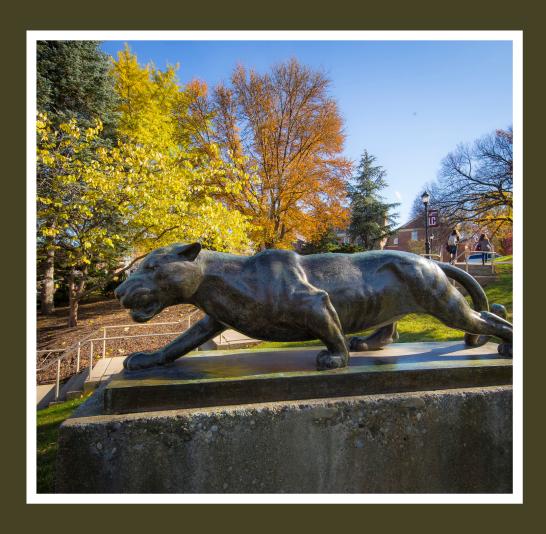# LAFAYETTE COLLEGE

AFFORDABLE COURSE MATERIALS HONORING STUDENT DIVERSITY

A FACULTY GUIDE

2024

Introduction

Contributors

Center for the Integration of Teaching Learning, & Scholarship (CITLS) & The Libraries

As the costs of textbooks and other course materials continue to rise, course affordability presents a number of challenges. Students might avoid courses that are less affordable or not have the means to purchase required materials resulting in opportunity gaps. Further, not being able to buy course materials can make low-income students feel as if they do not belong at our institution.

Concurrently, many faculty members aim to choose materials that are of high quality and beneficial for learning. The availability of particular materials might be limited to specific publishers that offer them at a high prices. In addition to high costs, course materials might not be reflective of the diversity of the world in which we live.

What can we do about these challenges at Lafayette to select more inclusive course materials? This guide provides guidance to faculty and departments. Given differing course contexts, we present a variety of recommended actions that can be taken to make courses more affordable and reflective of diversity. We also include some steps that instructors can follow and a discussion guide for departments to reflect on how to make courses more inclusive at Lafayette.

All are welcome to contact CITLS and The Libraries at any point while reflecting on how to make course materials more inclusive.

Stepwise Process for Selecting Materials

Overview

Selecting course materials takes time and intentionality, and it can be helpful to have some guidance for how to go about the process. Based on a review of the literature, Reid and Maybee (2021) describe five steps that instructors can generally follow when selecting course materials describe below.

STEPS

- **Determine student demographics** - This information can be used to determine the appropriate reading level of students taking the course as well as whether students have accommodations and learning needs that can impact which type of material is selected.

- **Align readings to course outcomes and design** - Backward design is a process of ensuring that all course related items align with learning outcomes. Similarly, course materials should be chosen that align with course outcomes. If course material is listed as being required for a course it should also always be used and referred to in the class.

- **Select format(s)** - Students may have a variety of preferences with regard to the format of course materials. Students might benefit from print or digital versions for various reasons. Considering the type of course materials and student demographics, faculty members can select the most appropriate formats and where possible give choice.

- **Review for quality and match** - While content and production quality can be important when choosing course materials, alignment with course outcomes is critical. Further, instructors should review whether there is the inclusion of people of diverse identities.

- **Order course materials** - This step involves working with the bookstore, library, or publishers to obtain materials for the course which will largely depend on the types of materials selected.

Reducing Costs

Overview

This section provides a variety of strategies for reducing the costs of course materials to make them more accessible to all Lafayette students.

Comparing Costs	Sometimes course materials are selected simply because they have been used in the past. A worthwhile endeavor is to investigate the following: Are comparable materials available? If so, what are their costs? Could these materials fulfill similar purposes and be used in the course in lieu of existing materials?
Incorporating Open Educational Resources	There are many types of academic materials that could be used in place of costly traditional course materials (such as mass market textbooks). Finding, evaluating, and incorporating these materials can be time consuming, but can greatly reduce the financial pressures felt by students. The Libraries provide grants of up to $1,000 per course to encourage and support instructors working to save students money in the classroom
Using the Inclusive Access Program	The College Book store offers a program that allows all students in a class to have access the digital book at a reduced price through Moodle in advance of the class start date. Students can opt out during the Drop/Add period if they would like to purchase a different version of the book or if they already have a copy. Faculty can work with publishers or the bookstore to use inclusive access options.
Allowing Earlier Textbook Editions	Earlier additions of textbooks are typically much cheaper. If a textbook is being used by students mostly for reference and earlier editions suffice,, faculty members can indicate such on course syllabi and announcements in the class.

Bypassing the Need to Purchase

Overview

This section describes how to make course materials available to students bypassing the need to purchase them directly.

Placing Materials in Library Reserves

Books and films may be placed on reserve at the circulation desks of both Skillman & Kirby Libraries. These materials may be personal copies or library copies. Materials owned by other libraries may not be placed on reserve. To place materials on reserve, complete a Course Reserves Form. You are encouraged to place materials on reserve before the start of the semester. Personal copies placed on reserve will be returned to you at the end of each semester.

Lending Instructor Copies

Often faculty members will receive copies of student versions of textbooks directly from a publisher. These copies can be loaned to students when purchasing them is not feasible.

Uploading Content Within Fair Use Rules

Faculty members can upload digital materials to their Moodle course site per fair use rules, typically 1 chapter or 10% whichever is bigger that is considered fair use. Review the guide to fair use which includes a fair use evaluator tool.

Bypassing the Need to Purchase

eBook Licensing Through the Library	While many commercial textbooks are only available through personal subscriptions or inclusive access, it is worth considering if you could assign an alternative title that the Libraries would be able to purchase through an ebook license.
Creating a Lending Library	Instructors or departments can allow students who completed courses to donate used books that are in decent condition to a lending library if they are no longer needed and the students do not want to participate in a buy-back program.

Honoring Diversity

Overview

Course materials might not reflect diverse peoples, scenarios, experiences, and perspectives. This section describes recommendations for honoring diversity.

Using Textbooks with Diverse Representation

Review all textbook choices for diversity. Do they show people from a variety of demographic backgrounds? Do they highlight a diversity of experiences and perspectives and minimize bias? If not, investigate whether other options exist or ways to supplement the textbook content.

Including Diverse Authors

Examine the authorship of any books selected for course. Do they represent a range of people and perspectives? If not, which authors are excluded that can be included?

Department & Program Conversations

Overview

Departments and programs can hold dialogues on how to make courses across the department the most affordable for their students. Below are several questions that can be discussed at a department or program meeting to review course affordability and create any relevant action plans.

Discussion Questions

- What is the average cost of course materials for courses in the department? Are there particular courses that are more expensive? What are the costs of materials for introductory courses?

- What have students already shared regarding the affordability of course materials? Have any students expressed not being able to purchase materials?

- Are there brave spaces where students taking courses have the opportunity to share affordability concerns? If not, what are some ways the department or program can find out this information from students (e.g. surveys, student groups)?

- Are there guidelines that we can follow as a department around course affordability?

- Are we prepared to set aside funds for students who demonstrate need in purchasing course materials?

- Do our course materials honor diversity in our fields?

- Would we benefit from using a department-wide process for selecting course materials? For example Altman et al. (2006) describes: (1) obtaining input from the department, (2) testing out two different textbooks, and (3) obtaining student feedback.

Supporting Students with Need

Even when instructors minimize the cost of materials for a course there might be students that will still have need given. Below are a few principles to consider when partnering with all students on obtaining the proper course materials.

Identify Alternatives

Prior to the beginning of each semester identify options for any students unable to purchase course materials. Consider the recommendations previously provided and any departmental or other support.

Create Brave Spaces

At the beginning of the semester tell the entire class that they can privately let you know if they have financial hardship in purchasing course materials and that you will work together to brainstorm possible solutions and maintain their confidentiality. Also include a statement about this on course syllabi. Another possibility is to confidentially survey the class.

Review Options

Hold private meetings with students to discuss possible next steps that can be taken to support them in obtaining the proper course materials.

Case Examples

01 **Course Packet**

Professor Lindsay Soh, Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering, observed that the students in her CHE 411 Mass Transfer, Separations, and Bioseparations course found her instructor-created course notes more helpful for their learning than the expensive textbook. She obtained an Open Educational Resources grant to work with a student to create a course packet with comprehensive skeletal notes and no longer required the textbook. The time investment paid off and the students appreciated the course packet which she provided either digitally at no cost or had printed through Printing and Copy Services.

02 **Course Website**

Professor Katie Stafford, Languages and Literary Studies, was aware of an abundance of open resources that could benefit the students in her SPAN 211 Advanced Spanish courses. She applied for an Open Educational Resources grant and partnered with a student to build a course website that incorporated a variety of materials to make them freely accessible to all students in the course.

03 **Licensed eBook**

In preparation for a new elective course, Professor Ryan Van Horn, Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering, wanted to find course materials that would relieve the financial burden of purchasing textbooks - particularly for a course where the text may not serve as a future resource. Professor Van Horn worked with the Research and Instructional Services team at the library to identify opportunities to use online texts. Professor Van Horn found a textbook that aligned well with course materials, and with help from the library and an Open Educational Resources grant, obtained a site license to provide online access for the students. The students greatly appreciated the opportunity to use a licensed ebook that they did not have to purchase. They also liked the flexibility in using an electronic text because they could view the material on a laptop/tablet or print hard copies.

References

Altman, W. S., K. Ericksen, and J. B. Pena-Shaff. 2006. An Inclusive Process for Departmental Textbook Selection. Teaching of Psychology 33 (4):228–31. doi: 10.1207/ s15328023top3304_2.

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