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2023

Let the Students Speak: Using a Student Survey to Promote Textbook Affordability

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Recommended Citation

Conforte, Laura A. and Elmquist, Mary, "Let the Students Speak: Using a Student Survey to Promote Textbook Affordability" (2023). *ILS Scholarship*. 12.

https://scarab.bates.edu/ils_scholarship/12

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Let the Students Speak:

Using a Student Survey to Encourage Change and Promote Textbook Affordability on Your Campus and Beyond

Discussion Facilitators

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Learning Outcomes

After this session, participants will be able to:

- Identify best practices and pitfalls that will help you to conduct an effective student textbook survey on your campus or in partnership with multiple institutions;
- Discuss strategies in survey development and promotion that increase response rate from historically marginalized and underrepresented voices; and
- Consider potential partners who could help support your project through survey promotion, data collection, analysis, and results sharing in your local context.

Discussion Ground Rules

- Share airtime—for every time you speak, try to let at least two others share before you speak up again.
- Be generous with your thoughts and ideas—none of us are experts and we're all here to share and learn.
- When fellow participants are speaking, try to focus on their contribution rather than your next remark.
- Be mindful of our Roundtable timeframe. We have a lot of questions to frame our discussion today, and we likely won't get to address all of them. Allow the questions we have to inspire our discussion and whatever we don't address, please take back to your institution to spark further conversation!

Additional Resources to Explore

- Appedu, S., Elmquist, M., Wertzberger, J., & Birch, S. (2021). **Inequitable Impacts of Textbook Costs at a Small, Private College: Results from a Textbook Survey at Gettysburg College**. *Open Praxis*, 13(1), 69–87. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.5944/openpraxis.13.1.1147>
- Florida Virtual Campus (2022). **2022 Student Textbook and Instructional Materials Survey**. Tallahassee, FL. <https://dlss.flvc.org/colleges-and-universities/research/textbooks>
- Nagle, C., & Vitez, K. (2020). **Fixing the broken textbook market: Second edition**. U.S. PIRG Education Fund. <https://pirg.org/edfund/resources/fixing-the-broken-textbook-market/>
- VIVA. (2021). **Virginia Course Materials Survey**. <https://vivalib.org/va/open/survey>
- Wertzberger, J., Elmquist, M., & Appedu, S. (2020, September 18). **Using a Student Textbook Survey to Advance an OER Initiative**. ALPa Affordable Learning Summit. <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/librarypubs/144/>

Guiding questions / topics

Topic 1: Introductions, Experience, and Goals (5 min)

- What institution are you representing at ACRL?
- Have you conducted a textbook survey (on any scale) before?
- What are the primary goals of your local affordability efforts?

Topic 2: Survey Development and Respectful Surveying

- If you're planning a textbook survey, what data are most important for advancing your local affordability program?
- What resources do you view as most important for a student textbook survey? What was the one thing you couldn't do without or can't start without having?
- What kinds of survey questions both serve your research aims and also respect the voices of students? When soliciting student voices, what kinds of questions do or do not work well or yield honest responses? (As an example: TextbookBroke walls can provide valuable feedback, but also often elicit jokes or less-than-honest responses.)

Topic 3: Promotion and Collaboration

- What promotional strategies have been the most helpful on your campus (for surveys or other efforts)? If you have administered a survey on your campus, what strategies helped you reach an array of student voices that accurately reflects your student body, including voices that historically have not been heard?
- What institutional partners make effective collaborators in promoting student surveys? Which offices or other partners on your campus have goals that align with the goals of your project?
- When is incentivization an appropriate strategy for increasing your response rate? If you have administered a survey in the past, what incentives seemed to be the most effective?

Topic 4: Analysis and Reporting

- For those of you who have administered a textbook survey, which responses provided the most insightful data for your work supporting students, faculty, and/or administrators?
- Considering that textbook surveys often deal with sensitive topics like student finances, inequity, and issues of academic success, what are the best ways you've found to handle these kinds of data in processing and analysis?
- Which groups in your institution are most important to reach with your data to make the biggest impacts? What forums have/might you use to report out your findings and reach those people?
- For many of us, especially in libraries, OER work is not our only or even primary role, and textbook surveys require a lot of time and coordination. How do we approach this work in a way that is sustainable over time, reproducible in the future, and fosters continued support for our students?