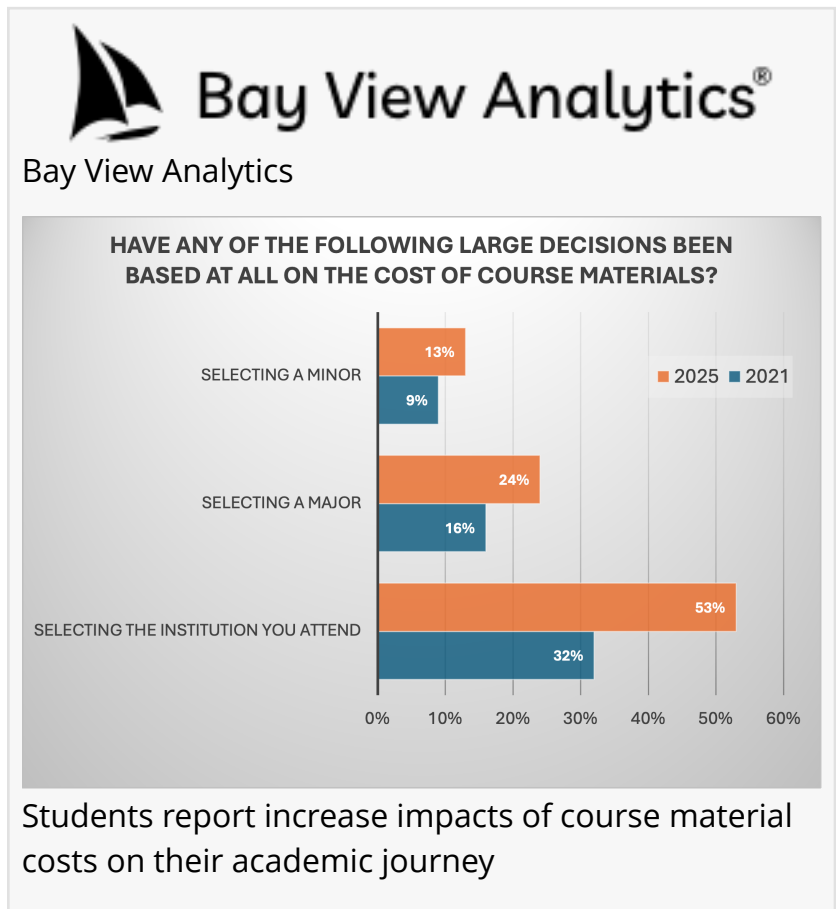


Statewide Survey Finds Course Material Costs Shape Major Student Decisions Across Virginia

New findings show course material costs increasingly influence students' choice of institution, major, and minor

FAIRFAX, VA, UNITED STATES, March 3, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A statewide survey of nearly 10,000 students reveals that the cost of course materials is playing an increasingly influential role in major academic decisions for students across Virginia. The [2025 Virginia Course Materials Survey](#) was conducted by [VIVA, Virginia's academic library consortium](#), in partnership with [Bay View Analytics](#). The survey examined how course material costs affect students' educational choices, learning experiences, and academic outcomes across the Commonwealth.



Compared to results from a similar statewide survey conducted by VIVA in 2021, the 2025 findings show that a growing share of students are selecting their institution, major, and minor based in part on course material costs, underscoring the financial pressures facing students in higher education.

"By maintaining consistent measures with the 2021 survey and expanding participation statewide, this study offers a rigorous longitudinal view of how course material costs shape student decisions, directly from the students themselves. The project highlights that costs remain a barrier to student success, and that tackling this barrier should be a priority topic for higher education policy makers in Virginia and nationally." -- Julia Seaman, Ph.D., Research Director, Bay View Analytics

Key findings from the survey include:

- Seven in ten students worry about affording required course materials for the current academic term.
- The influence of course material costs on students' choice of institution (53%), choice of major (24%), and choice of minor (13%) has increased since 2021.
- Nearly all students (97%) report taking steps to reduce course material costs, including delaying purchases, sharing materials, or seeking lower-cost alternatives.

These findings highlight that course material costs are a persistent barrier to student academic success. Financial concern about course materials is widespread and may affect student engagement, learning outcomes, and long-term educational pathways.



The results suggest that institutional and system-level strategies that reduce or eliminate course material costs have the potential to support academic success, reduce student stress, and promote more equitable outcomes across Virginia's higher education institutions.



These findings will guide the consortium's work as we support our institutions in their efforts to reduce cost barriers and strengthen student success"

Tyler Walters, Ph.D., VIVA Steering Committee Chair

The Virginia Course Materials Survey collected 9,853 responses from students at 40 of VIVA's 70 member institutions during the Spring and Fall 2025 terms. The survey was designed and analyzed by Bay View Analytics in collaboration with VIVA to assess the impact of course material costs on students' academic decisions, learning experiences, and cost-management strategies.

"Building on VIVA's first survey, these results deepen our understanding of how course material costs affect the

student experience. The fact that close to 10,000 students across 40 institutions shared their experiences gives Virginia an understanding of the barriers our students are facing that few other states have. These findings will guide the consortium's work as we support our institutions in their efforts to reduce cost barriers and strengthen student success across the Commonwealth." – Tyler Walters, Ph.D., VIVA Steering Committee Chair, Dean, University Libraries, Virginia Tech

VIVA's course materials surveys contribute to a growing body of state-level research on course materials costs, including the Student Textbook and Course Materials Survey conducted by the Florida Office of Distance Learning and Student Services and the Pennsylvania Course Materials Survey 2023 by Affordable Learning PA and the Partnership for Academic Library Collaboration and Innovation, in partnership with Bay View Analytics.

The 2025 Virginia Course Materials Reports are available for download and may be shared freely. All materials are released under a Creative Commons Attribution–Noncommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) license. Scan the QR code below to access the reports.

About VIVA

VIVA is the consortium of nonprofit academic libraries within the Commonwealth of Virginia. Members include all 39 state-assisted colleges and universities, as well as 31 independent institutions and the Library of Virginia. VIVA builds cooperative, equitable, accessible, and sustainable library infrastructure and services to support higher education across the Commonwealth. Learn more at vivalib.org or contact us at viva@gmu.edu.

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 www.bayviewanalytics.com for more information or contact us at info@bayviewanalytics.com.

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