receive the scholarships. The departments then choose the student recipients of the scholarships.

\(^{147}\) Ibid., pp. 4-5.

\(^{148}\) Ibid., p. 2.

\(^{149}\) Bulleted points taken verbatim from: Ibid., pp. 2-3.
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