



Action Plan  
for the Pricing of  
Textbooks and Other Instructional Materials

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Florida Board of Governors  
325 West Gaines Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399

# ACTION PLAN

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Florida Board of Governors, hereinafter referred to as the Board, is developing the Action Plan for the purpose of providing access to quality and affordable textbooks and instructional materials for students enrolled in the State University System of Florida.

## II. BACKGROUND

In Fall 2018, the State University System of Florida enrolled 353,558 Educational and General students and 8,599 students in Special Units.<sup>1</sup>

The 2018 Student Textbook and Course Materials Survey of SUS and Florida College System students, which was conducted by the Florida Virtual Campus, found that “The cost of textbooks continues to negatively impact student access, success, and completion.”

The Executive Summary further explains this finding:

The findings suggest that the cost of textbooks was negatively impacting student access to required materials and learning. The top 5 highest percentage answers as a result of the high cost of textbooks are: not purchasing the required textbook (64.2%); taking fewer courses (42.8%); not registering for a specific course (40.5%); earning a poor grade (35.6%); and dropping a course (22.9%).

Another key finding of the survey was that “Students were more and more willing to rent print and digital textbooks,” as described below: We see trends of willingness to rent textbooks. The majority of students (59.0%) were willing to rent either print or digital textbooks, compared to 51.0% in the 2016 Survey. When asked the strategies to reduce textbook costs, renting digital textbooks jumped from 29.6% in the 2016 Survey to 41.4% in the 2018 Survey.<sup>2</sup>

The Board, concerned about the effect that the cost of required course materials was having on students, directed that a plan be developed at the System level, so that students throughout the State may obtain materials at more affordable prices than are currently available.

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<sup>1</sup> Board of Governors, Office of Data Analysis (2019). “History of Headcount Enrollment, Fall 2006 through Fall 2018.” SOURCE: Enrollment datamart; extracted 2019-04-09.

<sup>2</sup> Florida Virtual Campus, Office of Distance Learning & Student Services (2018). “2018 Student Textbook and Course Materials Survey: Executive Summary.” Retrieved from <https://dlss.flvc.org/documents/210036/1314923/2018+Student+Textbook+and+Course+Materials+Survey+-+Executive+Summary.pdf/3c0970b0-ea4b-9407-7119-0477f7290a8b>.

### III. GOAL

The goal of this initiative is to provide students with access to quality and affordable textbooks and other instructional materials, thereby increasing the likelihood of their success in higher education.

### IV. PURPOSE OF THE NOTIFICATION OF THIS ACTION PLAN

The purpose of this Action Plan is to notify interested parties of the intent of the Board to pursue Letters of Commitment with publishers and university bookstore vendors to ensure that students in the State University System of Florida will be paying less for textbooks and other instructional materials than they currently pay, beginning with the Fall term, 2020, and that students throughout the System will be paying consistent prices for the same materials.

Components of the System-wide initiative that have been identified to achieve the goal include:

1. Student cost of course materials, including pricing mark-ups by university bookstore vendors, be provided for (a) \$20 or less per credit hour or (b) more than \$20 per credit hour, but at a noticeably lower retail cost than students would otherwise pay;
2. Identifying the format of materials that meet the pricing indicated above as print and/or digital;
3. Student access to materials on the first day of class;
4. Student access to digital materials beyond the end of the course;
5. Students not paying twice for digital access if the course is dropped and taken at a later time;
6. The option for print-on-demand for digital materials;
7. Accessibility for students with disabilities;
8. Bookstore vendors will develop mechanisms for capturing and reporting faculty use of open education resources, library materials, and other no-cost resources (e.g. generic ISBNs), which will allow these resources to be included in the official booklist and the savings can be captured in the authoritative list;
9. University access to data.

The Letters of Commitment from publishers and university bookstore vendors will acknowledge and address the components of this initiative (as applicable) to provide access to quality and affordable textbooks and instructional materials for students enrolled in the State University System of Florida.

### V. PROCESS

Publishers and university bookstore vendors interested in participating in the Board's Action Plan will submit an Opportunity to Participate form with contact information to Board staff, Dr. Lynn Nelson, Director of Student Affairs, eard

Marshall Criser, Chancellor, State University System of Florida, on **September 17, 2019**. Afterward, any questions may be submitted to Dr. Nelson at the above address no later than **September 26, 2019**; responses will be posted to the <https://www.flbog.edu/resources/textbook-affordability/> web page within three days of receipt of the questions.

By **January 20** of each year beginning in 2020, publishers will have available for faculty review and consideration the list of materials meeting the terms of their commitment. The list must include the title, author(s), ISBN, cost, format, access, option for print-on-demand, and accessibility, and be updated as additional materials become available.

## VI. REPORTING

Each institution will report the number of course sections that provided required course materials for \$20 or less per credit hour in the annual Textbook and Instructional Materials Affordability report due to the Chancellor by September 30, beginning with the 2021 report.