

Western Oregon University  
College Textbook Rental Program  
FIPSE Grant: #P116T100041  
2010-2012

## Student Survey Results Winter and Spring 2011 Terms

### Project Background

The Western Oregon University College Textbook Rental Program was created because of a US Department of Education FIPSE Grant. The overall goal of the grant is to develop a fully functional textbook and course material rental program to assist students in pursuing their educational goals by saving them money. The Textbook Rental Program will offer students adequate and appropriate opportunities to have textbooks for all classes they are attending.

### Winter 2011 Term

During Fall 2010 the Textbook Rental Program was presented to Faculty during Faculty Senate to encourage them to participate in the textbook rental program. One instructor agreed to have his textbook rented during the Winter 2011 Term. Fifteen students in his class rented the textbook during the pilot Winter 2011 term.

In order to hear from these students an online survey using Survey Gizmo. The survey was developed and sent electronically to all fifteen students who rented textbooks followed by two reminder messages. Five of the fifteen students, four female and one male, completed the survey which provided a response rate of 33%.

Three out of the five students that completed the pilot survey stated that renting the textbook was the key factor for them in having a textbook. All of the students agreed they would rent a textbook again; that it was convenient; and that the textbook rental program was simple and easy for them. When asked how the textbook rental program could be improved all five of the students stated they would like more books offered in the rental program.

## Spring 2011 Term

In the Spring 2011 Term seventeen Faculty members agreed to participate in the Textbook Rental Program. Prior to administering the Student Survey it was reviewed by the Advisory Committee resulting in revisions and additions to the instrument. A decision was also made to inquire with Faculty whether they would agree to a paper-and-pencil approach instead of the on-line format and if Faculty would provide the survey to both students who rented and who didn't rent textbooks.

In the 17 courses that provided the rental option 237 students rented textbooks. Envelopes with student surveys and a return envelope were delivered to Faculty members that taught the 17 courses. One class, English 104 had multiple instructors and an online delivery of the course. It was too late to send the survey out electronically, plus the Bookstore Manager was unsure whether any of the textbooks for that class was rented to online students. Two instructors returned the surveys saying that none of their students rented a textbook and one instructor noted that the survey was not designed well.

One of the intents of the paper-and-pencil format was to collect information from students who did not rent a textbook. The desire was that students would provide information about why they had not considered renting as an option and to discover if students were knowledgeable that there is a textbook rental program at Western Oregon University.

### ***What did the survey tell us?***

- Of the 347 students who responded to the survey 184 rented a textbook and 125 said they didn't check
- 115 male and 213 female students responded to this item on the survey
- When asked about class standing –
  - ✓ 72 first year
  - ✓ 74 second year
  - ✓ 90 third year
  - ✓ 87 fourth year
- When asked if they were satisfied with the pricing of the rented textbook 84 students said they were satisfied or very satisfied; 111 students left the item blank; and 89 students were neutral.
- 117 students who participated in the College Textbook Rental Program stated that price and convenience was the reason they rented a book

- 109 students heard about the rental from the WOU Bookstore website and 91 students saw a notice in the bookstore
- When asked about other places students had rented textbooks from they responded Chegg.com; online (not specific); campus rentals; Valore Books; ecampus.com; bookrenter.com; library (not specific); bookbyte.com; Barnes & Noble; Summit; high school books; Chemeketa
- When asked whether they would have a textbook if they had not rented 241 students responded that they would have a textbook.
- When asked whether *they have not purchased a textbook because of the price* 223 students responded yes.
- When asked if *they have purchased a prior edition of a textbook because it was cheaper* 227 students responded yes.
- 171 students stated they sell books back; 89 students said sometimes they sell books back; and 48 students responded that they keep books in their Major.

When asked how the textbook rental program can be improved 194 of the 347 students provided suggestions. Most of the comments were focused on “getting the word out” about the Textbook Rental Program and making the rental books cheaper. Several students commented about the price needed to be closer to one-third of the price since the book is being returned to the bookstore. Students also want the option to mark in the books. Interestingly a couple of students suggested going totally digital, while an equal number of students were grateful for books because their eyes hurt from reading online.

The most creative comment about improving the College Textbook Rental Program was “give incentive to return with a credit towards the next rental”. The most negative comment was – “I don’t use the rental program. All books on this campus are entirely too expensive and I don’t buy from here unless it is last minute. It’s a waste of money.” Of the 197 comments from students about improving the Rental Program 101 of them talked about making the books cheaper, including these two comments “free books for everyone” and “make all books for rent”.