

Affordable Learning PA (ALPA) and PALCI Reveal 2023 Survey Results on Course Material Affordability in Pennsylvania

Comprehensive survey finds Pennsylvania college students are struggling under the costs of course materials



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/EINPresswire.com/ -- [Affordable Learning PA](#)

(ALPA) and the Partnership for Academic Library Collaboration and Innovation (PALCI) are pleased to announce the results of their [comprehensive survey on course material affordability](#) in Pennsylvania in 2023. The Pennsylvania Course Materials Cost Survey, conducted in



These findings will help us better contextualize ongoing efforts, so we can reduce costs for students, give faculty more control over course materials, and help students stay enrolled in college."

*Elizabeth Nelson, Penn State
Lehigh Valley Librarian*

partnership with Bay View Analytics, collected 4,306 responses from students across 14 participating institutions during the spring and fall of 2023. Its goal is to understand the impact of course material choices on students' academic and general life.

This project builds upon the groundwork laid by the Virginia Course Materials Survey and the Florida Student Textbook and Course Materials Survey, expanding and updating the survey to address the unique needs and challenges faced by Pennsylvania students. The survey also included a national sample, providing a benchmark for comparing Pennsylvania's response rates to the broader

trends in course material costs, academic choices, and preferences.

Key findings from the Pennsylvania-focused survey include:

Most Students Worry about Course Material Costs: Nearly half of all students surveyed expressed a "moderate" or "extreme" level of concern regarding course material costs, highlighting widespread anxiety over this issue.

Course Material Costs Adversely Affect Student Success: The survey revealed that course material costs have a detrimental impact on students' academic performance, leading to poor grades and forcing students to reduce the number of courses they take. Only 23% of students

reported no impact on their academic career.

Course Material Costs Affect Academic Choices: Many students indicated that decisions shaping their academic careers, such as their choice of institution, major, and minor, are influenced by material cost responsibilities and expectations.

Students Actively Seek To Cut Costs: An overwhelming 98% of students have attempted at least one method to reduce the costs of course materials, including buying used copies, searching for a free online version of needed materials, or even going without required materials.

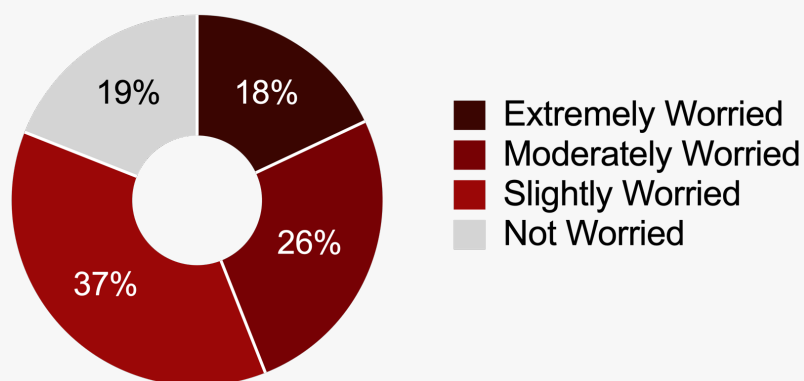
Mixed Preferences for Digital and Print Materials: While 40% of students prefer print materials, 42% indicated that their preference varies depending on the course or that they have no particular preference. This demonstrates the diversity of student needs and learning styles.

"This survey data will be incredibly helpful for higher education institutions working toward both greater affordability and greater equity for students, in PA and beyond," said Elizabeth Nelson, a reference and instruction librarian at Penn State Lehigh Valley and a member of the Affordable Learning PA Steering Committee. "These findings will help us better contextualize ongoing efforts, so we can reduce costs for students, give faculty more control over course materials, and help students stay enrolled in college."

ALPA and Bay View Analytics researchers will present the full results and insights from the Pennsylvania Course Materials Cost Survey at an [upcoming webinar](#), scheduled for January 18, 2024 at 1PM Eastern / 10AM Pacific. Registration will be available online at Online Learning Consortium: <https://onlinelearningconsortium.org/webinar/course-materials-cost-students-more-than-money/>.

"Students are worried about their course material costs everywhere, but we found Pennsylvania students are more worried and have a lower proportion of their costs covered by financial aid," notes Dr. Julia Seaman, co-lead researcher behind the survey. "This shows there is even a greater need for support in Pennsylvania. These differences highlight the importance of research at the state and even individual institutional level."

How worried were you about meeting your course material costs this term?



Nearly half of all students surveyed expressed a "moderate" or "extreme" level of concern regarding course material costs, highlighting widespread anxiety over this issue.

The full report is available for download here:

https://www.bayviewanalytics.com/course_materials.html

The completion of this survey marks the project's sixth and final year of its current grant-funded cycle. This project was made possible by Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds from the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Office of Commonwealth Libraries. The views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this website do not necessarily represent those of the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services or the Department of Education. For more information about the survey, its findings, and the upcoming presentation event, please visit Affordable Learning PA at <https://www.affordablelearningpa.org>.

About Affordable Learning PA (ALPA):

Affordable Learning PA (ALPA) is a statewide library-led initiative dedicated to providing resources and strategies to reduce the cost of educational materials for Pennsylvania's students. ALPA community members train librarians to collaborate with institutions, faculty, students, bookstores and other stakeholders to make higher education more affordable, equitable, and accessible. ALPA originated with a LSTA-funded grant awarded to PALCI and administered by the Office of Commonwealth Libraries within the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and has since developed into a volunteer-based community of practice among library practitioners and faculty to support affordability issues in Pennsylvania institutions of postsecondary education.

About the Partnership for Academic Library Collaboration and Innovation (PALCI):

The Partnership for Academic Library Collaboration and Innovation (PALCI) is a non-profit 501(c)(3) membership organization that originated in 1996 and officially became the Pennsylvania Academic Library Consortium, Inc. in 1998. Today, PALCI's membership has expanded to include over 70 academic and research libraries in Pennsylvania and neighboring states. The primary goal of PALCI is to facilitate cost-effective and sustainable access to information resources and services. PALCI is renowned for its highly respected EZBorrow interlibrary loan (ILL) service. PALCI members work together to support a diverse community of over 800,000 students, faculty, and staff. Their efforts are focused on collaborative collection initiatives, resource sharing services, and the development of innovative technology projects and approaches to enhance library services.

About Bay View Analytics

Bay View Analytics is a statistical research firm focusing on survey design, implementation and analysis. The scope of Bay View Analytics' consulting engagements includes scientific statistical analyses, clinical trial statistics and survey designs for a range of topics, with a particular focus on online education. Bay View Analytics has been conducting research and publishing annual reports on the state of online education in U.S. higher education for thirteen years. Visit

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