



5-2023

2022 Gettysburg College Textbook Survey Full Report

Mary R. Elmquist
Gettysburg College

Janelle Wertzberger
Gettysburg College

Follow this and additional works at: <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/librarypubs>



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#), and the [Scholarly Communication Commons](#)

Share feedback about the accessibility of this item.

Recommended Citation

Elmquist, Mary R. and Wertzberger, Janelle, "2022 Gettysburg College Textbook Survey Full Report" (2023). *All Musselman Library Staff Works*. 170.
<https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/librarypubs/170>

This is the author's version of the work. This publication appears in Gettysburg College's institutional repository by permission of the copyright owner for personal use, not for redistribution. Cupola permanent link:
<https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/librarypubs/170>

This open access report is brought to you by The Cupola: Scholarship at Gettysburg College. It has been accepted for inclusion by an authorized administrator of The Cupola. For more information, please contact cupola@gettysburg.edu.

2022 Gettysburg College Textbook Survey Full Report

Abstract

In Fall 2022, Musselman Library conducted its second course materials survey, this time in collaboration with 10 other liberal arts colleges from around the country. This report compiles the results from Gettysburg College participants' responses. Comparisons are also made to the results from Gettysburg's 2019 survey and the larger group of colleges.

Keywords

Gettysburg College, textbooks, textbook survey, course materials, OER

Disciplines

Higher Education | Library and Information Science | Scholarly Communication

2022 Gettysburg College Textbook Survey Report

Introduction and Background

In order to further understand the impact of textbook costs on students at liberal arts colleges, Musselman Library administered its second Student Textbook and Course Materials Survey in fall 2022. This iteration of the survey was conducted in collaboration with ten other institutions recruited from members of the Oberlin Group of Libraries, a consortium of libraries at leading liberal arts colleges in the United States. The project was led by a team of librarians from Bates College and Gettysburg College.

The survey was administered via Qualtrics during the first three weeks of the fall semester. It included nine questions about students' behaviors and experiences with textbook purchasing and ten demographic questions. The survey tool was initially adapted from the 2016 Florida Virtual Campus Student Textbook and Course Materials Survey for the 2019 Gettysburg survey, and was further adjusted for this iteration.

The survey returned 3601 responses that contained data across all participating institutions. The overall response rate was about 15% and ranged from 3% to 34% across the schools.

Survey data were cleaned and prepared for analysis using Excel and SPSS and with the help of statistician Sharon Birch. Dr. Birch also prepared the initial summary report that served as a basis for this document.

Participating institutions

- Bates College
- Colby College
- Connecticut College
- Gettysburg College
- Haverford College
- Lafayette College
- Macalester College
- Middlebury College
- Mount Holyoke College
- Skidmore College
- Sewanee: The University of the South

Demographics

Demographic Information: Gettysburg College Fall 2022 Student Body and Survey Respondents		
How many students...		
	Student body	Survey respondents
...total	2378	387 (16.3% of F22 student body)
...in each class year		
First-year	644 (27.1%)	118 (30.5%)
Sophomore	567 (23.8%)	97 (25.1%)
Junior	594 (25.0%)	72 (18.6%)
Senior	573 (24.1%)	96 (24.8%)
...are international students	186 (7.8%)	58 (15%)
...studying off campus in fall 2022	146 (6.1%)	56 (14.5%)
...by gender		
Women	1241 (52.2%)	240 (62.0%)
Men	1137 (47.8%)	113 (29.2%)
Non-binary		17 (4.4%)
Self-identified		6 (1.6%)
Prefer not to answer		5 (1.3%)
...by first-generation status	≈20%*	126 (32.6%)
...by Pell Grant recipients	≈20%*	114 (29.5%)
...by race/ethnicity**		
Hispanic or Latinx or Spanish Origin	269 (11.3%)	60 (15.5%)
American Indian or Alaska Native	4 (0.2%)	11 (2.8%)
Asian	72 (3.0%)	44 (11.4%)
Black or African American	110 (4.6%)	23 (5.9%)
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	2 (0.1%)	3 (0.8%)
White	1601 (67.3%)	240 (62.0%)
Two or more races	69 (2.9%)	21 (5.4%)
International	186 (7.8%)	
Race and ethnicity unknown	65 (2.7%)	
Self-identified		6 (1.6%)
Prefer not to answer		30 (7.8%)

* Due to the ways these numbers are collected and reported by the College, both are approximations based on known data.

** Our survey asked and reports race separately from ethnicity. We also did not include international student status as a racial category.

Selected Demographic Comparisons: Response Groups			
How many students...	Oberlin Group (OG)	Gettysburg 2022 (GC2022)	Gettysburg 2019 (GC2019)
...total	3,597 (15.0% of total population of all schools)	387 (16.3% of F22 student body)	438 (16.7% of F19 student body)
...in each class year	First-year	1106 (30.7%)	137 (31.3%)
	Sophomore	1024 (28.5%)	125 (28.5%)
	Junior	689 (19.2%)	72 (16.4%)
	Senior	725 (20.2%)	85 (19.4%)
...by first-generation status	818 (22.7%)	126 (32.6%)	111 (25.3%)
...by Pell Grant recipients	809 (22.5%)	114 (29.5%)	111 (25.3%)

* All percentages indicate percent of respective response group, except where otherwise labeled.

Results

How much did books (textbooks, novels, ebooks) cost you for ALL Fall 2022 courses?

This question asked cost as a dollar value.

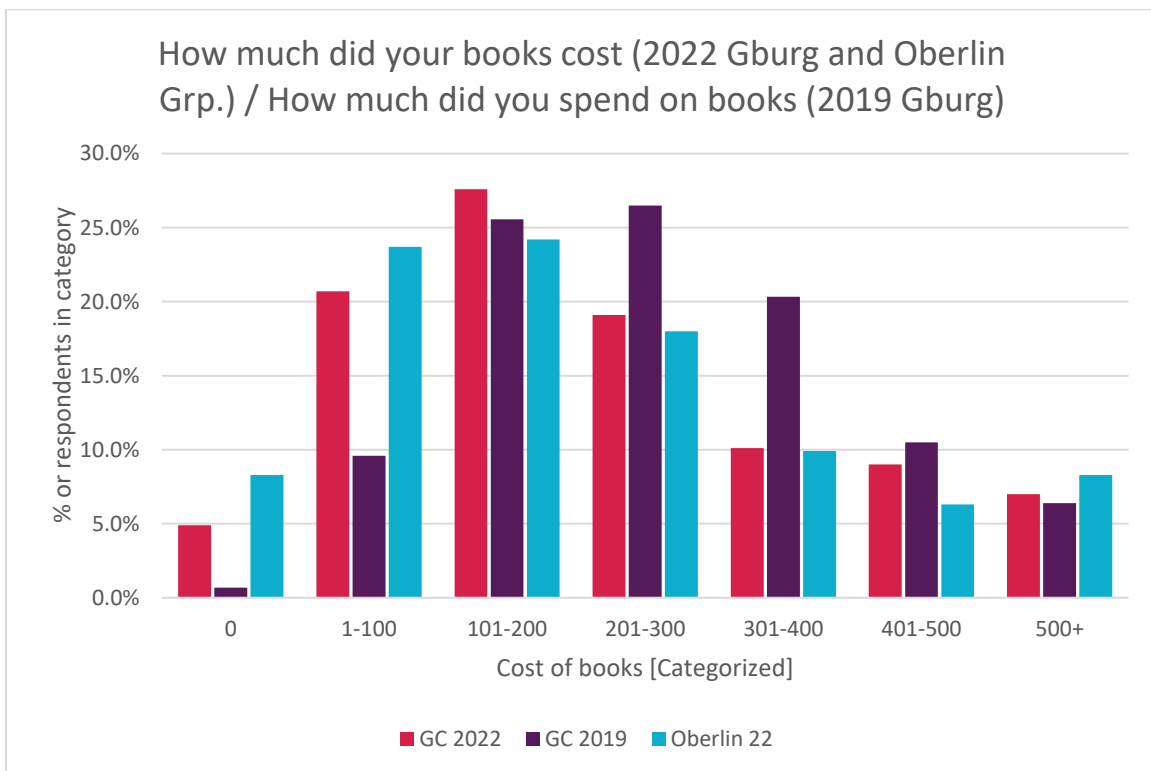
In Fall 2022, all averages have decreased from Gettysburg's 2019 survey, with a mean down by about \$35 to \$248.10. Gettysburg students pay about \$10 more than the overall Oberlin Group average. The most common answer also decreased from \$300 in 2019 to \$200 in 2022.

Fall 2022 book costs: averages			
	OG	GC2022	GC2019
Mean	\$239.18	\$248.10	\$282.60
Median	\$200	\$200	\$208
Mode	\$200	\$200	\$300
Std. Deviation	242.31	214.82	151.67

The overall results were categorized for ease of visualization:

Fall 2022 book costs: categorized						
	OG		GC2022		GC2019*	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
\$0	297	8.3%	19	4.9%	3	0.7%
\$1 - \$100	852	23.7%	80	20.7%	42	9.6%
\$101 - \$200	870	24.2%	107	27.6%	112	25.6%
\$201 - \$300	649	18.0%	74	19.1%	116	26.5%
\$301 - \$400	356	9.9%	39	10.1%	89	20.3%
\$401 - \$500	225	6.3%	35	9.0%	46	10.5%
\$500 +	297	8.3%	27	7.0%	28	6.4%
Missing	51	1.4%	6	1.6%	3	0.7%

* Gettysburg's 2019 survey original reported using ranges of \$0-100; \$101-200; \$201-300; \$301-400; and \$401+. Those responses have been recategorized here.



This mean cost of books varied significantly by class year. First-year students spent the most at \$305.82, and the mean decreased year-to-year, with seniors reporting spending nearly half as much at \$169.88.

Gettysburg 2022: Mean cost by class year				
You are a: first-year, sophomore, junior, senior	Mean*	N	Std. Deviation	Median
First-year Student	\$305.82	116	253.065	\$255.50
Sophomore	\$257.63	94	234.205	\$200.00
Junior	\$244.60	70	238.910	\$200.00
Senior	\$169.88	94	226.339	\$150.00
Total	\$248.08	374	241.212	\$200.00

*chi-squared test indicates means differ significantly

Means varied significantly based on first-generation student status. First-generation students spent an average of about \$80 more than those who were not first-gen. 32 respondents were both first-generation and first-year students. These students reported a mean cost for their books of over \$370.

Gettysburg 2022: Mean cost by first-gen status				
Are you a first-generation college student?	Mean*	N	Std. Deviation	Median
Yes	\$301.02	122	274.402	\$262.50
No	\$217.95	243	169.112	\$200.00
Prefer not to answer	\$260.59	6	180.757	\$306.78
Total	\$245.95	371	212.812	\$200.00

*chi-squared test indicates means differ significantly

How much did books cost you for all Fall 2022 courses? [dropped \$ outliers]				
You are a: first-year, sophomore, junior, senior	First-gen?			
	Yes		No	
	Mean	N	Mean	N
First-year	\$371.84	32	\$277.31	81
Sophomore	\$314.27	30	\$227.10	61
Junior	\$344.13	24	\$192.67	46
Senior	\$198.28	36	\$141.51	55

Student spending did not appear to be meaningfully impacted by Pell Grant recipient status.

Gettysburg 2022: Mean cost by Pell recipient status				
Did you receive a Pell Grant?	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Median
Yes	\$257.33	110	224.960	\$200.00
No	\$241.45	237	210.508	\$200.00
Prefer not to answer	\$232.80	25	180.346	\$200.00
Total	\$245.56	372	212.659	\$200.00

How much do you feel is reasonable to pay for all books and required course materials for a SINGLE class?

This question asked for a dollar value.

\$50 was the most common response. The mean for all Gettysburg respondents was \$61.81, down about \$12 from 2019. The Gettysburg and Oberlin Group 2022 means were consistent, with only about a 50-cent difference.

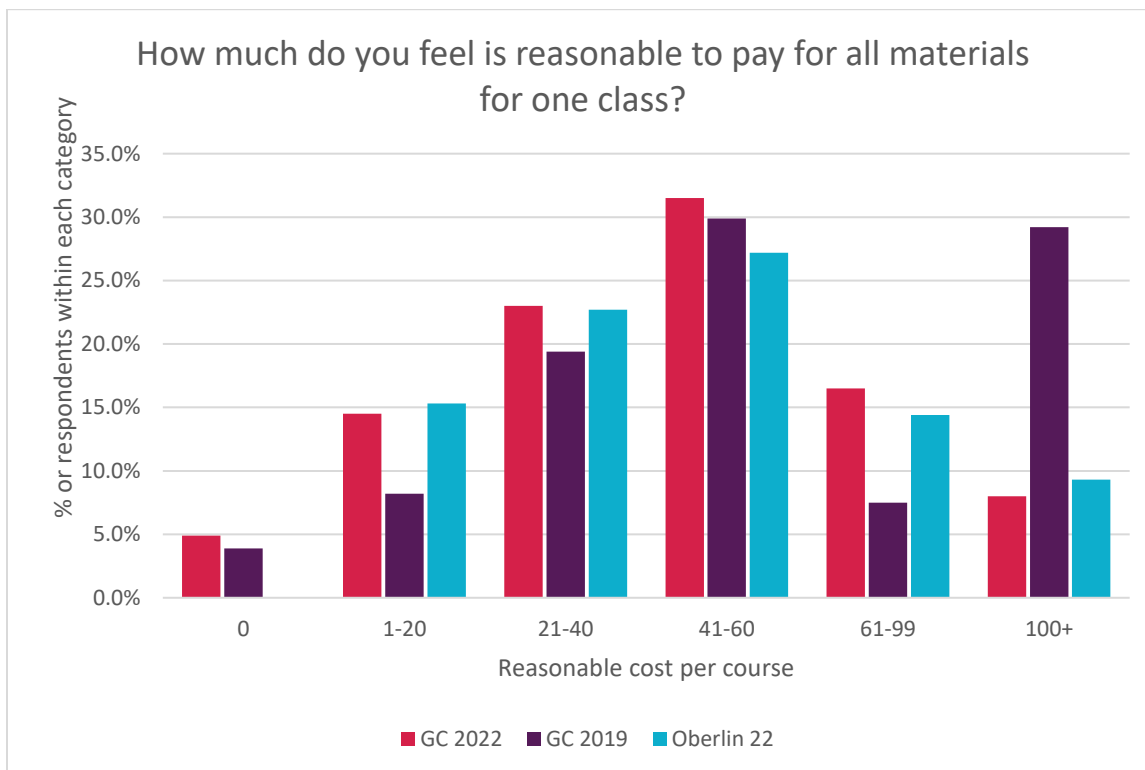
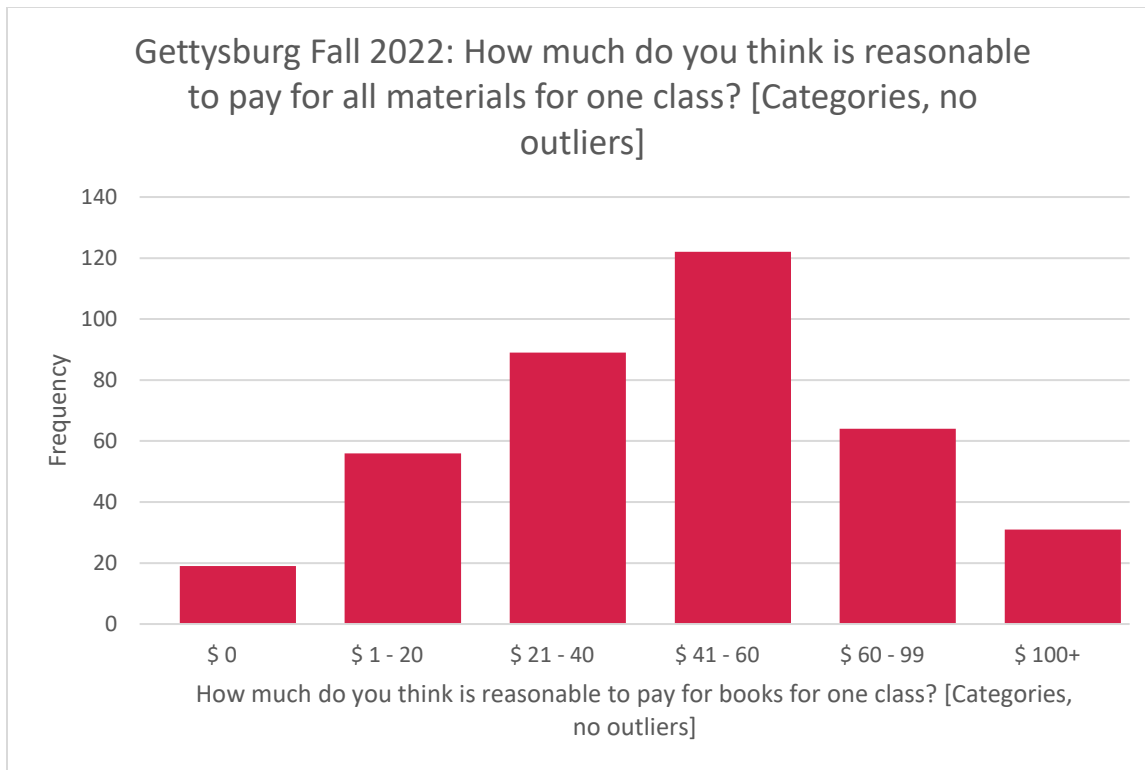
Means from Gettysburg in 2022 did not vary significantly by class year, but varied from \$69.50 (first-years) to \$54.00 (juniors).

Reasonable cost per course: averages			
	OG	GC2022	GC2019
Mean	\$62.37	\$61.81	\$73.56
Median	\$50.00	\$50.00	\$50.00
Mode	\$50	\$50	\$50
Std. Deviation	83.24	69.821	65.91

The results were categorized for ease of visualization:

Reasonable cost per course: categorized						
	OG		GC2022		GC2019*	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
\$0	329	9.1%	19	4.9%	17	3.9%
\$ 1 - 20	550	15.3%	56	14.5%	36	8.2%
\$ 21 - 40	818	22.7%	89	23.0%	85	19.4%
\$ 41 - 60	979	27.2%	122	31.5%	131	29.9%
\$ 60 - 99	517	14.4%	64	16.5%	33	7.5%
\$ 100+	335	9.3%	31	8.0%	128	29.2%
Missing	89	2.0%	3	0.8%	8	1.8%

* Gettysburg's 2019 survey originally reported using ranges of \$0; \$1-20; \$21-50; \$51-100; \$101+. Those responses have been recategorized here.



The mean response did vary significantly by first-generation status, with first-gen students indicating a reasonable cost about \$20 higher than their counterparts.

Gettysburg 2022: Mean reasonable cost by first-generation status				
Are you a first-generation college student?	Mean*	N	Std. Deviation	Median
Yes	\$75.26	123	89.973	\$50.00
No	\$55.11	245	55.577	\$50.00
Prefer not to answer	\$43.33	6	44.684	\$22.50
Total	\$61.55	374	69.207	\$50.00

*chi-squared test indicates means differ significantly

Pell Grant recipients reported a mean reasonable cost slightly—but not meaningfully—higher than their counterparts.

Gettysburg 2022: Mean reasonable cost by Pell recipient status				
Did you receive a Pell grant?	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Median
Yes	\$65.56	111	77.996	\$50.00
No	\$58.32	240	59.620	\$50.00
Prefer not to answer	\$73.96	24	106.495	\$27.50
Total	\$61.46	375	69.134	\$50.00

What measures have you taken to reduce your required book costs for the Fall 2022 semester?

Only 3% of Gettysburg respondents indicated that they do not attempt to control book costs, up slightly from 1% in 2019. Respondents were most likely to rent their books from the College bookstore as a cost-saving measure, and they also indicated frequently purchasing used books and buying/renting from sources other than the Bookstore.

In comparison to responses from Gettysburg students in 2019, respondents were almost twice as likely to say that they only purchased some of their required books in 2022. Respondents were overall noticeably more likely to use library resources in 2022, including both using course reserves and checking out books from the library’s regular collection.

The only strategy to noticeably decrease in response rate was students selling used books—decreasing from about a quarter of respondents to about 17%.

There was also a noticeable increase in the number of students who chose “Other,” the option to self-report other types of measures used to control costs. Some form of “download from the web” or “piracy” was by far the most common response to this question in the free-response field.

Measures to reduce cost (percent of all respondents)			
Measure to Reduce Costs	OG	GC2022	GC2019
	%	%	%
Rent a copy from the campus bookstore	27.7	55.6	52.3
Buy used copies from the campus bookstore	39.9	49.6	47.5
Buy books from a source other than the campus bookstore	42.5	44.7	49.5
Rent books from a source other than the campus bookstore	26.6	34.6	39.0
Only purchase some of the required books	32.6	28.4	15.8
Check out course materials from the library	23.1	21.2	11.6
Worked additional hours at my job to pay for books	15.8	18.3	
Share books with classmate	23.5	17.8	16.4
Sell used books	15.0	16.8	26.0
Use a reserve copy from the campus library	21.9	16.0	7.3
Buy lifetime access to a digital version of a book	13.1	12.9	8.4
Other	17.6	12.7	6.2
I do not attempt to reduce book costs	5.5	3.1	1.1

There is a significant difference in use of library materials as a measure to reduce costs among first-generation students as compared to non-first-gen. 29% of first-gen respondents said they checked out course materials from the library, compared to 17% of non-first-gen students. 22% of first-gen students said they used library reserves, with only 12.9% of non-first-gen students saying they used this resource.

Gettysburg 2022: Measures to reduce cost (percent of all respondents by First-gen status)		
What measures have you taken to reduce your required book costs for the Fall 2022 semester?	First-gen student?	
	Yes	No
Rent a copy from the campus bookstore	52.4%	57.3%
Buy used copies from the campus bookstore	46.8%	51.6%
Buy books from a source other than the campus bookstore	44.4%	44.4%
Rent books from a source other than the campus bookstore	37.3%	32.7%
Only purchase some of the required books	33.3%	26.6%
Worked additional hours at my job to pay for books	15.9%	19.0%
Check out course materials from the library	28.6%	16.5%
Share books with classmate	22.2%	15.3%
Sell used books	20.6%	14.9%
Use a reserve copy from the campus library	22.2%	12.9%
Buy lifetime access to a digital version of a book	15.9%	11.7%
Other	15.1%	11.7%
I do not attempt to reduce book costs	4.0%	4.0%

Gettysburg 2022: Measures to reduce cost (percent of all respondents by Pell status)		
What measures have you taken to reduce your required book costs for the Fall 2022 semester?	Pell Grant Recipient?	
	Yes	No
Rent a copy from the campus bookstore	51.8%	58.3%
Buy used copies from the campus bookstore	47.7%	51.2%
Buy books from a source other than the campus bookstore	47.7%	43.4%
Rent books from a source other than the campus bookstore	40.4%	32.6%
Only purchase some of the required books	34.2%	26.4%
Worked additional hours at my job to pay for books	21.9%	16.5%
Check out course materials from the library	22.8%	21.1%
Share books with classmate	19.3%	16.5%
Sell used books	15.8%	17.4%
Use a reserve copy from the campus library	18.4%	14.9%
Buy lifetime access to a digital version of a book	14.9%	12.4%
Other	18.4%	10.7%
I do not attempt to reduce book costs	4.4%	2.5%

Both first-gen students and Pell Grant recipients were noticeably more likely to purchase only some of their required books and share books with their classmates. This is consistent with the differences we observed in 2019, and the rate of use for these strategies has increase across all groups.

In your ENTIRE time at your current college, has the cost of required books caused you to...?

The most common impact of the cost of books and materials is that students do not buy all the required books, which students also reported as a strategy for saving money. About 33% of respondents reported this, up from 24% in 2019. A larger percentage of respondents said they struggled academically because they did not have the book for a class in 2022 than in 2019 as well.

However, about 34% respondents indicated that they did not experience any of the possible effects of textbook costs. This may mean that costs did not impact them or that they were able to control costs.

Effects of textbook costs (percent of all respondents)			
Cost of required books caused you to...	OG	GC2022	GC2019
	%	%	%
Not purchase the required books	40.1	32.8	24.2
Struggle academically because I could not access the book(s)	19.0	18.6	14.6
Drop a course before/at the beginning of the semester	9.7	8.5	7.5
Not register for a specific course	8.1	4.9	7.8
Withdraw from a course later in the semester	3.7	3.9	1.1
Change Major	2.1	2.8	1.1
Other	1.6	1.6	
This is my first semester at college	25.6	28.7	31.3
None of these	28.6	33.6	39.7

Generally, first-generation students are much more likely to be affected by costs than students who are not first-gen. First-gen students were more likely to report having felt nearly *every* effect on the survey. 43% of first-gen students said that they had not purchased required books, compared to 28% of non-first-gen respondents. First-gen students were also more than 3 times as likely to say they struggled academically or dropped a course due to textbook costs. All but one of the respondents who reported changing their major due to cost also identified as first-generation.

Gettysburg 2022: Effects of textbook costs (percent of all respondents by First-gen status)		
Cost of required books caused you to...	First-gen student?	
	Yes	No
Not purchase the required books	42.9%	28.3%
Struggle academically because I could not access the book(s)	33.3%	10.5%
Drop a course before/at the beginning of the semester	16.7%	4.9%
Not register for a specific course	10.3%	2.4%
Withdraw from a course later in the semester	8.7%	1.2%
Change Major	7.9%	0.4%
None of these	21.4%	40.5%
This is my first semester at college	24.6%	31.2%
Other	1.6%	1.6%

A similar pattern exists for Pell Grant recipients, with even more drastic differences in the percentages of students who have not purchased books or struggled academically due to book costs.

Gettysburg 2022: Effects of textbook costs (percent of all respondents by Pell status)		
Cost of required books caused you to...	Receive Pell Grant?	
	Yes	No
Not purchase the required books	43.9%	27.0%
Struggle academically because I could not access the book(s)	36.8%	10.8%
Drop a course before/at the beginning of the semester	14.9%	5.0%
Not register for a specific course	8.8%	2.9%
Withdraw from a course later in the semester	6.1%	2.9%
Change Major	6.1%	1.7%
None of these	20.2%	41.5%
This is my first semester at college	25.4%	31.5%
Other	1.8%	1.7%

Which book formats do you prefer?

Preferred textbook format						
Which book formats do you prefer?	OG		GC2022		GC2019*	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Printed book	2432	67.6%	274	70.8%	377	86.1%
Online ebook	1338	37.2%	137	34.6%	64	14.6%
Audio book	326	9.1%	34	8.8%	24	5.5%
Whatever option is cheaper	1780	49.5%	201	51.9%		
Other	35	1.0%	1	0.3%	2	0.5%
Printed book with companion website					128	29.2%
Downloadable ebook/PDF					114	26.0%
Formatted for cell phone or tablet					20	4.6%
Formatted for print disabilities/assistive technology					7	1.6%

* Additional options from the 2019 survey included

Students prefer printed books more than the other options, but more than half of all respondents also indicated that they prefer whatever option is cheapest. Preference for the use of online ebooks seems to have increased since 2019.

How do you typically pay for your textbooks?

Students most frequently reported that they pay with their own money and/or that their family contributes to book costs. Scholarships and loans are not a large source of funding for textbooks; only 67 (17.3%) of student use financial aid (scholarships or loans) to pay for any part of their books. This number is up from 2019, when only 8% of students reported having any financial aid to pay for their books.

Who pays for textbooks				
How Do You Typically Pay for Textbooks?	OG		GC2022	
	N	%	N	%
I pay with my own money	2242	62.3%	255	65.9%
My parents/family pays	1944	54.0%	203	52.5%
My scholarship covers the cost	283	7.9%	38	9.8%
I pay with my loans	227	6.3%	32	8.3%
Other	60	1.7%	6	1.6%
Missing	13	0.4%	2	0.5%

Students whose scholarships pay for books spend significantly more on average than any other group.

Who pays for textbooks by Fall 2022 textbook costs				
How Do You Typically Pay for Textbooks?		OG		GC2022
		Mean Amount Spent Fall 22		Mean Amount Spent Fall 22
I pay with my own money	No	\$273.38		\$268.67
	Yes	\$219.09		\$238.56
My parents/family pays	No	\$221.35		\$268.41
	Yes	\$254.39		\$230.51
My scholarship covers the cost	No	\$232.48		\$233.98
	Yes	\$324.18		\$401.18
I pay with my loans	No	\$236.60		\$246.23
	Yes	\$282.34		\$275.61
Other	No	\$240.15		\$249.57
	Yes	\$190.26		\$192.33

Students who pay for their books with scholarships also see a significantly higher cost as reasonable in comparison to other groups. Students who pay with their own money see a significantly lower price as reasonable, when compared with those who do not.

Who pays for textbooks by stated reasonable cost per class			
How Do You Typically Pay for Textbooks?		OG	GC2022
		Reasonable cost	Reasonable cost
I pay with my own money	No	\$77.53	\$76.01
	Yes	\$53.52	\$54.94
My parents/family pays	No	\$58.60	\$63.93
	Yes	\$65.56	\$60.21
My scholarship covers the cost	No	\$59.58	\$59.20
	Yes	\$96.53	\$90.76
I pay with my loans	No	\$61.92	\$59.97
	Yes	\$69.16	\$84.13
Other	No	\$62.73	\$62.19
	Yes	\$40.52	\$46.67

First-generation and Pell Grant recipient students are much less likely to have parental/family support for textbook costs and are more likely to use their own money to pay for books. Pell Grant recipients are about twice as likely to use scholarships to pay for their books, and first-gen students are around 3 times more likely to use loans to pay.

Gettysburg 2022: Who pays for textbooks by first-gen status		
How do you typically pay for your textbooks?	First-gen student	
	Yes	No
My parents/family pays	42.1%	58.5%
I pay with my loans	15.1%	5.2%
My scholarship covers the cost	12.7%	8.5%
I pay with my own money	76.2%	61.3%
Other	1.6%	1.2%

Gettysburg 2022: Who pays for textbooks by Pell recipient status		
How do you typically pay for your textbooks?	Pell grant recipient	
	Yes	No
My parents/family pays	37.7%	60.7%
I pay with my loans	10.5%	6.6%
My scholarship covers the cost	14.9%	7.9%
I pay with my own money	82.5%	57.9%
Other	1.8%	1.2%

I think my professors pay attention to the cost of course materials and work to make them more affordable.

Do professors attend to textbook costs?				
	OG		GC2022	
	N	%	N	%
Strongly Agree	405	11.3%	27	7.0%
Agree	1426	39.6%	161	41.6%
Neutral	907	25.2%	102	26.4%
Disagree	688	19.1%	73	18.9%
Strongly Disagree	152	4.2%	22	5.7%
Missing	19	0.5%	2	0.5%

About half of all students agree or strongly agree that their professors pay attention to the cost of course materials and works to make them more affordable. A quarter are neutral and another 25% do not agree.

I think the institution pays attention to the cost of course materials and works to make them more affordable.

On the other hand, students do not think the college or university pays attention to costs, with 57% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the statement.

Does the institution attend to textbook costs?				
	OG		GC2022	
	N	%	N	%
Strongly Agree	241	6.7%	19	4.9%
Agree	559	15.5%	50	12.9%
Neutral	868	24.1%	94	24.3%
Disagree	1199	33.3%	135	34.9%
Strongly Disagree	712	19.8%	87	22.5%
Missing	18	0.5%	2	0.5%