

NACS Student Watch Report: Course Materials Spending Dropped, Increase in Digital Preference

OBERLIN, OHIO, UNITED STATES, June 15, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- College students, on average, reported spending less on their course materials during the 2022-23 academic year, according to the [Student Watch™](#):



[Attitudes and Behaviors toward Course](#)

[Materials](#): 2023 Report, the National Association of College Stores' (NACS) annual survey of college students. Total course material spending for required materials fell to \$285 per student for the year, the lowest amount since NACS began tracking student spending in 1998 and less than half the spending in 2007-08 when students paid \$701 on average for course materials.

Overall, students took an average of 8.7 courses during the 2022-23 academic year, slightly less than last year. However, they purchased more materials, 9.7 on average compared to 8.6 in 2021-22. Dividing students' total spending on required course materials by the number of courses they took results in average course material spending per course of \$33. This is a decrease from \$38 in 2021-22.

There was a decrease this year in the percentage of students purchasing materials and in the percentage of students renting. Sixty-nine (69%) percent of students purchased at least one material and 25% percent rented at least one material for the spring 2023 semester. By comparison, 79% of students purchased a course material in spring 2022 and 35% rented a material. Upper-level students were less likely to purchase materials and more likely to rent.

Seventy-two percent of students said they had been assigned at least one free or non-paid-for material during the academic year. Last year, 73% said the same. The number of students reporting being assigned free materials has slowly been increasing over the years but has remained steady this year. Most (63%) of these materials were provided to students through the campus learning management system, but other sources were instructor handouts, website articles, class notes, professional journals and articles, web searches, social media, general consumer books (novels, for instance), and free textbooks. (While students did not pay for them directly, some of these sources are supported by student tuition and fees, such as instructor-developed materials and journal subscriptions at the campus library.)

Last year, preference for print declined slightly to only 44% of students preferring some type of print material. Though this was only a small decline, it was the first decline seen since 2019. That decline continued this year, with print preference down to 37%. This year, preference for digital materials continued to increase. Thirty-four percent of students preferred some type of digital materials. Older students, namely students older than 30, had stronger preference for print. Racial and ethnic minorities were more likely than other students to prefer digital materials, as were students from larger institutions.

Around one in four students decided not to acquire at least one course material. Students who skipped materials were more likely to consider dropping out, suggesting these students are struggling academically or with the costs of attendance. However, students who skipped acquiring materials only spent \$12 less on average per year than students who obtained all materials.

Student Watch™ is developed by OnCampus Research™, the research arm of the National Association of College Stores. Other key findings from the report, which compiled responses from approximately 14,500 college students from 36 two- and four-year colleges and universities in the U.S. and Canada, include:

- Course materials spending represented less than one-quarter (24%) of total spending across course materials, technology, and supplies needed for courses, compared to 28% from the previous year.
- Most students who purchased materials purchased at least some from their campus store (84% of students who purchase). This year the gap between online and offline college store purchases decreased, with 41% of students purchasing from the campus store's physical location and 43% purchasing from the college store online.
- Over half (56%) of purchased course materials were made at the campus stores, 18% from Amazon, and the rest split between publisher websites and other sources.
- This year, more students said they used online homework assignments, 80% compared to 71% last year.
- Participation in campus negotiated discount programs, such as inclusive access and flat fee models, continued to grow. Student satisfaction with these institutional programs also increased.

Members of the media interested in a copy of the report should email publicrelations@nacs.org.

About The National Association of College Stores: The National Association of College Stores (NACS) is the professional trade association representing the collegiate retailing industry. NACS represents campus retailers and industry-related companies that supply course materials and

other merchandise and services to campus stores. NACS provides education and other resources that help its member stores support student success, the campus experience, and the missions of higher education institutions.

About The NACS Foundation: In operation for almost four decades, the NACS Foundation is the only philanthropic resource for the campus store industry. Since its inception, it has disbursed more than \$3 million for industry education and research and awarded more than 3,000 professional development grants to college store professionals.

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