

**2016 NYSR3
College Council
Mini-Grant**

**Establishing
Guidelines and
Improving College
Textbook Utilization
Practices**

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Grant Objectives

- Raise college campus awareness on the wastefulness of current college textbook utilization practices through campus survey, focus forums, research, and findings report.
- Establish simple guidelines for more responsible textbook utilization practices by publishers, faculty, and administrations
- Empower college students to address concerns over the high cost and limited reuse of textbooks.
- Educate faculty members on textbook utilization practices that will minimize cost and waste of natural resources.

Grant Administration Note:

- Due to the early retirement of the JCC grant administrator, the grant progress was interrupted. Despite retiring the former grant administrator has remained a member of the JCC Sustainability Committee and will continue to work toward achieving the grant objectives within that capacity.
- JCC has made the decision to return the grant award (\$180) to NYSAR3, as it became apparent the costs were minimal and could be absorbed by college resources.

Context- College Textbook Figures

- The cost of textbooks rose 82 percent between 2002 and 2013 (US Government Accountability Office)
- The average U.S. college student currently spends about \$1,200 a year on books and supplies. (College Board)
- The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) confirms that textbooks have increased over three times the rate of inflation from January 1977 to June 2015, which is a 1,042 percent increase (Popken, 2015).

Context- Paper Industry Tidbits

- Pulp and paper is the third largest industrial polluter to air, water, and land in both Canada and the United States, and releases well over 100 million kg of toxic pollution each year. (Canada Environment Report, 2014)
- It has been estimated that by 2020 paper mills will produce about 400,000,000 tons of paper and paperboard per year, so great efforts are needed to ensure that the environment is protected during the production, use and recycling/disposal of this enormous volume of material. (Canada Environment Report, 2014)

Context- Paper Industry Tidbits

- Discarded paper is a major component of many landfill sites, accounting for about 35 percent by weight of municipal solid waste (before recycling). (Canada Environment Report, 2014)
- Deforestation is a major contributing factor to global warming.

Context- College Student Data

- In fall 2016, some 20.5 million students are expected to attend American colleges and universities, constituting an increase of about 5.2 million since fall 2000.
(National Center for Education Statistics)
- Charges for tuition and required fees in 2015 averaged \$6,371 at public institutions, \$30,643 at private nonprofit institutions, and \$13,971 at private for-profit institutions (NCES).

Economics of Textbooks

- 20 million college students times \$1,200 a year in textbook costs equals approximately 2.4 billion dollars per year.
- Approximately 96% of the same information is retained from one edition to the next.
- 98% of the information in textbooks can be found on the internet.
- 3,000+ Jefferson Community College students spend 3.6 million dollars a year on textbooks which is diverted from the local economy.

College Textbook Survey Information

- The survey consisted of 16 question items, and was approved by the college's committee on testing and surveys.
- 411 surveys have been administered to students at 3 different colleges (Jefferson CC, Schenectady CCC, SUNY Stony Brook), with nine different instructors and staff members administering the surveys in their classes and programs.
- The current survey results have been shared with the Jefferson CC campus through the annual report of the JCC Sustainability Committee.

Survey Questions

1. How many courses are you enrolled in this semester? _____
2. How many textbooks were you required to purchase this semester? _____
3. What was the approximate cost of your textbooks this semester? \$ _____
4. What was the price of the most expensive textbook that you had to purchase this semester? _____
5. What was the price of the most expensive textbook that you've ever had to purchase for a course? _____
6. What approximate percentage of your textbook cost was covered by financial aid?
0% 5% 50% 75% 100%

Textbook Survey Questions

7. Have you ever been unable to acquire required textbooks due to their cost? Yes__ No __

8. Have you ever chosen not to use a required textbook, to save money? Yes_____ No _____

9. Have you ever been required to purchase a textbook in a course and didn't end up using it? Yes_____ No _____

10. a) Have you ever gone without a required textbook during the beginning of a course, because you ordered it through a source other than the bookstore? Yes__ No __

10. b) Did that delay affect your grade? Yes__No__

Textbook Survey Questions

11. For the last college semester you attended, how many of your books did you sell back?

12. If you sold books back at the end of the semester, what amount did you receive, compared with what you spent? Amount Received \$_____, Amount Spent \$_____

13. Does your college's bookstore provide you with alternative sources of textbooks to help reduce your costs? Yes_____ No _____

14. Do you feel that your college is committed to keeping textbook costs at a minimum?
Yes_____ No _____

Textbook Survey Questions

15. If your college implemented textbook cost-saving measures, would you end up spending that extra money in the local economy?

Yes _____ No _____

16. Are you aware of any students who were unable to attend college because they were unable to afford textbooks? Yes _____ No _____

- Completion of this survey is voluntary. Please return your completed survey to Matt Lambert in the JCC Advising Center (6-020) or email to mlambert@sunyjefferson.edu.

Survey Purpose Summary

Please READ before completing survey. Only complete and submit ONE survey per student.

A member of the EverGREEN (Campus Sustainability) Committee of Jefferson Community College was awarded a grant by the New York State Association of Reduce-Reuse-Recycle (NYSAR3), for the purpose of exploring strategies for containing college textbook costs and establishing sustainable practices for utilizing textbooks.

Your participation in this survey is voluntary, and your individual responses will be kept confidential. The overall feedback from the survey will be used to improve the ways in which we manage textbook use.

Please return your completed survey to the college Faculty-Staff member who distributed it to you.

If for whatever reason that is not possible you can also fax (315-786-2471), or scan/email (mlambert@sunyjefferson.edu) your completed survey to Matt Lambert, Jefferson Community College Advising Center, 1220 Coffeen Street, Watertown, NY 13601.

Thank you!

Textbook Survey Results

- The average amount spent on textbooks by each student for the Fall 2016 semester was: \$604
- The average amount spent for textbooks in each class was \$142.00
- The average amount spent on each textbook was \$124.00
- 85% of the students reported that they were required to purchase a textbook that they did not end up using for the course

Textbook Survey Results

- **45%** of students reported that they chose not to use a required textbook for a course, to save money.
- **34%** of the students reported that they were unable to purchase a required textbook for a course due to high cost.

Progress Achieved To-Date

- In the development stages of the survey, we shared grant objectives with the listserv of the New York State Transfer & Articulation Association. (NYSTAA) which reinforced a need to examine textbook utilization practices at the statewide level.
- By administering several hundred surveys at participating colleges, we have heightened student awareness of textbook utilization issues.

Progress Achieved To-Date

- Initial survey administration and responses have provided feedback that will allow us to modify and improve the future survey design and administration.
- Survey objectives and design are posted on college social media, providing exposure to prospective students in Jefferson, Lewis, and other surrounding counties.
- Through this project we forged a partnership with bookstore management that will facilitate necessary changes in future textbook practices.

Future Tasks

- Based on feedback from the initial survey administration, modify the survey design and distribute it to college student government organizations throughout New York State. Encourage them to accumulate survey feedback from students, in order to justify and promote improved textbook utilization practices at their campuses.
- Establish a listing of textbook publishers who offer the most economical and sustainable alternatives and share that listing with college faculties, administrations, and student organizations.