

2025 Oregon State University Course Materials Affordability Survey: Infographic

Summary¹

Research from the past 10 years has demonstrated that the current cost of required learning materials can have a significant impact on students' academic success and ability to access essential resources for living. This infographic is a summary of the findings of the *2025 Course Materials Affordability Survey*, developed by the Open Educational Resources Unit (Division of Educational Ventures) in collaboration with others². The purpose of the survey is to determine the impact of the cost of course materials, when students acquire their course materials, what strategies students use to reduce costs, and how different populations are impacted by the cost of course materials. The full report including the survey questions is available online at https://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/concern/technical_reports/1c18dq258

Survey Demographics Overview

690

Survey respondents
(undergraduates)

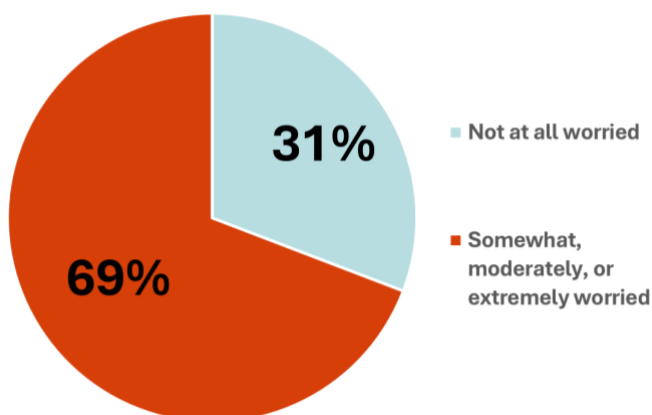
9

Colleges represented³

\$179.18

Average spending per term

Respondents Are Worried About Meeting the Cost of Course Materials



"I can barely afford to attend OSU. Having free course materials is like a weight off my back."

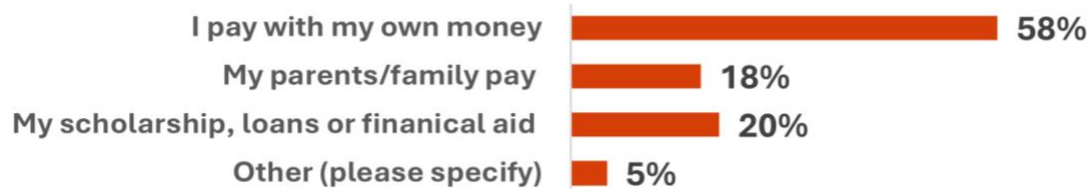
"It has made it much easier and caused me less stress if I knew the materials were free."

¹ Infographic designed by Amy Donley and Stefanie Buck, Division of Educational Ventures.

² University of Oregon, Southern Oregon University, and Portland State University.

³ The College of Pharmacy and College of Vet Med were not surveyed as they are primarily graduate level programs.

Respondents Mostly Pay for Course Materials Themselves



Respondents Use a Variety of Strategies to Reduce Course Material Costs

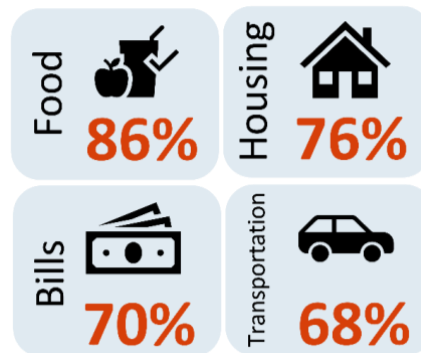


And most respondents (77%) report engaging in **multiple strategies...**

The Cost of Course Materials Impacts Respondents Personally and Academically

Sometimes forcing them to choose between course materials and living essentials.

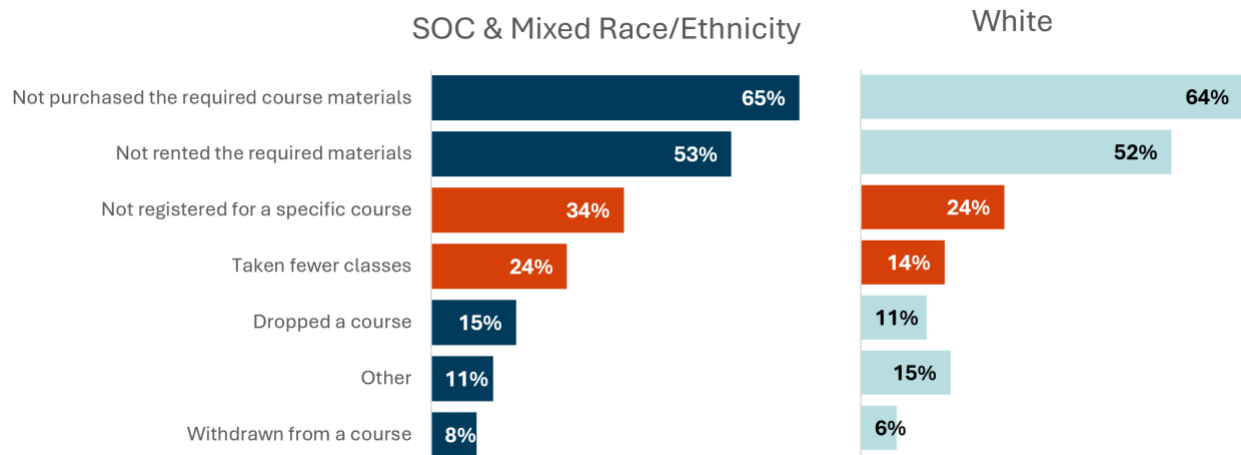
"I've had to forego paying for groceries because of expensive course materials."



17%

Reported **earning a poor grade** because they could not afford the required course materials.

Respondents from Historically Underrepresented Groups Report Being More Likely Not to Register for Specific Courses or to Take Fewer Courses Compared with White Students.



Most Respondents Have Experience with Instructors Using Free Course Materials

Many respondents praised the equity in the classroom free course materials afford.

92%

"It has allowed me to go back to school. If I needed to purchase textbooks for every class like I did a decade ago, I wouldn't be able to afford it. Free course materials have been a great equalizer."

Respondents Appreciate Free Course Materials but Note That Some Formats Can Hamper Their Learning



"They are helpful for cost but hard for me to read. I have to print them off. I cannot read on screens for a long period of time."



"Sometimes it's very helpful. But other times, the free materials are less accessible with my learning disabilities. Sometimes it is just a photocopied version of a larger piece of material which can be hard to read and is not compatible with screen readers."

Recommendations & Strategies for Instructors



Ensure students have timely and accurate information about required course materials.

- **Report** your required course materials to the Beaver Store by the deadline.⁴
- **Inform** students about any other costs for course materials in the Beaver Store form comments.
- **Open** your Canvas course site to your students as early as possible.



Offer multiple ways to access your required course materials.

- **Bring** additional copies of your course materials to the Valley Library for [course reserves](#).
- **Permit** the use of earlier editions of your textbooks (and add this to the comments in the Beaver Store form.)
- **Consult** with the Beaver Store about ways to reduce the cost of commercial textbooks.



Consider alternative course materials, paying attention to affordability and digital accessibility.

- **Consult** with the [Open Educational Resources Unit](#) or the [Valley Library](#) about available free or library-licensed ebooks and other resources.
- **Provide** accessible versions of your course materials.



Recognize that some students are struggling financially and may be choosing between course materials and daily essentials.

- **Share** resources available at the Basic Needs Center (e.g., textbook lending program, food pantry), the Valley Library (e.g., course reserves, library of things), and mental health services.
- **Apply** for an Affordability Matters Badge for your course if your course materials cost \$40 or less.

⁴ Students will see if they need to purchase anything instead of a “no materials reported” message and if the course materials are free or less than \$40, the course will be labeled as low or no-cost in the Schedule of Classes.