

# Report

January 2005

Board of Governors for Higher Education  
Department of Higher Education  
State of Connecticut



A REPORT TO THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
HAVING COGNIZANCE ON MATTERS RELATING  
TO HIGHER EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT ADVANCEMENT  
*Special Act No. 04-3*  
*An Act Concerning Student Textbook Purchasing Policies*

The Connecticut Taskforce on the Cost of College Textbooks makes the following recommendations, with the intention of helping Connecticut's college and university students buy textbooks at appropriate and reasonable prices.

These recommendations incorporate a survey done of some 250 faculty and well over 500 students and include suggestions for steps that faculty members, students, bookstores, publishers, and the State of Connecticut should take to ensure that the educational material needs of students are served well and at the most reasonable cost. The complete tabulated results for both surveys are attached as an appendix to these recommendations. Three of the survey's questions serve as context for the recommendations listed below.

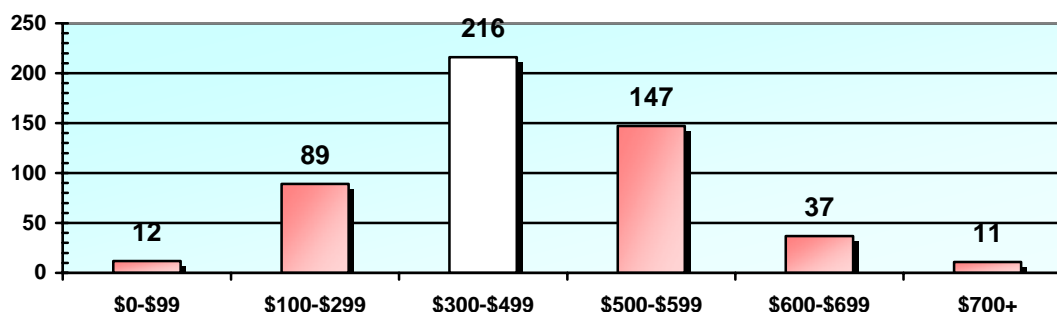
1. When asked about affordability, students responded that, "in general, textbooks are"

Cheap	Reasonable	Sometimes Expensive	Always Expensive	Totals
0	2	205	341	548
0.0%	0.4%	37.4%	62.2%	100.0%

2. When faculty were asked, "Do you believe that textbooks are competitively priced?" they responded:

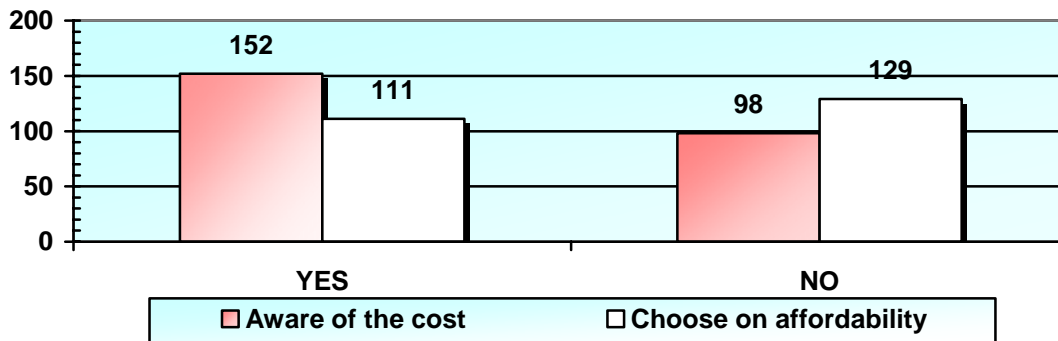
YES	NO	Totals
52	163	215
24.2%	75.8%	100.0%

3. When asked, "How much did you spend on textbooks and other course materials this semester?" students responded:



### Taskforce Recommendations

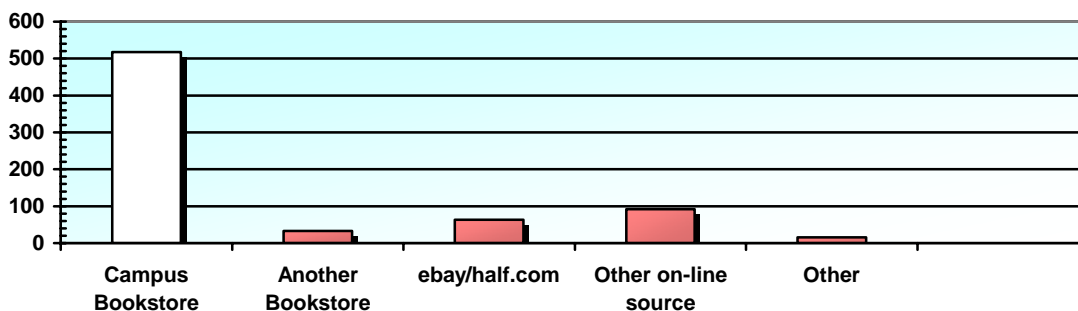
1. Faculty members should know the price of textbooks they select for their courses in advance of ordering them. Faculty members should use that price as a consideration as they plan their textbook use. In our survey, 61 percent of the faculty who responded said that they were aware of the price of the textbook before selecting it and 46 percent responded that they choose textbooks based on how affordable they were.



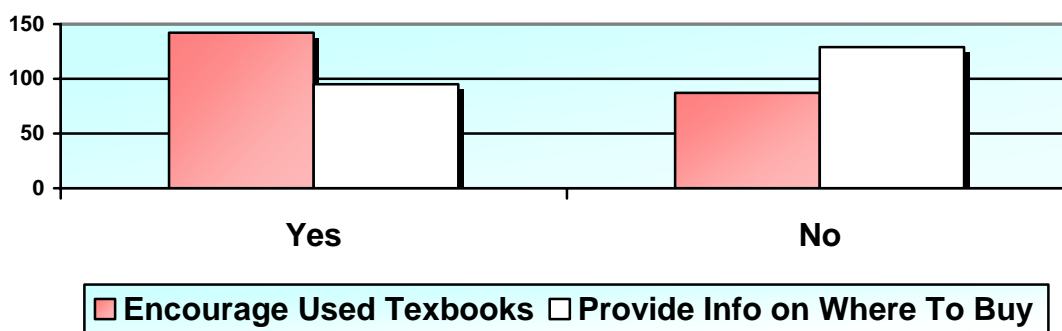
The principal concern of all faculty members and of the colleges and universities whose students they educate is, of course, academic quality, and no decision about the use of textbooks and other educational materials should be made that might affect that quality. However, as they consider the cost of textbooks, faculty members should consider if the price of the textbook justifies its usage or if there is another textbook, course packets, or other educational resources, including online resources, that might make the course less costly for students without affecting academic quality.

2. To assist faculty members as they make these considerations, college and university bookstores – whether independent or part of a larger chain – should establish a process by which information about the prices of various textbooks will be provided to faculty members. This should be done well in advance of the book ordering deadline each term. Such information could be provided through a bookstore website or through other readily available listings open to faculty members.

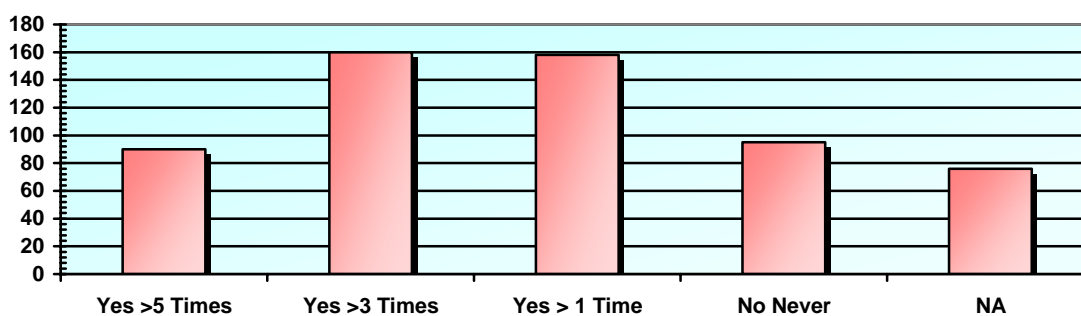
3. Bibliographies should be available to students, for all courses, well in advance of the beginning of each term whenever possible or available, so that students might plan their book purchasing. These should indicate which are required materials and which are recommended or optional materials. Our survey shows that, currently, over two-thirds of our students buy their textbooks at the bookstore and that only 21 percent buy their books on-line.



Our survey also shows that, while 62 percent of the faculty report that they encourage students to buy used textbooks, only 42 percent provide information on where used textbooks may be bought.



4. Faculty should be encouraged to use textbooks for multiple terms or years, or in multiple courses. Around 70 percent of the students who responded to our survey said they had known of someone who had taken a particular course before they took it but they could not use their textbook because a new edition was required. 15.5 percent responded that this had occurred more than five times; 27.6 percent more than three times; and 27.3 percent more than one time.



“New editions” do not always provide sufficiently new material to justify their cost or the need to change from a current textbook to a new one. Publishers should be made aware of faculty commitment to such multiple term, multiple year, and multiple course use of a particular textbook. Publishers should therefore build such economy of scale into the prices they charge for their books.

To ensure the success of this commitment, bookstores should work with publishers, with individual faculty members, and with college or university departments to ensure that those textbooks – whether new or used – are available for such multiple use.

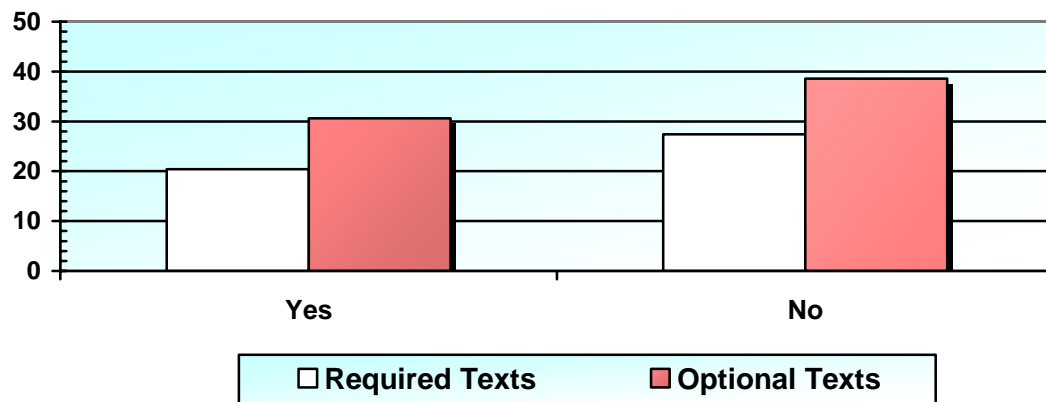
For example, contracts may be signed by the State of Connecticut with publishers to ensure that a particular number of new books (for example, introductory chemistry textbooks) will be purchased by students throughout the state system. Such a special order guarantee would ensure availability of specified books at specific prices for a specified period.

5. The practice of “bundling” course materials should stop. In that practice, various materials – textbooks, workbooks, CD-ROMs, and other elements – are shrink-wrapped and sold as a single package to students.

Such “bundled” materials are not always used or, in fact, required by faculty members. Publishers and bookstores should provide students – on the advice of the faculty member teaching the course – with the option of buying individual elements of the “bundled” package, individually priced at fair value, rather than the entire package.

6. To ensure the success of a multiple term or multiple year plan to use a particular textbook, bookstores should institute programs to encourage such use. Such programs could include innovations with the purchase and buyback cycle, guaranteed buybacks, and other programs to reduce the initial and net purchasing price for the student. Policies for such programs should be distributed to students and clearly posted at bookstores.

7. The college or university library – or, where appropriate, departmental libraries – should have on reserve at least one copy of each textbook used in each respective course. Faculty members should inform students in their courses that textbooks are on reserve. In larger courses, the availability of such textbooks should be calculated at the proposed rate of 1 copy per 100 students. This would provide those students who cannot afford a particular book with access and opportunity to use it at no cost. Our survey indicates that only 20 percent of the faculty who responded place required textbooks on reserve in the library and 31 percent place recommended or optional textbooks on reserve.



8. Financial aid processes should be enhanced so that students automatically receive credits at the bookstore at the beginning of the term.

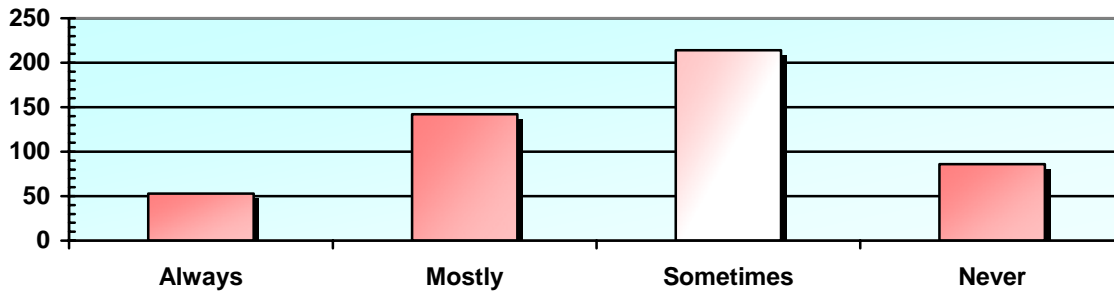
There are now many instances in which students cannot buy textbooks at the beginning of the term – and sometimes not until the third week of the term – because they have not received financial aid awards. This practice should change to provide students receiving financial aid with the opportunity to buy books at the very start of their classes.

9. Bookstores should be encouraged to be more responsive to student concerns, especially with regard to used textbooks.

In this regard, bookstores should provide students who resell their used books with larger prices for their books and should resell those used books at reduced cost. This would be especially workable if faculty members committed to using the same textbooks for multiple semesters or years or in multiple courses. In our survey, 64.5 percent of the students responding stated that they never

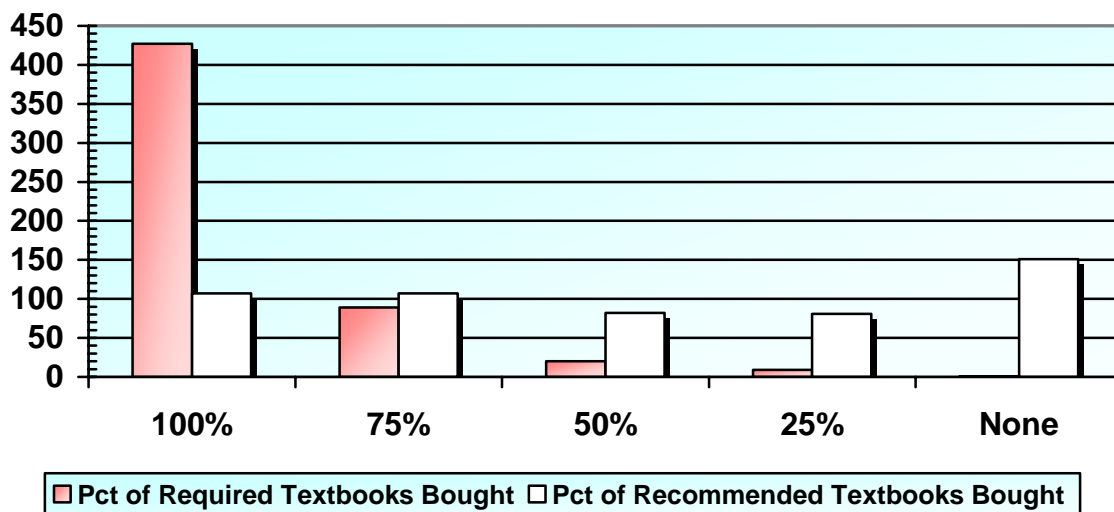
received a fair price when they sold back their textbook and 27.3 percent said that they sometimes did. 52 percent of the students responding said that used textbooks were always or mostly available and 48 percent said that they were sometimes or never available. As for how convenient students found it to sell back their textbook, the following was reported:

**How convenient is it for you to sell back your textbook?**



Finally, as seen on the table below, our survey shows that 78 percent of those students who responded generally buy all the textbooks required for their course and 94 percent buy from three-quarters to all the textbooks required. But only 21 percent of the students responding bought all the recommended (optional) textbooks for the course and 28 percent say they buy none. However, 56 percent of the respondents bought at least half of the recommended (optional) texts.

Clearly, students are more likely to ‘cut corners’ with recommended or optional texts and feel less obliged to purchase all of them, but they will purchase some. That being the case, it might be helpful if the faculty limited the number of optional texts they recommend to their students.



*Taskforce Members*

Sharon Braverman, Central Connecticut State University  
Assistant Dean, School of Business

Ralph Harvey, Naugatuck Valley Community College  
Instructor, Engineering Technologies

Jessica Lahey, Central Connecticut State University  
Student

Diana McCarthy-Bercury, Naugatuck Valley Community College  
Student  
Student Representative, Standing Advisory Committee

Gloria Ragosta, Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges  
Vice President

Jean Reynolds, Board of Governors

William Simpson, University of Connecticut  
President and General Manager, UConn Coop

Betsey C. Smith, University of Hartford  
Program Director Occupational Therapy  
and Special Assistant to the Dean.

Alfred Williams, Quinebaug Valley Community College  
Director of Financial Aid Services

Marlene Woodman, Charter Oak State College  
Assistant to the President

Alex Zozulin, Naugatuck Valley Community College  
Instructor, Chemistry

Thomas Tynan, Department of Higher Education  
Associate Director, Academic Affairs

Jonas Zdanys, Department of Higher Education  
Associate Commissioner for Academic Affairs  
& Chief Academic Officer, *Chair*

# APPENDIX

## Results of Faculty and Student Textbook Surveys

### 1. Faculty Textbook Survey

1. Are you aware of the price of a textbook before you select it?

Yes	No	Totals
152	98	250
60.8%	39.2%	100.0%

2. Do you choose textbooks based on how affordable they are?

Yes	No	Totals
111	129	240
46.3%	53.7%	100.0%

3. Do you require the newest edition of each textbook as soon as it is published?

Yes	No	Totals
130	100	230
56.5%	43.5%	100.0%

4. Do you use course packets and other photocopied materials?

Yes	No	Totals
161	85	246
65.4%	34.6%	100.0%

5. Do you use course packets and other photocopied materials instead of textbooks?

Yes	No	Totals
60	176	236
25.4%	74.6%	100.0%

6. Do you place required textbooks on reserve in the Library?

Yes	No	Totals
48	188	236
20.3%	79.7%	100.0%

7. Do you tell your students to buy recommended or optional books?

Yes	No	Totals
36	118	154
23.4%	76.6%	100.0%

8. Do you place recommended or optional books on reserve in the Library?

Yes	No	Totals
50	109	159
31.4%	68.6%	100.0%

9. Are textbooks and course materials you order on the bookstore's shelf before class starts?

Yes	No	Totals
211	15	226
93.4%	6.6%	100.0%

10. Do you encourage students to buy used textbooks?

Yes	No	Totals
142	87	229
62.0%	38.0%	100.0%

11. Do you provide information on where used books may be bought?

Yes	No	Totals
95	129	224
42.4%	57.6%	100.0%

12. Does the bookstore provide timely resolution of your/your students' problems with books?

Yes	No	Totals
179	28	207
86.5%	13.5%	100.0%

13. Do you believe that textbooks are competitively priced?

Yes	No	Totals
52	163	215
24.2%	75.8%	100.0%

14. Does the bookstore provide you with reasonable deadlines for submitting textbook orders?

Yes	No	Totals
190	29	219
86.8%	13.2%	100.0%

## 2. Student Textbook Survey

1. How much did you spend on textbooks and other course materials this semester?

\$0-\$99	\$100-\$299	\$300-\$499	\$500-\$599	\$600-\$6999	\$700+	Totals
12	89	216	147	37	11	512
2.3 %	17.4 %	42.2 %	28.7 %	7.2 %	2.1 %	100.0 %

2. How much did you spend on textbooks and course materials last semester? (*Freshmen, please skip this question.*)

\$0-\$99	\$100-\$299	\$300-\$499	\$500-\$599	\$600-\$6999	\$700+	Totals
8	78	162	115	38	23	424
1.9 %	18.4 %	38.2 %	27.1 %	9.0 %	5.4 %	100.0%

3. Where did you buy your textbooks?

Campus Bookstore	Another Bookstore	EBay/half .com	Other On-line sources	Other	Totals
518	33	63	92	16	722
71.7 %	4.6 %	8.7 %	12.7 %	2.2 %	100.0 %

4. Did you know of someone who took a particular course before you took it but you couldn't use their book because a new edition was required?

Yes > 5 Times	Yes > 3 Times	Yes > 1 time	No Never	N.A.	Totals
90	160	158	95	76	579
15.5 %	27.6 %	27.3 %	16.4 %	13.1 %	100.0 %

5. Have you ever taken or heard of a class where you can use the same textbook more than one semester?

YES	NO	Totals
273	164	437
62.5 %	37.5 %	100.0 %

6. Who pays for your textbooks?

I Do	My Parents	Scholarship	Spouse	Other	Totals
345	257	22	5	8	637
54.2 %	40.3 %	3.5 %	0.8 %	1.3 %	100.0 %

7. Has there been a semester when you were not able to buy books for class because they were too expensive?

No	1 Time	More Than 1 Time	More Than 3 Times	Totals
381	83	46	18	528
72.7 %	15.7 %	8.7 %	3.4 %	100.0 %

8. In general, textbooks are:

Cheap	Reasonable	Expensive Sometimes	Expensive Always	Totals
0	2	205	341	548
0.0 %	0.4 %	37.4 %	62.2 %	100.0 %

9. Are the textbooks you need available when class starts?

Always	Mostly	Sometimes	Never	Totals
62	263	120	3	448
13.8 %	58.7 %	26.8 %	0.7 %	100.0 %

10. Does the bookstore tell you when textbooks will be arriving late or are out-of-stock?

Always	Mostly	Sometimes	Never	Totals
103	230	131	65	529
19.5 %	43.5 %	24.8 %	12.3 %	100.0 %

11. Are used textbooks available to you in your bookstore?

Always	Mostly	Sometimes	Never	Totals
46	241	247	15	549
8.4 %	43.9 %	45.0 %	2.7 %	100.0 %

12. How convenient is it for you to sell back your textbooks?

Always	Mostly	Sometimes	Never	Totals
53	142	214	86	495
10.7 %	28.7 %	43.2 %	17.4 %	100.0 %

13. Did you receive a fair price when you sold back your textbook?

Always	Mostly	Sometimes	Never	Totals
2	38	133	314	487
0.4 %	7.8 %	27.3 %	64.5 %	100.0 %

14. What proportion of the required textbooks for your course do you generally buy?

100%	75%	50%	25%	None	Totals
427	89	20	9	1	546
78.2 %	16.3 %	3.7 %	1.6 %	0.2 %	100.0 %

15. What proportion of the recommended or optional textbooks for your course do you generally buy?

100%	75%	50%	25%	None	Totals
110	107	82	81	151	531
20.7 %	20.2 %	15.4 %	15.3 %	28.4 %	100.0 %