

# 2012 Florida Student Textbook Survey

## Executive Summary



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The full report is available from:

[http://www.openaccesstextbooks.org/pdf/2012\\_Florida\\_Student\\_Textbook\\_Survey.pdf](http://www.openaccesstextbooks.org/pdf/2012_Florida_Student_Textbook_Survey.pdf)

The [Florida Distance Learning Consortium](#) was a network of all public (39) postsecondary institutions in Florida that served 1.3 million postsecondary students annually. On July 1, 2012, the Consortium was merged with three other Florida organizations to form [Florida Virtual Campus](#).

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Florida Distance Learning Consortium (FDLC) conducted a revised survey of higher education students between January 18 and April 4, 2012 as a follow-up to the 2010 Florida Student Textbook Survey. FDLC administered the earlier survey in response to the Open Access Textbooks Task Force Report (2010). The task force report was pursuant to a 2009 charge by the Florida Legislature to develop a plan for promoting and increasing the use of open access textbooks as a method for reducing textbook costs (Section 1004.091(2), Florida Statutes). The online survey of Florida higher education students was conducted to learn more about some of the issues underlying textbook costs and alternative solutions.

FDLC developed the revised statewide student survey on textbook acquisition and use with the collaboration of the Board of Governors (BOG) of the State University System of Florida and staff of the Division of Florida Colleges (DFC). In addition, the Consortium commissioned a consulting statistician, Eric Thomas, Senior Research Analyst with Statistics & Dissertation Services, LLC, to assist with developing survey questions and analyzing the survey data.

The purpose of the survey was to assess students' textbook acquisition choices, the reasoning behind them, and the attitudes of students who face the harsh reality of rising textbook costs. Specific objectives of the survey were to identify:

- how much Florida students spent on textbooks during the Spring 2012 semester
- the frequency with which students buy textbooks that are not used
- how students are affected by the cost of textbooks
- what formats students prefer
- what functions students find important
- students perceptions of the availability of textbooks in their institutions' libraries
- what study aids students perceive to be the most beneficial to their learning

During the spring of 2012, local campus officials solicited student participation. Over 20,000 students from all 11 of Florida's state universities and 22 of its 28 colleges, community colleges and state colleges voluntarily responded to the anonymous online survey. Of the respondents, 10,874 (53%) were enrolled in universities, 9,717 (47%) were enrolled in colleges, and 485 (2%) of those were enrolled in both a university and a college.

Concurrent with the student survey, FDLC conducted a survey of Florida postsecondary faculty and administrators to examine the climate for open educational resources (OER). A report of that survey's results can be obtained through the Open Access Textbooks project website, [www.openacesstextbooks.org](http://www.openacesstextbooks.org). On questions selected for their comparative value, responses of faculty and staff were examined for similarities and differences to the students' responses. The next section provides a summary of key findings from the faculty and staff survey.

## **Summary of Key Findings**

- ❖ **Key Finding 1: Students are generally unaware of open textbooks and their potential for use as supplementary text or for saving them money.** Almost three-quarters (73%) had never heard of open textbooks. Explanations for this may include low usage in their program, the term may not be applied even when using an open textbook, or they may be unfamiliar with the term because only portions of an open textbook are used in their courses.
- ❖ **Key Finding 2: Students are generally unaware of open courseware and its potential to help them prepare for a course or learn difficult material.** More than two-thirds (68%) had never heard of open courseware on the tenth anniversary of MIT OpenCourseWare. Open courseware is a vast, rapidly expanding source of open educational resources that is apparently going untapped by all but 10% of Florida students.
- ❖ **Key Finding 3: Textbook costs continue to take a toll on students financially and academically.** Fifty-four percent spent more than \$300 on textbooks during the Spring 2012 term and 19% spent over \$500. More than half do not have financial aid that covers any of their textbook costs. More than half (64%) reported not having purchased the required textbook because of the high cost, and almost one-fourth reported doing without frequently (23%). Academically, 45% reported not registering, 49% took fewer courses, 27% dropped a course, and 21% withdrew from a course.
- ❖ **Key Finding 4: Students use various means to reduce costs of textbooks, including purchasing books from a source other than the campus bookstore, renting textbooks, purchasing used books, selling their used books, and using copies on reserve at the campus library.** A large portion of the students reported buying books from sources other than their campus bookstore (78%), 74% reported they would rent textbooks if it saved them money, and one-fifth (20%) reported using a reserve copy from their campus library.
- ❖ **Key Finding 5: Most students are willing to pay a small textbook materials fee for each course in which they use an open textbook.** Sustaining an open textbook authoring and editorial process requires a source of funds. Sixty-one percent reported being willing to pay between \$5 and \$10 open textbook material fee and 31% said maybe.
- ❖ **Key Finding 6: The purchases of digital textbooks are increasing.** In 2012, students reported buying limited licensed (16% up from 9% in 2010) and permanent access (8.4% up from 3.5 % in 2010) digital textbooks. Several factors point to increasing digital textbooks sales and their eventual dominance of the textbook market, including improvements of interactive features of software, portability of devices, and lower costs.
- ❖ **Key Finding 7: Some institution's libraries provide textbooks for checkout, extending a lifeline to students who cannot afford to purchase a textbook.** Almost half (44%) indicated that their libraries provided textbooks for checkout in print, digital, or both formats. However, nearly half (47%) did not know and 9% said textbooks were not available for checkout.
- ❖ **Key Finding 8: Students as well as faculty perceive interactive digital study aids as supportive of student learning.** For most subject areas, it is essential for learners to test and improve their knowledge and skills through practice and feedback. The students perceived interactive practice questions, flash cards, and PowerPoint slideshows as more useful than the faculty. The faculty perceived video, animations, interactive try-it-now activities, and online study groups as more useful than the students perceived them.
- ❖ **Key Finding 9: Although over half perceived open textbooks, open courseware, and OER to be similar or greater in academic value to commercial resources, approximately one-third did not know their commercial value or the opportunities they present.** Open textbooks were rated as similar or more valuable by 63%, open courseware was rated similarly by 51%, and open educational resources by 55%, when compared to commercial resources. It is important to note that a third or more (33%, 39%, 36% respectively) expressed that they did not know their comparative value.
- ❖ **Key Finding 10: Students value highly having lifetime access to digital textbooks in their major area of study.** Seventy percent of the respondents indicated that having lifetime access to digital textbooks in their major area of study was important or very important. Lifetime access to other textbooks, however, is considerably less important to them.