College and Textbook Affordability in the Florida College System
2022

November 2022
Contents

Introduction .................................................................................................................................................. 1
Tuition and Fees ........................................................................................................................................... 2
   FCS Cost per Credit Hour ............................................................................................................................ 2
   FCS Tuition and Fees ................................................................................................................................. 3
   Institutional Strategies to Reduce Tuition and Fees ................................................................................... 3
Student Financial Assistance ......................................................................................................................... 4
   Student Aid by Type .................................................................................................................................. 4
   Military and Veterans Benefits ................................................................................................................... 5
   Net Price .................................................................................................................................................... 6
   Cohort Default Rates ............................................................................................................................... 7
   Exemptions and Waivers .......................................................................................................................... 8
   Institutional Strategies to Increase Financial Aid Initiatives and Programs ............................................... 9
Textbook Affordability .................................................................................................................................. 9
   Books and Supplies ................................................................................................................................... 9
   Institutional Strategies to Promote Textbook Affordability ................................................................... 10
Updates During the 2022 Legislative Session ............................................................................................. 12
Conclusion ................................................................................................................................................... 13
Appendix A: 2022 Division of Florida Colleges Template for College Affordability Reports .................... 14
Introduction

Florida College System (FCS) institutions are recognized as being among the nation’s best colleges. The FCS is the primary access point to undergraduate education for Floridians, including recent high school graduates and returning adult students. The 28 member colleges respond quickly and efficiently to meet the demands of employers by aligning certificate and degree programs with regional workforce needs.

The FCS provides a cost-effective and efficient avenue for raising the state’s educational level and economic status of Florida citizens. To keep college affordable, FCS institutions developed multiple initiatives that reduced costs and increased strategies that promote affordability.

This report is submitted in accordance with section (s.) 1004.084, Florida Statutes (F.S.), by identifying and sharing institutional strategies that promote college affordability for all FCS students. In addition, this report includes sections on current practices for the selection of textbooks and cost-saving innovations in accordance with s. 1004.085(7), F.S. This report merges the college and textbook affordability requirements, which was done to increase efficiencies and streamline college reporting.

To better understand college and textbook affordability, the Division of Florida Colleges (division) analyzed quantitative data from federal and statewide datasets. Additionally, the division disseminated a survey to collect quantitative and qualitative data from the 28 institutions in the FCS (Appendix A). The report is divided into three sections: tuition and fees, financial assistance, and textbook affordability.
Tuition and Fees

FCS institutions are some of the most affordably priced options for higher education in Florida. To provide affordable higher education to FCS students, institutions are committed to different strategies and programs to promote affordability. Institutions may reduce or hold tuition flat, a step they have taken in recent years. Additionally, FCS institutions regularly review course fees as required in s. 1009.23, F.S. Such evaluations may result in the reduction or elimination of student fees.

In the following section, affordability data related to institutions’ cost per credit hour, student tuition and fees, and cohort default rates over the last three years are presented. These data are from various publicly available sources including the FCS Fact Book, the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and the U.S. Department of Education’s Federal Student Aid Cohort Default Rates Database.

**FCS Cost per Credit Hour**

As seen in Figure 1, the average cost per credit hour has increased incrementally over the last five years. It is important to note that while the 28 FCS institutions have costs per credit hour ranging from $199 to $467, there is variability in college costs, with some falling below and others falling above the system-level average.
**FCS Tuition and Fees**

Figure 2 shows the system-level average cost for the academic year, defined as the costs of taking 30 credit hours during the school year. The cost to students has been stable with small increases and decreases over the last five years. While tuition at the majority of the colleges is under $3,200, there are institutions that have costs below or above system-level averages.

![Figure 2. FCS Academic Year (30 hours) Tuition and Fees, weighted mean](source: FCS Fact Book 2017-2022)

**Institutional Strategies to Reduce Tuition and Fees**

Figure 3 provides a summary of institutional responses to the division survey related to changes in tuition and fees at the 28 institutions. Five questions focused on changes in tuition, administrative fees and user fees.
As shown in Figure 3, all institutions indicated that tuition was reduced or held flat over the prior year. Additionally, all institutions indicated that administrative fees were reduced or held flat over the prior year. User fees, which include laboratory, distance learning or parking fees, were held flat or reduced by 46 percent of institutions and 68 percent of institutions eliminated user fees over the prior year. One institution, Gulf Coast State College, eliminated administrative fees.

**Student Financial Assistance**

FCS students are awarded a variety of financial aid through federal, state and local financial aid programs. Financial aid programs to promote affordability are also available at many FCS institutions, including:
- Targeted aid to students close to completing (including Last Mile).
- Targeted aid to students who were in need, but not eligible for Pell Grants.
- Emergency financial aid grant to students.
- Single online scholarship application management system for all institutional scholarships.
- Partnerships with community-based organizations.

**Student Aid by Type**

Student financial aid can be awarded from federal sources, including the need-based Pell Grant and federal student loans. Additionally, Florida and local municipalities and institutions can award financial aid to students in the FCS. Figure 4 uses IPEDS data from 2017-18 through 2019-20 to provide an average award for undergraduate students in the FCS.
The average amount received from the Pell Grant increased between 2017-18 and 2019-20, with the average award amount being $4,381 in the 2019-20 academic year. Federal student loan award amounts increased between 2017-18 and 2018-19 and had a slight decrease from 2018-19 and 2019-20. Federal, state, and local grant aid awards saw increases each year from 2017-18 to 2019-20.

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Figure 4. FCS Student Aid by Type
*Source: IPEDS, 2017-18 through 2019-20*

**Military and Veterans Benefits**

In addition to student aid provided to all students, Figure 5 and Figure 6 highlight the financial aid benefits for military and veterans through the Post-9/11 GI Bill. These data available from IPEDS provide the number of FCS students receiving these benefits from 2017-18 through 2019-20 (Figure 5) and the total amount of Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits awarded annually to students in the FCS (Figure 6).

The number of FCS students receiving Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits decreased between 2017-18 and 2019-20, which may be explained by looking at overall enrollment trends that also decreased. Additional research is needed to better understand the trend. In the 2019-20 academic year more than 12,000 FCS students received Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits.
Figure 5. Number of FCS Students Receiving Post-9/11 GI Bill Benefits  
*Source: IPEDS, 2017-18 through 2019-20*

Figure 6 provides the total amount of Post-9/11 GI Bill Benefits awarded to students in FCS institutions. As shown in the figure below, the total amount awarded to students decreased between 2018-19 and 2019. In total, more than $28 million was awarded to students in 2019-20.

Figure 6. Total Amount of Post-9/11 GI Bill Benefits Received by FCS Students  
*Source: IPEDS, 2017-18 through 2019-20*

**Net Price**

Previously in Figure 2, the average amount in tuition and fees in the FCS was $3,207 for 2021. In addition to tuition and fees, the total cost of attendance can include books and supplies and room and board. The net price amount presented in Figure 7 reflects the total cost of attendance minus the average award for federal, state or local government and institutional grant and scholarship aid provided to
students. In Figure 7, the average net price for the FCS increased between 2017-18 and 2019-20 to $6,293.

The increase in net price was not uniform across all 28 FCS institutions. From 2018-19 to 2019-20, 12 colleges showed decreased net prices, three colleges’ net prices remained relatively stable, and three colleges’ net prices increased by less than 5 percent. Eight colleges reported increases in net price between 9 percent and 67 percent. Two colleges reported substantial increases in net prices, which were based on adjustments to their methodologies to include transportation and housing costs more reflective of their regions.

**Cohort Default Rates**

Previously in Figure 4, the average amount of student loans borrowed by a student in the FCS remained relatively steady from 2018-19 to 2019-20. The U.S. Department of Education provides a database of cohort default rates through the Federal Student Aid website. The most recent available data related to cohort default rates for FCS institutions are for fiscal years 2016-2018. The cohort default rates are calculated by dividing the number of borrowers who entered repayment during a cohort fiscal year and defaulted by the number of borrowers who entered repayment during a cohort fiscal year. Figure 8 includes all FCS colleges where students can receive federal student loans (N=27).
Exemptions and Waivers

Colleges have the authority to grant fee exemptions and waivers for their students under ss. 1009.25 and 1009.26, F.S. From fiscal years 2016-17 through 2020-21, colleges have increased the number of students and related amounts of fee exemptions and waivers (Figure 9). However, the number of students receiving exemptions and waivers and the total amount of exemptions and waivers decreased in 2020-21, which may be explained by looking at overall enrollment trends that also decreased. Additional research is needed to better understand the trend. The majority of fee exemptions and waivers are in three major categories of dual enrollment, apprenticeship and out-of-state fees.
Institutional Strategies to Increase Financial Aid Initiatives and Programs

In addition to textbook affordability policies and initiatives, institutions used a variety of financial aid initiatives and programs, both targeted and general, to promote affordability for their students. Figure 10 describes the number of institutions that used each of the programs.

![Figure 10. Number of institutions utilizing financial aid initiatives and programs. N=28](image)

The CARES Act was included as an option and all institutions reported using those funds for emergency financial aid grants to students, as the data collection time period was 2021-22. Another common financial aid policy used by 25 of the 28 institutions was targeted aid to students close to completion of their programs.

Textbook Affordability

Books and Supplies

As mentioned in the net price calculation, books and supplies cost is included in the total cost of attendance in IPEDS. There is additional interest in books and supplies cost in Florida as it relates to textbook affordability and evaluating how to make course materials more affordable for FCS students. In Figure 11, the average cost of books and supplies for a student in the FCS is described for years 2017-18 through 2021-22. The average cost for books and supplies has increased over the last five years. In the most recent year, 2021-22, the average cost for these materials was $1,508.
Institutional Strategies to Promote Textbook Affordability

Each FCS institution develops its own selection process for textbook and instructional materials for all high-enrollment courses and any general education courses with a wide cost variance. Based on the survey responses, two main practices regarding the textbook and instructional materials selection and adoption process emerged as trends: 1) textbook and instructional materials selection is done at the course level, and 2) textbook and instructional materials selection is at the discretion of faculty.

For colleges where the selection of course materials is done at the course level, they reported very little to no variance in the cost of textbooks and instructional materials in high enrollment and general education courses. At these institutions, the selection and adoption process is done by: 1) discipline-specific faculty, 2) a combination of faculty and administrators, and 3) as a department.

For colleges where the selection of textbooks and instructional materials is done at the discretion of faculty, there exists the potential for a wide cost variance between different sections of the same course. These colleges reported encouraging faculty, particularly faculty teaching high enrollment courses, to consider course-wide adoptions and other efforts to minimize the cost of textbooks and instructional materials.

Regardless of the different selection and adoption practice, colleges reported having processes in place that consider cost-saving initiatives, such as:

- Limiting the number of courses using customized textbooks.
- Creating an approval process for justification of wide cost variance.
- Conducting periodic departmental reviews of adopted textbook prices.
- Working in conjunction with institutional research to look at bookstore data trends.
Additionally, Figure 12 provides insight into how colleges are using various initiatives to increase affordability of textbooks and course materials. All FCS institutions consider the length of time that textbooks and instructional materials remain in use. Further, the adoption of open education resources and use of digital textbooks and materials are utilized by all the FCS institutions. In addition to the initiatives indicated below, multiple colleges explained other ways to increase textbook affordability including textbook price matching, providing textbook and course materials in the library and developing initiatives to incentivize faculty to use low- or no-cost course materials.

![Bar chart](image)

**Figure 12. Number of institutions utilizing strategies to increase textbook affordability. N=28**

In the effort to provide adequate time to acquire textbooks and course materials, institutions post these materials 45 days prior to the first day of class. More than 80 percent of institutions meet the requirement of posting material requirements for at least 95 percent of all courses and course sections. Eighty-six percent and eighty two percent of institutions reported meeting this requirement for fall 2021 and spring 2022, respectively. Figure 13 describes some examples of why courses and course sections did not meet the 45-day requirement. The most common examples for posting after the 45-day window were due to changes in course schedules and new teaching assignments.
At the suggestion of FDOE’s Inspector General based on findings from the auditor general, the State Board of Education (SBOE) modified Rule 6A-14.092, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), on February 9, 2022, to add reasonable exceptions to meeting the forty-five (45) day requirement, which is authorized in s. 1004.085(5)(a), F.S. The intent behind the rule change was to recognize there are limited, valid reasons why an institution may not be able to adhere to the forty-five (45) day posting requirement. They are:

1. The originally adopted textbook or instructional material is no longer available;
2. A faculty member is hired or assigned to teach the course section after the forty-five (45) day notification deadline;
3. The course section is added after the forty-five (45) day notification deadline;
4. The instructional modality of the course section changes after the forty-five (45) day notification deadline; and
5. The course is continuing workforce education.

These exceptions did not go into effect for this report cycle; however, they will be in effect for the next report cycle, which will provide a deeper understanding of the reasons why course sections are not meeting the deadline.

Updates During the 2022 Legislative Session

During the 2022 legislative session, Senate Bill (SB) 7044 modified s. 1004.085, F.S., to provide requirements for lists of required and recommended textbooks and instructional materials for FCS institution and state university courses. Specifically, the bill required the lists of textbooks and instructional materials to:

- Remain posted for at least five academic years.
- Be searchable by the course subject, course number, course title, the name of the instructor of the course, the title of each assigned textbook or instructional material, and each author of an assigned textbook or instructional material.
• Be easily downloadable by current and prospective students.

Additionally, SB 7044 modified syllabi requirements for the list of required and recommended textbooks when the course is a general education core course option identified pursuant to s. 1007.25, F.S. For these courses, and each course section, the full syllabus must be posted with the following information: course curriculum; goals, objectives, and student expectations; and assessment of student performance. This bill took effect on July 1, 2022.

To comply with the new statutory requirements, on August 17, 2022, SBOE approved revisions to Rule 6A-14.092, F.A.C., Textbook and Course Material Affordability and Transparency (formerly Textbook Affordability). This rule amendment also included updates to the reporting requirements, which are expected to be reflected during the 2023 reporting period.

Conclusion

Every hard-working student deserves a real opportunity to earn an affordable, high-quality degree or credential that offers a clear path to civic engagement, economic security and success. The 21st century workforce demands the best education to meet the needs of a diversified state economy. The Florida College System continues to meet those needs in the most affordable manner for students. All 28 colleges will continue to innovate and implement strategies that result in cost-saving measures. Ensuring that our colleges remain the primary access point to higher education for all students will always be a top priority.
Appendix A: 2022 Division of Florida Colleges Template for College Affordability Reports
2022 Florida College System Affordability Report Template

Affordability remains a top priority for all 28 Florida College System (FCS) institutions. The Division of Florida Colleges requests data and information related to college affordability initiatives and textbook and instructional material affordability pursuant to sections (ss.) 1004.084 and 1004.085, Florida Statutes (F.S.). By September 30, 2022, each college must input institutional responses for the 2022 FCS Affordability Report via https://www.research.net/r/2022FCSAffordability.

If you have any questions about completing the report, please contact Research and Analytics at FCSResearch@fldoe.org.

This Word template is provided for planning purposes only. All responses must be uploaded in the survey instrument.

Contact Information

1. College Name
   Click or tap here to enter text.

2. Contact Information
   | Name       | Click or tap here to enter text. |
   | Title      | Click or tap here to enter text. |
   | Email Address | Click or tap here to enter text. |

Tuition and Fees

3. Did your institution reduce or hold tuition flat over the prior year?
   □ Yes
   □ No

   If you answered “no,” provide a short description (100 words or less) of how the decision to increase tuition was made. Specify the amounts and identify the estimated number of students impacted.
   Click or tap here to enter text.

4. Did your institution reduce or hold administrative fees flat over the prior year? Administrative fees include financial aid, capital improvement, student activity and service, and technology.
   □ Yes
   □ No

   If you answered “no,” provide a short description (100 words or less) of how the decision to increase administrative fees was made. Specify the amounts and identify the estimated number of students impacted.
   Click or tap here to enter text.

5. Did your institution eliminate administrative fees over the prior year?
2022 Florida College System Affordability Report Template

☐ Yes
☐ No

If you answered “yes,” provide a short description (100 words or less) of how the decision to eliminate fees was made. Specify the amounts and identify the estimated number of students impacted.

Click or tap here to enter text.

6. Did your institution reduce or hold user fees flat over the prior year? (e.g., laboratory, distance learning, parking, etc.)
   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No

If you answered “no,” provide a short description (100 words or less) of how the decision to increase user fees was made. Specify the amounts and identify the estimated number of students impacted.

Click or tap here to enter text.

7. Did your institution eliminate user fees over the prior year?
   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No

If you answered “yes,” provide a short description (100 words or less) of how the decision to eliminate fees was made. Specify the amounts and identify the estimated number of students impacted.

Textbook Affordability

8. Describe your institution’s selection process for textbook and instructional materials for all high-enrollment courses and any general education courses with a wide cost variance.

Click or tap here to enter text.

9. Identify specific institutional policies or initiatives designed to reduce the cost of textbooks and instructional materials. Select all that apply.
   ☐ Adoption of Open Educational Resources
   ☐ Usage of digital textbooks and learning objects
   ☐ Textbook affordability committees
   ☐ Mechanisms to assist in buying, renting, selling, and sharing textbooks and instructional materials
   ☐ Program(s) with no textbook costs
   ☐ Faculty grants for development of textbooks
   ☐ Bulk textbook purchasing
   ☐ Offering students opt-in provisions for the purchase of materials
   ☐ Offering students opt-out provisions for the purchase of materials
   ☐ Consideration of the length of time that textbooks and instructional materials remain in use
10. Describe the policies implemented regarding the posting of textbook and instructional materials for at least 95% of all courses and course sections 45 days before the first day of class.

11. Report the number and the total percentage of courses and course sections that were not able to meet the textbook and instructional materials posting deadline for the academic year.

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12. Identify examples of why the posting deadlines were not met, if applicable. Select all that apply.

- Changes in accreditation standards that required curricular changes
- Errors made by the third-party bookstore vendor
- Teaching assignments given to faculty members after the 45-day window passed
- Course schedules changed for some faculty after the posting deadline
- Course sections changed instructional modality
- Other (please specify) Click or tap here to enter text.

Financial Aid Policies

13. Identify specific institutional financial aid policies or programs that promote affordability. Select all that apply.

- Targeted aid to students close to completing (including Last Mile)
- Targeted aid to students who were in need, but not eligible for Pell Grants
- Emergency student aid fund for students in emergency financial situations with unplanned costs
- Single online scholarship application management system for all institutional scholarships
- Partnerships with community-based organizations
- Other (please specify) Click or tap here to enter text.

Other Affordability Strategies

14. Provide any additional information about any innovative or new affordability strategies. Optional.

Click or tap here to enter text.