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The College Bookstore

Required Materials Not Fully Used

Suggestions for Improving Textbook Affordability

Help students sell and swap
Technology in the classroom
Better communication of what materials will be needed in the future
Make course readers optional, printable, or free
Earlier notice of required materials
Use of older editions
Expand Add/Drop dates
Departmental textbook lists
High cost of supplies for certain majors

Stress and Anxiety Caused by the High Cost of Course Materials

Complete Responses
Executive Summary

The Student Textbook Spending Survey was administered by the College Library during the spring 2020 semester in collaboration with the Diplomatic Congress (DipCon) and in consultation with the Committee on Instructional and Research Services. The 2019 Faculty Course Materials Survey was conducted at the end of the previous semester. The surveys grew out of a textbook affordability initiative begun in February of 2019 in response to an open letter to the Faculty Council by members of DipCon’s Academic Life Committee pleading for help with the problems that skyrocketing textbook costs were creating for an increasing number of F&M students.

In their letter, the Academic Life Committee specifically mentioned their hope that the newly hired Scholarly Communications Librarian, Christopher Barnes, would work with students and faculty on possible solutions. Barnes, whose primary responsibilities include advocating for the usage of open educational resources (OER) and open access (OA) to scholarly publications, met with Yousra Chaabane ’19 and Ruby Fries ’20 to discuss ways that DipCon and the College Library could partner in an ongoing effort to ensure that, to quote the open letter, “a student at Franklin & Marshall should never have to drop a class, or have their ability to keep up with the pace of the class impeded upon by the financial barriers which textbooks can represent.”

The survey ran from 30 January to 13 March, 2020. All first- and second-year students were emailed directly on the day the survey opened and reminder emails were sent on 9 March. Flyers with a QR code link to the survey were hung around campus and representatives from the Academic Life Committee of the Diplomatic Congress staffed a table in the student center to solicit responses during the weeks of 3-7 February and 2-6 March (Open Education Week). The survey was also promoted via the College’s social media accounts and a lunch-and-learn event held during Uncommon Hour on 3 March.
A total of 406 responses were received, the vast majority (361) coming from first-year and second-year students. 193 out of 617 first-year students completed the survey, a response rate of 31%. 168 out of 564 second-year students completed the survey, a response rate of 30%. During the final two weeks of the survey, the campus was dealing with the COVID-19 crisis and the response rate likely suffered as a result.

The results of the survey show that many F&M students are spending less than the $600 a semester which most private, four-year institutions tell their students to budget for books and supplies. 86% of all respondents spent less than $300 on required books and access codes in the Spring 2020 semester. However, many are doing this by not purchasing all the required course materials and employing a number of affordability strategies. Some of those strategies, like utilizing print copies placed on reserve at the College Library, are impossible in an online environment and others may soon no longer be an option due to changes in the publishing industry. The many students who save significant money by purchasing used, print copies of textbooks, for example, will not be able to continue doing so as commercial publishers switch to a rental-only model so they can eliminate the losses they incur to the used textbook market.

43% of all respondents went without one or two required books or access codes and 14% went without three or more. Among first-year students, 41% went without one or two and 13% went without three or more. Among second-year students, 46% went without one or two and 11% went without three or more. This means that the expenditures on course materials reported in this survey are likely artificially low.

Many F&M students also cut costs for books and supplies by employing various affordability strategies: renting when they would prefer to buy, getting an ebook when

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they would prefer print, searching for used copies, borrowing books from the College Library, and sharing or swapping with other students. Some of these affordability measures, like swapping and sharing or using print reserves at the College Library, are impossible to replicate in an online environment. Others, like acquiring used copies, will eventually be eliminated due to the industry-wide move among publishers to only rent out their books rather than sell them. 14% of respondents are spending more than $300 a semester, sometimes 2 or 3 times what the majority of their peers are spending.

While most respondents did not report experiencing any of the most common adverse effects on their academic experience as a result of high course material costs, a significant number indicated that those costs had led them to not register for certain courses (11%), earn a poor grade because they could not afford to get a book or access code (10%), or drop or withdraw from a course (8%). This supports the conclusion that, in any given semester, approximately 10% of our students are facing the brunt and feeling the negative effects of soaring course material prices. For many of those 200+ students, class schedule, course requirements, registration window, the used textbook market, bookstore policies, and their instructors’ choice of materials conspire to create a bill for books and access codes which can be two to four times more expensive than the respondent average of about $225 a semester.

But the adverse effects are not limited to such quantifiable metrics. Given the sometimes extraordinary total costs, the unpredictability of the marketplace (in terms of price, availability, and format), and the inexperience of most students at shopping for their own course materials, it should not be surprising that several respondents reported experiencing significant stress and anxiety as a result. This is also in keeping with the latest F&M Campus Climate Survey, which found affording “Books/Course Materials” to be the most common cause of financial hardship with just over 65% of respondents (n=284) selecting it from a list including “Tuition” and “Food,” which
came in second and third, respectively. Students from low-income households and first-generation students often feel these effects the most because they are less likely to have the experience and get the guidance which can be key for finding ways to lower the total cost of course materials.

The final question of the survey asked respondents to share any other relevant information about their experience with obtaining course materials while a student at F&M. Of the 80 substantive responses, more than a quarter (22) mentioned the bookstore and only one was not explicitly negative. 16 of those 22 responses noted that the prices at the bookstore were higher than at other retailers, while other comments focused on problems with their policies and inventory. Students also complained about being asked to acquire an expensive text of which only a small portion was actually read or referenced in the course. Several respondents offered suggestions for ways of reducing the cost burden for students.

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Key Findings

Infographic of Key Findings

Link:  
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jeyXythQ1NcSBBsG_DPq9t7ulzdyAZLc/view?usp=sharing

Total expenditure

86% of all respondents spent less than $300 on required books and access codes in the Spring 2020 semester.

- 48% of first-year respondents spent between $100 and $200 and 22% spent between $200 and $300
- 36% of second-year respondents spent between $100 and $200 and 32% spent between $200 and $300
- 14% of respondents spent more than $300, with 9% reporting spending $300-$400 and 3% spending $400-$500.

From the 2019 Faculty Survey: Only 65% of respondents try to keep the total cost of course materials for a given class under a certain dollar amount. Of those respondents, approximately 85% try to keep costs under $100.

Going without required books and codes

57% of all respondents went without at least one required book or access code due to cost.

- 43% of all respondents went without one or two required books or access codes
- 14% of all respondents went without three or more
- 41% of respondents from the class of 2023 (first-year students) went without one or two required materials and 13% went without three or more
46% of respondents from the class of 2022 (second-year students) went without one or two required materials and 11% went without three or more.

From the 2019 Faculty Survey: more than 85% of respondents estimated that 20% or fewer students typically go without a required book and 65% placed that number at 10% or fewer.

Affordability measures

More than 99% of respondents employed at least one of the affordability measures listed.

- The most popular strategies among all respondents included (#1) renting when they would prefer to buy, (#2) buying used copies, and (#3) getting an ebook when they would prefer a print copy.
- Other popular measures included (#4) sharing books with classmates, (#5) borrowing copies from the College Library, and (#6) swapping books with other students.
- 7 of the 28 respondents who selected “Other” for the question about affordability measures (Q6) mentioned shopping at Amazon.com in their text entry. 16 of those 28 respondents mentioned that the B&N College Bookstore was too expensive.

From the 2019 Faculty Survey: less than 70% of respondents ‘Always’ place book orders through the B&N College Bookstore. 34% of respondents require works they believe to be overpriced/unaffordable, 27% require works of which they assign less than half, and 21% require works which they are actively trying to replace.
Adverse academic effects of high costs

While a significant number of respondents reported experiencing one or more negative impacts on their student experience from the high cost of course materials, the majority reported not having experienced any (Q7). Most students who reported an adverse effect on their academic experience indicated that it impacted their course selection, grades, and whether they dropped or withdrew from a course:

- 11% of respondents reported that the cost of course materials had led them to “Not register for a certain course”
- 10% of respondents reported that the cost of course materials caused them to “Earn a poor grade because you could not afford to get a book or access code”
- 8% of respondents reported that the cost of course materials had led them to “Drop or withdraw from a course”

The negative impact of high costs goes beyond such quantifiable metrics, however, and many students shared personal stories about the stress and anxiety they can cause (Q8). The following two anecdotes are representative but also clearly demonstrate the connection to coursework:

- As a first gen and a low-income student who financially supports herself since her parents are struggling to make ends meet, textbooks costs have made me reach out to professors to see if they can lend a book or provide extensions until I was able to get an access code for the class. (51)
- I hope professors become aware of some of the pain low-income students go through in trying to find outside sources for purchasing books and stressing about not getting them in time to do the assignments. (85)

From the 2019 Faculty Survey: More than 70% of respondents said that they are ‘Never’ (34%) or ‘Rarely’ (37%) asked by students whether they really need to get all of the required materials.
Comparing first-and second-year student responses

- **Total expenditure:** First-year students spent an average of $197 while second-year students spent an average of $206.
- **Going without required books and codes:** Among first-year students, 41% went without one or two and 13% went without three or more. Among second-year students, 46% went without one or two and 11% went without three or more.
- **Affordability measures:** the two most popular affordability measures among first- and second-year respondents were (1) renting when they would prefer to buy and (2) buying used copies from places other than the college bookstore. The only difference between responses from students in the class of 2022 and 2023, in terms of ranking, is for third place. First-year respondents rank getting an ebook third and buying a used copy from the bookstore fourth. For second-year respondents, the rankings are reversed.
- **Adverse academic effects of cost:** Differences between the two classes were relatively minor in this regard. A slightly larger percentage of first-year respondents (8.45%) had to drop or withdraw from a course than second-year respondents (5.41%). And a slightly larger percentage of second-year respondents (10.27%) reported earning a poorer grade than first-year respondents (7.51%).

Comparing trends in majors and divisions

- The fact that most responses were from first- and second-year students means that data on majors is speculative. By far the most commonly selected choice for major was “Undecided/undeclared” (n=125). Also, students were allowed to select more than one major and no accounting was made for double majors.
- A sampling of between 54 and 59 students from the three divisions (Figure 4.5) supports the popular understanding that students in the natural sciences spend
the most on textbooks and access codes (avg=$248), followed by students in the social sciences (avg=$217). Humanities majors spend the least (avg=$201), a result of the cheaper list price of many required texts (novels, nonfiction) and the greater numbers of used copies in circulation. This is also borne out in some of the concluding comments provided in response to Question 8: “It’s much easier for me as an English major to find my books for free online. I can often use websites that have ebooks or PDFs, and my professors also tend to be more lax about electronics in class. It’s an advantage that a lot of other majors don’t have, especially STEM students” (A42).

- Even though many Humanities majors are able to find cheaper course material options, this is not always possible and not the case for all courses and majors. For example, some of the highest costs are associated with courses in art history and studio art. Because of the need for many high-resolution images which are mostly under copyright and require publishers to pay licensing fees to reproduce them, new art history texts can be among the most expensive. Similarly, the high list price and lack of used options can make the necessary supplies for studio art classes very costly: “Art majors/minors have a huge expense for materials. It makes it harder to participate in class when you don’t have the materials you need to succeed. For example, professors recommend you buy master grade paint because if you buy student grade paint the quality is really poor and very hard to work with because there is little to no pigment. However, master grade paint is really really expensive. Maybe the school could provide some supplies to help us out. PLEASE.” (Q8.A56).

- Lastly, some of the most expensive course materials and many of the most exasperated comments in this survey are associated with language courses. While the total cost of textbooks can be lessened by using the same book across multiple semesters, this is not always possible and students still find the access codes and costs associated with practice exercises too expensive (see Q8 answers 20, 60, 64).
Acknowledgements

This survey and the textbook affordability initiative from which it sprang would not have been possible without the initiative and hard work of the Diplomatic Congress, its Academic Life Committee, and especially Yousra Chaabane ’19, Ruby Fries ’20, and Luke Belge ’22.

Franklin & Marshall College’s Institutional Review Board approved this survey on 14 January 2020 (HSS #R_10ZVNE92AFHffWO) and the Office of Institutional Research provided the data necessary for its dissemination to the student body.

Scott Vine, Director of the College Library, oversaw the proposal and creation of the survey as well as the analysis of the results. Louise LoBello, Research & Collections Management Specialist, reviewed drafts of this report, assisted with the data visualizations, and created the accompanying infographic.
Questions

Q2 - Class Year

Chart 2.1 Responses by Class Year

Table 2.2 Responses by Class Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Year</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2023</td>
<td>47.54%</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>41.38%</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>6.65%</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>4.43%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q3 - Major(s)

Chart 3.1 Responses by Major

Only those majors selected by at least 4 students are represented in this chart (92% of responses). Also, the fact that most responses were from first-year and second-year students means that data on majors is speculative, majors typically being declared at the end of a student’s second year. Students were allowed to select more than one major and no accounting was made for double majors.
Q4 - How much did you spend on required books and access codes this semester?

Chart 4.1 Total Spending

- $100-$200: 164
- $200-$300: 116
- Less than $100: 68
- $300-$400: 37
- $400-$500: 12
- $500-$600: 6
- $600-$700: 2
- More than $1000: 1
Table 4.2 Total Spending

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than $100</td>
<td>16.75%</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100 - $200</td>
<td>40.39%</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$200 - $300</td>
<td>28.57%</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$300 - $400</td>
<td>9.11%</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$400 - $500</td>
<td>2.96%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$500 - $600</td>
<td>1.48%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$600 - $700</td>
<td>0.49%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$700 - $800</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$800 - $900</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$900 - $1000</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than $1000</td>
<td>0.25%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.3: First-Year and Second-Year Student Spending

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Class of 2022</th>
<th></th>
<th>Class of 2023</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than $100</td>
<td>$100 - $200</td>
<td>15.47%</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$200 - $300</td>
<td>36.30%</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>48.18%</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>$300 - $400</td>
<td>32.14%</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>22.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$400 - $500</td>
<td>11.30%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$500 - $600</td>
<td>2.97%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$600 - $700</td>
<td>1.19%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$700 - $800</td>
<td>0.59%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>$800 - $900</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>$900 - $1000</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than</td>
<td>$100 - $200</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1000</td>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4 Average Expenditure by Class Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2023</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>$38050</td>
<td>$197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>$34600</td>
<td>$206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>$4850</td>
<td>$180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>$3500</td>
<td>$194</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Averages were calculated by multiplying the number of responses for a given dollar range by the median of the range (e.g. $100 - $200 = $150 x number of responses), adding those numbers, and then dividing that number by the total number of responses for a given class year.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>$228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>$268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Sciences</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Average $248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>$213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>$221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>Average $217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Studies</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>$193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art &amp; Art History</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>$275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English: Creative Writing</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>$172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English: Literature</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>$183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film &amp; Media Studies</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>$225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>$150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>$230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>$183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Average $201</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Averages were calculated by first grouping departments by division to get roughly the same number of respondents per division (54, 55, 59), then calculating the average expenditure per major using the same formula as in Table 4.4, (Example: Spanish - 12 majors: 3 Less than $100 = $150; 6 $100-$200 = 900; 1 $200-$300 = $250; 1 $300-$400 = $350; 1 $500-$600 = $550. Total = $2200. Average $2200/12 = $183.33). Next, the averages of each department within a division were added (Example: Humanities total - $1611) and that total was then divided by the number of departments selected to represent that division (Example: Humanities $1611/8 = $201.37).
Q5 - Did you decide not to get some required books or access codes due to cost?

Chart 5.1 Going Without Required Materials

Table 5.2 Going Without Required Materials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>2023</th>
<th>2022</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, one or two</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, three or more</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Totals</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q6 - What measures have you taken to reduce the amount you spend on required books and access codes? Select all that apply.

Chart 6.1 Affordability Measures

Four affordability measures stand out as the most popular with first- and second-year students: renting when they would prefer to buy, getting an ebook when they would prefer a print copy, and buying a used copy from either an online store or the F&M bookstore.
Table 6.2 Affordability Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rent when you would prefer to buy</td>
<td>19.33%</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buy a used copy from other store or website</td>
<td>18.62%</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get an ebook when you would prefer a print copy</td>
<td>17.21%</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buy a used copy from the F&amp;M bookstore</td>
<td>15.65%</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share books with classmates</td>
<td>9.47%</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borrow a copy from the College Library or another library</td>
<td>6.49%</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swap books with other students</td>
<td>6.34%</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use a copy on reserve at the College Library</td>
<td>4.30%</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
<td>2.19%</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the above</td>
<td>0.39%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The two most popular affordability measures among first- and second-year respondents were (1) renting when they would prefer to buy and (2) buying used copies from places other than the college bookstore. The only difference between responses from students in the class of 2022 and 2023, in terms of ranking, is for third place. First-year respondents rank getting an ebook third and buying a used copy from the bookstore fourth. For second-year respondents, the rankings are reversed.

A sizeable number of first-year and second-year respondents also reported sharing books with classmates or swapping books with other students, and somewhat smaller numbers borrowed a copy from the College Library or used a copy held on reserve there.
Other
1. I prefer ebooks.
2. Rent used copy from F&M Bookstore, and Rent digital version from Amazon
3. Amazon Rentals
4. Found the PDFs online
5. Book voucher
6. literally i don’t buy the books bc teachers will assign them, they cost hundreds and we don’t use them
7. Download free versions online
8. Bought an older, much cheaper, version of the text that had some different material
9. pdf versions online
10. Buy strictly from amazon. Buying from the bookstore is not cost effective.
11. buy it from other students
12. Online libraries
13. Pdf
14. Rent from Amazon
15. Purchase from Amazon
16. Buy cheaper copy online
17. Download PDFs of the books online
18. Found free online version
19. Rent a used copy
20. Buy from amazon instead of bookstore
21. find free sample trials online
22. Rent a used copy from amazon
23. Find books online
25. Use older versions
26. Rent used
Q7 - Has the cost of required books and access codes caused you to do any of the following? Select all that apply.

Chart 7.1 Adverse Academic Effects

- None of the above: 289
- Not register for a certain course: 50
- Earn a poor grade because you could not afford to get a book or access code: 43
- Drop or withdraw from a course: 34
- Take fewer courses: 16
- Choose a different major: 7
- Other: 7
- Fail a course because you could not afford to get a book or access code: 5
Table 7.2 Adverse Academic Effects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Choose a different major</td>
<td>1.55%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drop or withdraw from a course</td>
<td>7.54%</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earn a poor grade because you could not afford to get a book or access code</td>
<td>9.53%</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fail a course because you could not afford to get a book or access code</td>
<td>1.11%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not register for a certain course</td>
<td>11.09%</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take fewer courses</td>
<td>3.55%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the above</td>
<td>64.08%</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.55%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7.3 Adverse Academic Effects Among First-Year and Second-Year Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Class of 2022</th>
<th>Class of 2023</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose a different major</td>
<td>1.08%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drop or withdraw from a course</td>
<td>5.41%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earn a poor grade because you could not afford to get a book or access code</td>
<td>10.27%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fail a course because you could not afford to get a book or access code</td>
<td>0.54%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not register for a certain course</td>
<td>9.19%</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take fewer courses</td>
<td>4.32%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the above</td>
<td>67.03%</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2.16%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Class of 2022
1. Earn a poor grade because you could not afford to get a book or access code: 10%
2. Not register for a certain course: 9%
3. Drop or withdraw from a course: 5%

Class of 2023
1. Not register for a certain course: 11%
2. Drop or withdraw from a course: 8%
3. Earn a poor grade because you could not afford to get a book or access code: 8%
Q8 - Is there any other relevant information about your experience with required course materials that you would like us to know?

There were 90 responses to this question and 10 were some variation on “n/a.” Within the 80 remaining responses, several themes emerged.

The College Bookstore

- 22 respondents mentioned the bookstore and only one was not negative:
  - Too expensive: 4, 9, 21, 22, 43, 54, 57, 61, 62, 63, 71, 73, 76, 80, 87, 88
  - Problem with return / buy-back policy: 6, 70
  - Problem with purchase policy: 69, 86
  - Too few used options: 38
  - Too few copies available: 81
  - Use the bookstore for rental options, new and used: 52

Required Materials Not Fully Used

- 7 respondents complained about being asked to obtain texts which were only partially used: 3, 12, 20, 36, 41, 79, 85
  - I believe it is unfair for professors to require students to buy/rent a book that we will only use for one assignment. I feel like it's a waste of my money to buy a 40 dollar book if I'm only going to be reading 30/450 pages in that book. (85)

Suggestions for Improving Textbook Affordability

Help students sell and swap

- I hope that the school can create a platform for students to sell their old
textbooks to other students. (13)

○ Maybe the school could create a group chart in which students can sell and buy used books. (45)

Technology in the classroom

○ I feel like if more teachers were open to the use of e-readers (iPads, Kindles etc) digital textbooks would be more feasible in the classroom, because so many teachers already have a no laptop policy. (17)

○ Instructors that do not allow technology in class are also making their classes inaccessible for those who need to use ebooks due to costs or other reasons. (18)

Better communication of what materials will be needed in the future

○ Also in some classes that continue from one semester to the other (like languages or sciences) often use the same textbook multiple times but you are not aware of it until you have to rent the book again the next semester. It would be nice to know if this book may be needed in another class in the future or how important this book is to the curriculum. (20)

○ Some classes require access codes for online homework programs. These programs offer “cost-efficient choices” where you can elect to buy access spanning more than one semester to avoid paying $100 twice (price is just an example). The issue is lack of communication between faculty/professors of the same department - for example, my calculus professor suggested we buy access for 2 semesters if we planned on taking the next successive math course. I chose to do this because I assumed if my professor said this, he had information that the professors of the next
class would also be using the same program. This option would have saved me about $90, if my next professor had used the program. Instead, due to lack of communication and regard for student finances, I lost money. (40)

Make course readers optional, printable, or free

○ Compiled course readers, while convenient to have a bound copy of class readings, are very easily printed on my own, and this way, I can pay over time on my student account and not be forced to pay a burden of a lump sum for it. (18)

○ For the $70,000+ price tag, textbooks and other packets should be included. [...] Especially regarding classes that offer a packet that you are required to purchase, the packets should be free rather than a cost. (67)

Earlier notice of required materials

○ It would also be super helpful if professors told us whether or not we actually needed the textbook before classes started. (55)

○ Professors should post their syllabus with required book[s] during course registration so students can see if the class will have expensive textbooks. I have taken a class where there was an expensive textbook that I had to buy because I could not drop the class in time. (60)

Use of older editions

○ Textbooks are important for class, but maybe instead of requiring a new edition each year, we could use the older edition for language classes and such. (68)
Expand Add/Drop dates

- I think you should expand the add drop dates for spring semester, and have the return of books be based on when you have purchased it, not based on the first week of the start of classes. (70).

Departmental textbook lists

- I strongly recommend each department to have a systematic textbook list so that I don’t need to spend too much money in purchasing some textbooks that I can’t not use in later class. (82)

High cost of supplies for certain majors

- Art majors/minors have a huge expense for materials. It makes it harder to participate in class when you don’t have the materials you need to succeed. For example, professors recommend you buy master grade paint because if you buy student grade paint the quality is really poor and very hard to work with because there is little to no pigment. However, master grade paint is really really expensive. Maybe the school could provide some supplies to help us out. PLEASE. (56)

Stress and Anxiety Caused by the High Cost of Course Materials

- It's stressful when it comes time to buy books because I feel guilty that I'm putting my family under financial stress. And I wonder if we will be able to afford to get the books. (11)

- And it can feel risky buying or renting from third parties if you need access codes with your textbook. Especially used. And just because we can afford it
doesn’t mean it isn’t a concern. My family can afford it, but that doesn’t mean it’s nothing. I know we need the books, and I can understand that. But no single textbooks should be in the 90-120 dollar range. (49)

- Without a scholarship that covers the cost of books, the cost of purchasing textbooks would absolutely be a financial burden to me and have a negative impact on my college experience. (53)

- It was a hassle to rent the books from other websites because I wasn’t sure if they were going to get delivered on time but I had to because I could not afford to get the books from the F&M bookstore. (57)

- My textbooks were cheaper this semester because I was able to borrow one from a friend, and I dropped a class and ended up not having to get the textbooks for that class. They were about $150 more expensive last semester. Buying textbooks each semester is a source of stress for me, but I do whatever I can to get the cheapest ones possible. That almost never includes buying books from the school bookstore. (61)

- The worst cases are purchases for books in language courses solely for access to faulty online portals. Spending over $150 on a SINGLE electronic textbook my first semester was quite shocking and harsh. (64)

- Coming from a low income family, coming up with the extra money on top of paying for loans and overpriced meal plans is very difficult, and trying to come up with more money for textbooks is unreasonable. (67)

- Spending money on books regularly causes me extreme stress and puts me in debt. (72)
Complete Responses

1. Some of the textbooks are crazy expensive and they are used too it should be lowered that’d be nice :)

2. n/a

3. We are college kids, not a lot of us have the necessary funds to buy every book required. Sometimes borrowing a book is not an option and we are forced to buy books that are only referenced to for a week out of the semester.

4. The textbook prices at the bookstore are completely unreasonable.

5. I love ebooks and I know where to find them. But most of my classmates don’t so they have to spend lots of money on textbooks.

6. I find it wildly unacceptable that the bookstore will not buy back your books because "a new edition is coming out" even though many professors use specific editions that are often not the newest. It's a poor excuse used to cheat students.

7. N/A

8. we need cheaper textbooks

9. Just go on amazon and rent textbooks, so much cheaper than our campus bookstore which will cost you an arm and a leg.

10. I could not afford to buy any of my text books so I found the PDFs online.

11. It’s stressful when it comes time to buy books because I feel guilty that I’m putting my family under financial stress. And I wonder if we will be able to afford to get the books.

12. Price gouging would be an understatement. I really can’t be bothered to spend hundreds of dollars on books I hardly use but are required.
13. I hope that the school can create a platform for students to sell their old textbooks to other students.

14. One of my classes had four different textbooks listed to buy on the website, but three of them were just different versions of the same book which was not conveyed clearly. I ended up spending more than I needed to on books for the one class.

15. I decided to borrow books and bought or rented used books from CHEGG.

16. A lot of the time they do not tell us what books we need prior to the classes beginning so we don’t have time to order them online.

17. I feel like if more teachers were open to the use of e-readers (iPads, Kindles etc) digital textbooks would be more feasible in the classroom, because so many teachers already have a no laptop policy.

18. Compiled course readers, while convenient to have a bound copy of class readings, are very easily printed on my own, and this way, I can pay over time on my student account and not be forced to pay a burden of a lump sum for it. Instructors that do not allow technology in class are also making their classes inaccessible for those who need to use ebooks due to costs or other reasons.

19. Two of my professors this semester had us use a free online book, and the books are affordable but are significantly lower quality than books I rented or bought and have used in other classes.

20. Sometimes professors require us to buy books that we use for maybe a week. Or books that we don’t really need because they aren’t used much during class. Also in some classes that continue from one semester to the other (like languages or sciences) often use the same textbook multiple times but you are not aware of it until you have to rent the book again the next semester. It would be nice to know if this book may be needed in another class in the future or how important this book is to the curriculum.
21. Books are unfairly priced, you can get them for much cheaper other places and the school already is expensive. If you need financial aid books deduct from the amount of spending money left.

22. Bookstore’s book is too expensive compared to the outside resources.

23. I think it would be great if the prices of textbooks go down.

24. nope

25. This semester I have borrowed all my textbooks from the library.

26. None

27. Nah

28. There is no difference between requiring one expensive textbook or multiple “cheaper” books. My professors this year expect us to buy all 9 books for their class, each one is at least $35, because they aren’t requiring us to buy a textbook.

29. No

30. Professors should have class copies and the student should have the option to purchase books additionally if they wish to mark it up or the readings should be available on canvas.

31. I think textbook costs are just a hassle for students especially for students that are on financial aid. Some students that are on financial aid can not afford these expensive textbooks and it really impacts their educational experience here at F&M.

32. Award professors who do their best to make all materials easy to access or free.

33. Nah

34. Nope

35. I just think it forces students to not be able to do the work. It also poses a
problem bc students who don’t want to do poorly end up spending lots of money on books and then they have financial issues. Sometimes I have asked around for text book pdf for my science classes bc those tend to be more expensive.

36. Last year a professor in the chem department put up $800 of material to buy and we didn’t use any of it

37. PDFs are more convenient and can be found but not always legally

38. More used options in the bookstore

39. Even when professors are telling us that they aren’t updating textbooks to the newest edition so it could be more affordable they are still very expensive.

40. Some classes require access codes for online homework programs. These programs offer “cost-efficient choices” where you can elect to buy access spanning more than one semester to avoid paying $100 twice (price is just an example). The issue is lack of communication between faculty/ professors of the same department - for example, my calculus professor suggested we buy access for 2 semesters if we planned on taking the next successive math course. I chose to do this because I assumed if my professor said this, he had information that the professors of the next class would also be using the same program. This option would have saved me about $90, if my next professor had used the program. Instead, due to lack of communication and regard for student finances, I lost money.

41. This semester, I had to spend 55 dollars on a book that is being used for a single chapter. Professors should only require the purchase of books if they are using the whole book.

42. It’s much easier for me as an English major to find my books for free online. I can often use websites that have ebooks or PDFs, and my professors also tend to be more lax about electronics in class. It’s an advantage that a lot of other
majors don’t have, especially STEM students.

43. My textbook spending has been lower than it could’ve been only because I have been resourceful and learned that I should rarely rent/buy books from the F&M bookstore. I don’t understand why, but the F&M bookstore tends to sell/rent books for significantly higher prices. I needed to get an economics textbook this semester, and the F&M bookstore listed it around $250, but I was able to find a used version to rent off of Amazon for around $20 instead.

44. No thank you!!

45. Maybe the school could create a group chart in which students can sell and buy used books.

46. My professor is also against the ridiculous pricing.

47. I have encountered several professors you (sic) provided PDFs of online copies of the material if we were only covering excerpts from a book and not the entire thing. This has allowed me to save a large sum of money since I didn’t have to buy any books.

48. It should be part of tuition

49. I didn’t need to buy textbooks for two classes this semester. One was a language so we just continued with the same book. The other has all the reading as files in canvas. I had to get books for only two classes. New and bought I would have spent ~210. For two classes. There was a 120 book I’ve rented for around 80. Which is still a lot. And you don’t know if you can rent or buy or if used is available. And it can feel risky buying or renting from third parties if you need access codes with your textbook. Especially used. And just because we can afford it doesn’t mean it isn’t a concern. My family can afford it, but that doesn’t mean it’s nothing. I know we need the books, and I can understand that. But no single textbooks should be in the 90-120 dollar range. 80 is a lot too.
50. Although I’m aware that many other students struggle with the costs of textbooks, I thankfully have not yet experienced any major issues.

51. As a first gen and a low-income student who financially supports herself since her parents are struggling to make ends meet, textbooks costs have made me reach out to professors to see if they can lend a book or provide extensions until I was able to get an access code for the class.

52. I always try to rent a used textbook from the bookstore, but sometimes if all the books are new it is not possible and I have to figure out other ways to get the books I need which can be a tedious process.

53. Without a scholarship that covers the cost of books, the cost of purchasing textbooks would absolutely be a financial burden to me and have a negative impact on my college experience.

54. The bookstore’s prices are always more expensive than they are online.

55. It would also be super helpful if professors told us whether or not we actually needed the textbook before classes started.

56. Art majors/minors have a huge expense for materials. It makes it harder to participate in class when you don’t have the materials you need to succeed. For example, professors recommend you buy master grade paint because if you buy student grade paint the quality is really poor and very hard to work with because there is little to no pigment. However, master grade paint is really really expensive. Maybe the school could provide some supplies to help us out.

57. It was a hassle to rent the books from other websites because I wasn’t sure if they were going to get delivered on time but I had to because I could not afford to get the books from the F&M bookstore.

58. It isn’t the cost of each individual book, but the number of books (sometimes up to 6 per class) that makes it less affordable.
59. Since I look to see where I can find the cheapest books online, I'm still waiting for one of my books to arrive.

60. Professors should post their syllabus with required book during course registration so students can see if the class will have expensive textbooks. I have taken a class where there was an expensive textbook that I had to buy because I could not drop the class in time. Additionally I find that language textbooks and science textbooks are soo expensive. I am currently in an upper level language class right now and we have to buy a subscription for an online service where we sign up to talk to native french speakers. We are required to pay $65 dollars for 4 conversations with a native french speaker. This is the most ridiculous thing I have ever heard of because I think it would be more beneficial to talk to my classmates, the professor, or French tutors for free instead of having to pay to talk to someone. As someone who is a student worker, I put the cost of textbooks into perspective. For example, $65 for an online french subscription is like working 10 hours on campus. I am positive that there are other resources that professors can use that are just as education and cost less money. For example, if they used books that were readily available in the library or older versions of books.

61. My textbooks were cheaper this semester because I was able to borrow one from a friend, and I dropped a class and ended up not having to get the textbooks for that class. They were about $150 more expensive last semester. Buying textbooks each semester is a source of stress for me, but I do whatever I can to get the cheapest ones possible. That almost never includes buying books from the school bookstore.

62. Bookstore is too expensive

63. F&M bookstore sells really expensive textbooks!

64. The worst cases are purchases for books in language courses solely for access to faulty online portals. Spending over $150 on a SINGLE electronic textbook my
first semester was quite shocking and harsh.

65. They're too expensive

66. We are already paying so much to attend this school, it's really hard when we have to spend even more to take the classes that are required for graduation.

67. For the $70,000+ price tag, textbooks and other packets should be included. Professors demand the newest version of a textbook, which is the most expensive. The new material often isn’t too much more relevant, but costs upwards of hundreds more. Especially regarding classes that offer a packet that you are required to purchase, the packets should be free rather than a cost. Coming from a low income family, coming up with the extra money on top of paying for loans and overpriced meal plans is very difficult, and trying to come up with more money for textbooks is unreasonable.

68. Textbooks are important for class, but maybe instead of requiring a new edition each year, we could use the older edition for language classes and such.

69. I have often paid full price for a new textbook and then upon pickup at the bookstore I was given all used books. If there are no more new textbooks that’s fine then they should reimburse me. I paid $500 for the books that I bought and when selling them back to the school I received $15. That is simply ridiculous.

70. I think you should expand the add drop dates for spring semester, and have the return of books be based on when you have purchased it, not based on the first week of the start of classes.

71. I didn’t buy anything from the bookstore this semester -- mainly because the prices were FAR to high. I saved over $150 from buying used copies online (and that is assuming I would have borrowed used copies from the bookstore).

72. Spending money on books regularly causes me extreme stress and puts me in debt.

73. Used books on Amazon is always cheaper than the used ones from books
store.(like 50%prize) The prize of used book is even cheaper than then rental prize in book store

74. Some instructors sell textbooks they wrote with very expensive prize.

75. nyueh

76. Books at the bookstore are much more expensive than on amazon and many of the required books I had to buy because rent wasn’t available.

77. This is by far the cheapest semester I’ve had yet because I only had to buy 4 books. My spending is usually in the $500-$600 range.

78. Previous semesters were upwards of $300 even when rented. As a science major the materials are extremely expensive

79. Some “required course materials” are only used once or twice and then never used again in the class, therefore; at times I’ve found myself buying an expensive book that was rarely used in the class.

80. The price of books at the bookstore does discourage students from buying books. F&M should consider other options to get books at a cheaper price because not everyone on campus is "rich".

81. Required materials should always be available at the F&M bookstore. Sometimes they run out of copies and students have to wait for online shipping before getting books. So these students are then without a require book when it may be needed in the beginning of the semester.

82. I strongly recommend each department to have a systematic textbook list so that I don’t need to spend too much money in purchasing some textbooks that I can’t not use in later class

83. BOS 200 required students to buy online versions of different texts, which cost about 50 dollars. It would be better if the professor brought those texts and share them with students.
84. I had a class last semester, where upon hearing the cost of the textbook, the professor expressed they wouldn’t have assigned it knowing it was that much.

85. I believe it is unfair for professors to require students to buy/rent a book that we will only use for one assignment. I feel like it’s a waste of my money to buy a 40 dollar book if I’m only going to be reading 30/450 pages in that book. I hope professors become aware of some of the pain low-income students go through in trying to find outside sources for purchasing books and stressing about not getting them in time to do the assignments.

86. Being charged for a new book but selecting to rent a used one and then having to pay the new book cost which is extremely more expensive

87. Some of the books you can rent used at the bookstore still are very expensive.

88. The books used are too expensive. Also, the ones offered for renting in the bookstore are not cheap enough. They are even more expensive than renting them online.

89. Too expensive, makes me poor for weeks

90. It would be helpful if teachers provided the websites for known pdf versions of the books. I have found a few for my courses, and this helped me lower the cost of books in total.