

Marta Brunner, College Librarian, Scribner Library

A study coordinated by the Oberlin Group - Open and Equitable Working Group



Research Questions:

- 1. How much money do students spend on textbooks and required course materials?
- 2. What strategies do students use to reduce textbook costs?
- 3. How are students affected by textbook costs?





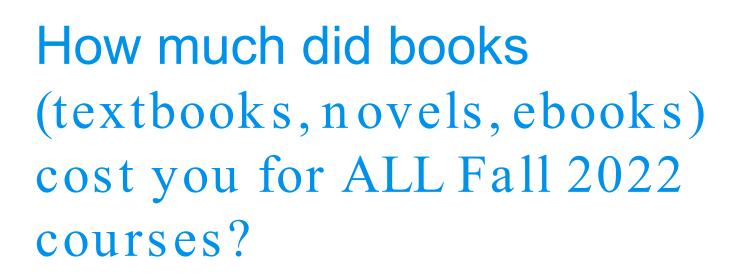
Who Participated:

- Bates College (Krystie Wilfong and Laura Conforte)
- Colby College (Hilary Baribeau)
- Connecticut College (Jessica McCullough and Ariela McCaffrey)
- Gettysburg College (Janelle Wertzberger and Mary Elmquist)
- Haverford College (Norm Medeiros)
- Lafayette College (Angela Perkins)
- Macalester College (Louann Terveer and Marina Ito)
- Middlebury College (Terry Simpkins)
- Mount Holyoke College (Rachael Smith)
- Skidmore College (Marta Brunner)
- University of the South (Patricia Dover)



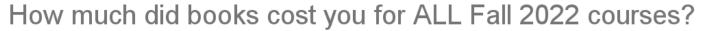
Methodology

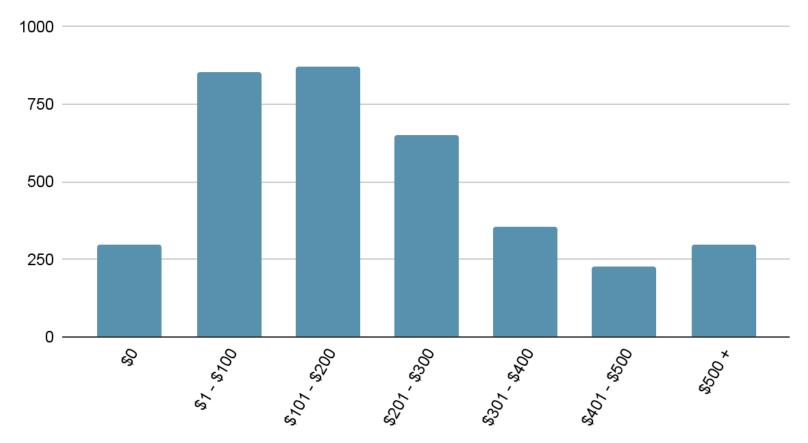
- 9 survey questions (all optional)
- 8 demographic questions (all optional)
- 1 prize drawing question (optional per school)
- Qualtrics platform used
- Administered in September 2022 (open for 3 weeks)
- Survey data was cleaned and prepared for analysis using Exceland SPSS. (Sharon Burch, PhD)











Spending and Class Year		
Class Year	Mean Spent (USD)	
First Year	\$271.15	
Sophomore	\$246.95	
Junior	\$222.40	
Senior	\$193.96	
All Students	\$238.92	

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Average cost of Fall 2022 Textbooks (First-gen status)

	Mean*
First-generation students	\$312.94
Non-first-generation students	\$217.66

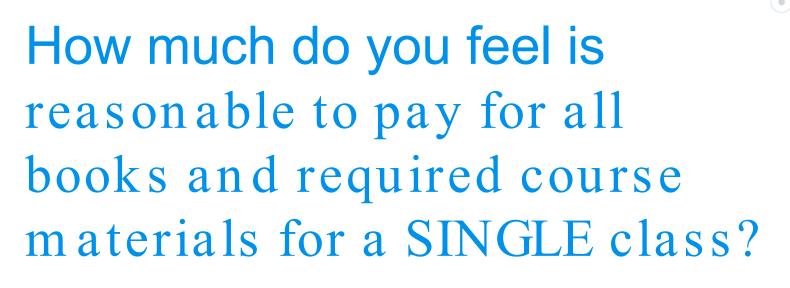
Average cost of Fall 2022 Textbooks (Pell status)

	Mean*
Pell Grant recipients	\$259.67
Non Pell Grant recipients	\$234.10

^{*}chi-squared test indicates means differ significantly



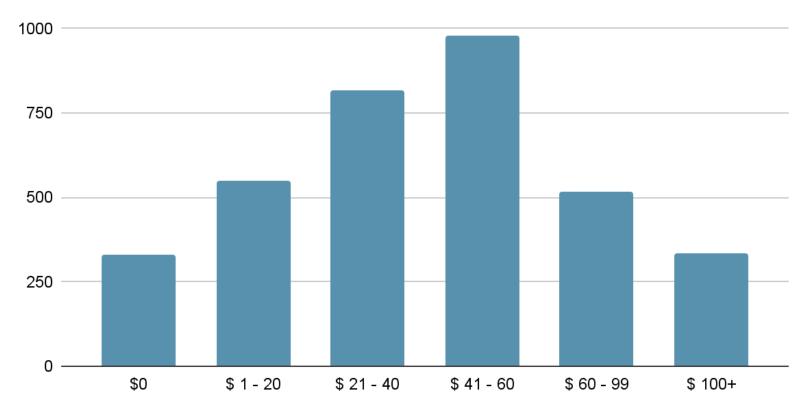
I needed to put in extra hours of work to afford my textbooks.







How much do you think is reasonable to pay for books for one class?





Student perceived reasonable cost for single class (First-gen status)

	Mean*	
First-generation students	\$77.80	
Non-first-generation students	\$58.26	
Student perceived reasonable cost for single class (Pell status)		
	Mean*	
Pell Grant recipients	\$68.71	
Non Pell Grant recipients	\$60.43	

^{*}chi-squared test indicates means differ significantly



I can purchase what materials I need, as long as textbooks aren't multiple of hundreds of dollars... however MANY of my peers who pay for their own supplies absolutely cannot afford it.

What measures have you taken to reduce your required book costs for the Fall 2022 semester?



	Measures Taken to Reduce Costs	All Responses	Skidmore
	Buy books from a source other than the campus bookstore	42.5%	58%
	Buy used copies from the campus bookstore	39.9%	7
	Only purchase some of the required books	32.6%	
	Rent a copy from the campus bookstore	27.7%	10%
	Rent books from a source other than the campus bookstore	26.6%	
	Share books with classmate	23.5%	
	Check out course materials from the library	23.1%	
	Use a reserve copy from the campus library	21.9%	10%
	Other	17.6%	
	Worked additional hours at my job to pay for books	15.8%	
	Sell used books	15.0%	
	Buy lifetime access to a digital version of a book	13.1%	
7.	I do not attempt to reduce book costs	5.5%	



Measures Taken to Reduce Costs	All Responses
Buy books from a source other than the campus bookstore	42.5%
Buy used copies from the campus bookstore	39.9%
Only purchase some of the required books	32.6%
Other	17.6%





Measures Taken to Reduce Costs (First-gen status)

	First-gen	NOT First- gen	Difference
Check out course materials from the library	30.2%	21.1%	9.1
Worked additional hours at my job to pay for books	21.9%	13.9%	8.0
Use a reserve copy from the campus library	27.8%	20.0%	7.8

Measures Taken to Reduce Costs (Pell status)

	Pell	NOT Pell	Difference
Worked additional hours at my job to pay for books	23.8%	13.3%	10.5
Check out course materials from the library	29.1%	21.7%	7.4
Use a reserve copy from the campus library	27.0%	20.3%	6.7



Worked on campus to pay for books



Downloaded them illegally

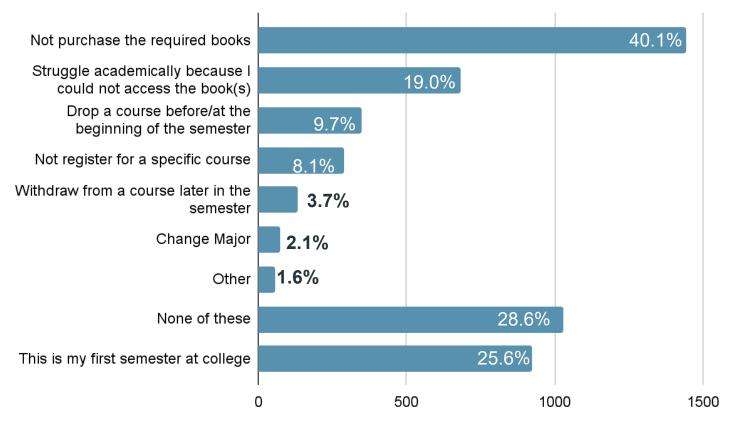
Use free online resources to get the textbooks in pdf versions

Purchasing from local bookstores to reduce shipping costs I asked people who previously took the course for their used books

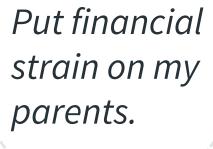




In your ENTIRE time at your current college, has the cost of required books caused you



Cost of required books caused you to (First-gen status)				
	First-gen	NOT First-gen	Difference	
Struggle academically because I could not access the book(s)	29.9%	15.6%	14.3	
Drop a course before/at the beginning of the semester	20.1%	6.5%	13.6	
Not purchase the required books	45.1%	39.1%	6.0	
Cost of required books caused you to (Pell status)				
Cost of required books caused y	ou to (Pell	status)		
Cost of required books caused y	ou to (Pell	status) NOT Pell	Difference	
Struggle academically because I could not access the book(s)	,		Difference 18.2	
Struggle academically because I could not access the	Pell	NOT Pell		





It means cutting back on other things in my household.

Use a loan to pay for books.

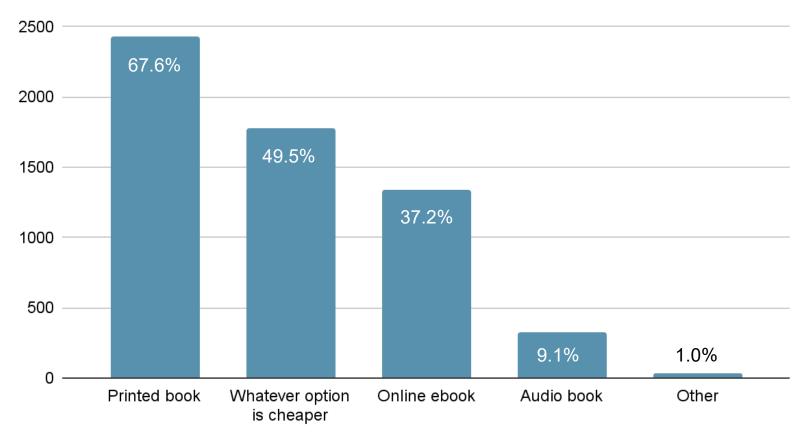








Book format preference





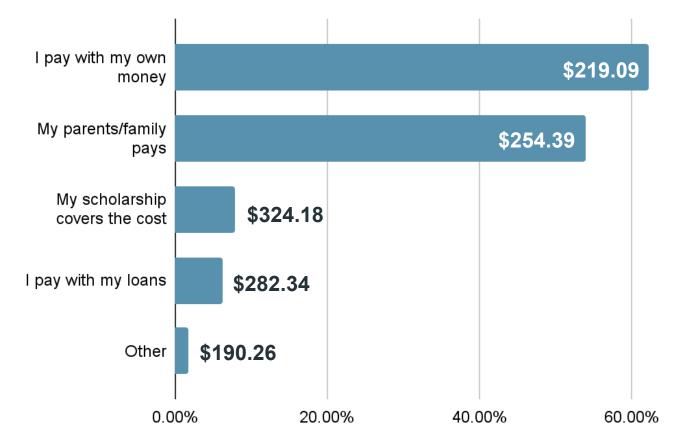
If it's a book I might keep, I get a new copy. If it's something I don't care about, I rent an e-book. Ebooks are my preferred textbook as I can search them.



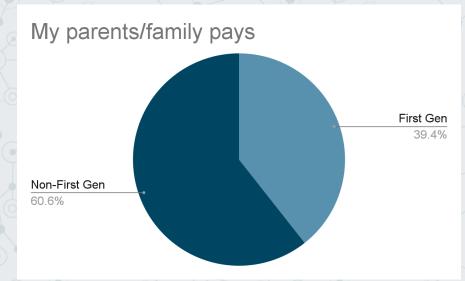




How do you typically pay for textbooks?





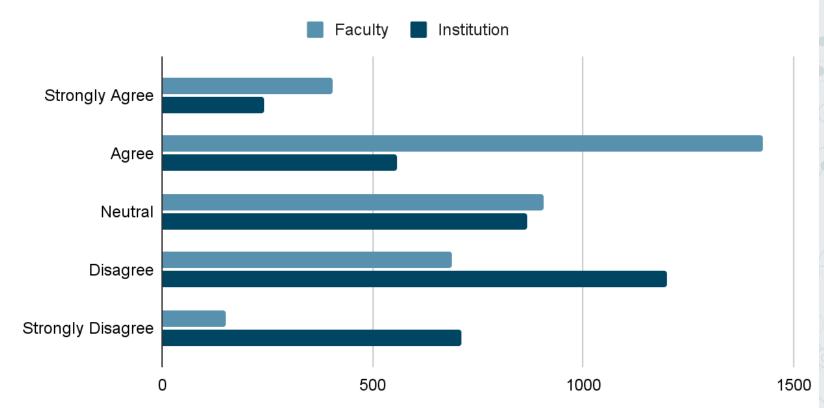




I think my professors/ institution pay attention to the cost of course materials and work to make them more affordable.

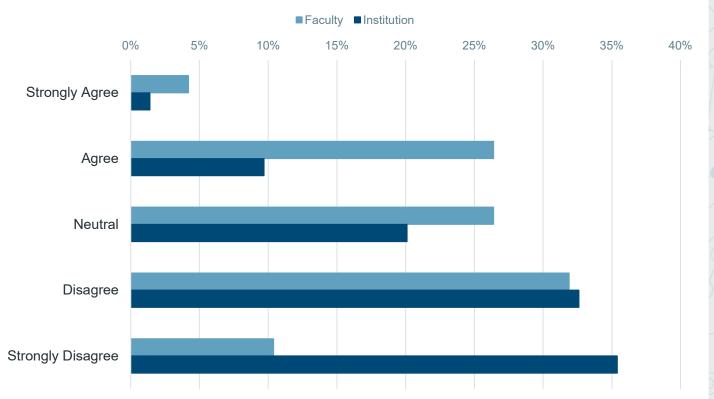


I think my professors/institution pay attention to the cost of course materials and work to make them more affordable.





Skidmore: I think my professors/institution pay attention to the cost of course materials and work to make them more affordable.



(66)

While I think some professors are very conscious about book costs (mainly younger professors who have recently been in school), in my experience there are more professors that do not seem to make the effort.



Skid Chem department is working to move away from making kids buy textbooks by using free online options or scanning the sections necessary. It's a huge stress off my back because having to pay for textbooks means buying less food/other basic needs.



Key Takeaways

- First-year students, first generation students, and Pell Grant recipients suffer the largest consequences from textbook costs.
- As students become "savvier", the methods they use to acquire course materials expand, including extra-legal activities.
- \$50 is the cutoff for what students view as affordable.
- While some individual faculty are addressing book costs, institutional-level actions are needed to accelerate student impact.



What can WE do?

- Library reserves program for all course-required textbooks
- ✓ Peer-to-peer sharing or student exchanges
- ✓ Allowing students to acquire older editions
 - Institutional support for faculty who use openly licensed materials instead of costly commercial textbooks
 - Institutional support at time of tenure and promotion for faculty who use open educational practices
 - Course marking for free or low-cost books



Beware industry "solutions"

- Digital books
- "Inclusive access" programs https://www.inclusiveaccess.org/





Thanks!

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This work, "Fall 2022 Student Textbook Survey Results - Skidmore," is adapted from "Fall 2022 Student Textbook Survey Results" by Wilfong, Wertzberger, Elmquist, and Conforte, used under <u>CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.</u> "Fall 2022 Student Textbook Survey Results - Skidmore" is licensed under <u>CC BY-NC-SA 4.0</u> by Skidmore College.