

LEARNING RESOURCE AFFORDABILITY PLAN

3.18.2022

Introduction

The cost of textbooks has been a longstanding barrier to student access and affordability. According to the Educational Data Initiative website:

- In 2021, the average cost for full-time, undergraduate students at a four-year university for books and supplies per year was approximately \$1240.00, **with students spending the most (average of \$1420) at public two-year colleges** compared to \$1220 per year at private four-year colleges (average of \$450-\$625 per semester).
- When possible, nearly **66% of students will avoid buying course materials** due to the steep prices
- In 2020, 25% of students indicated they **worked extra hours** to pay for their books and materials and 11% **skipped meals** in order to afford books and course materials
- In 2020, 19% of students indicated **the cost of materials and books directly influenced their decision on what classes to take**

Anecdotally, we are fully aware that students attending the College of Southern Idaho sometimes forego the textbook altogether and attempt to muddle through the course. First-generation students may not even be aware that they are required to purchase textbooks, let alone know the high costs and variability of textbook selection and adoption. Many students attend their first class sessions without textbooks and get off to a rocky start.

While national data indicate that through various means the total cost of textbooks has declined since 2016, it remains a significant problem. The College of Southern Idaho is committed to a mitigation if not elimination of textbook and/or learning resource costs with the end goal of becoming a “zero added textbook cost institution,” where students simply secure their learning resources as a function of their course registration. This will have the effect of:

- Student relief from *additional* costs of textbooks and other learning resources so there are no *added cost* surprises; and
- Students will have access to their resources on day one of the course and be fully equipped to succeed; and
- Equitable access to any course in the schedule, rather than searching for a course with the lowest textbook cost; and
- Improved access to higher education and student success

While CSI is not subject [to Idaho State Board of Education Policy III.U. Instructional Material Access and Affordability](#), which provides the universities guidance and sets expectations, the College has made the commitment to adhere as best it can to the policy in good faith, including the specific requirements set forth therein.

Current activity

In 2021 at the behest of the Office of the Provost, an ad hoc committee was formed with the express purpose of determining how best to incrementally move toward the ultimate goal of becoming Idaho's first Zero Added Textbook Cost Institution. Two employees were selected to co-chair the committee, including a member of the CSI Teaching and Learning Center (and former President of the Faculty Senate) and the Director of the CSI Bookstore. Both had been instrumental in the deployment of the *inclusive access*, also known as *automatic charge*, which is a textbook publisher subscription service for digital textbooks as a significant cost saving measure. The committee, made up largely of faculty, has met a number of times and set milestones for meeting the goal as well as quantifying the total financial cost to students.

This analysis not only creates a snapshot of current faculty commitments to keeping costs down but creates a goal or target for the total cost of the initiative. It is quite apparent that it will take multiple tactics to reach the goal, including but not limited to:

- Faculty dedication and commitment to sensitivity around textbook costs (something that is already apparent)
- Continued deployment of inclusive access/automatic charge
- Use of the CSI Library as a resource
- CSI Foundation support
- Institutional support
- Minimal course fees in lieu of textbook purchases
- Development and adoption of open educational resources (OER)

The College is currently participating in a new statewide OER initiative (Project Z-Degree) which will provide \$1 million to support this effort over the next few years. However, textbook adoption and selection remains a primary role of faculty and the institution fully supports this academic freedom right.

Plan

According to policy III.U. the institutional plan is to consist of the following elements at a minimum. For each of the elements, institutional comment is provided.

- *Resources and support to help faculty ensure all instructional materials are relevant and accessible for all students, especially students who require learning accommodations or additional modes of delivery (e.g. a print version of a digital textbook, internet access, etc.).*
 - This is accomplished through institutional program review, outcomes assessment, and textbook adoption processes, along with support from and in consultation with the Student Disability Services unit and the Teaching and Learning Center. A review of current textbook adoption processes across departments and programs is planned for the Spring 2022 semester.
- *Policies and/or strategies that minimize the cost of instructional materials for students while maintaining the quality of education, the academic freedom and responsibility of faculty and students, and the recognition that the average cost of instructional materials is higher in certain disciplines, and some disciplines require higher cost materials which are used over multiple terms or throughout an entire program.*

- As stated earlier, the CSI faculty have made these commitments as an inherent function of their positions. However, during the process of textbook adoption and selection review, the College will undertake to create reasonable parameters around selection that are consistent with the language in the policy.
- The College will commit to the creation of institutional textbook selection policy.
- *Professional development opportunities for faculty and staff related to the discovery, adoption, and use of OER and other affordable instructional materials.*
 - Will be accomplished through the deployment of Project Z-Degree (the community college OER project) as well as through the Teaching and Learning Center, library, and other instructional support services.
- *Strategies to support faculty adoption, adaption, and/or use of OER and other affordable instructional materials.*
 - See the first and second bullets above
- *Programs, incentive structures, or other strategies to encourage and support faculty to publicly share OER developed for their own courses.*
 - This is a function of Project Z-Degree including significant collaboration between institutions.
- *Course marking processes at the time of course schedule releases that indicate the cost of instructional materials in course sections that are reliably zero cost or very low cost, as defined in this policy.*
 - Course marking will be deployed as soon as possible, although it is important to point out that CSI is adopting a new Student Information System which may cause a delay.
- *Strategies with measurable goals for improving and using readily available and relevant OER or other very low cost instructional materials in common-indexed courses as articulated in Board Policy III.N.6.b., including dual credit courses.*
 - This will be a component of the plans cited above in the first two bullet points as well as those set forth in the conditions of Project Z-Degree, e.g. a zero textbook cost major developed at each Idaho community college.