

MINUTES
STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF FLORIDA
BOARD OF GOVERNORS
INNOVATION AND ONLINE COMMITTEE
March 28, 2023

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1. Call to Order and Opening Remarks

Chair Edward Haddock convened the meeting at 2:53 p.m. on March 28, 2023, with the following members present: Commissioner Manny Diaz, Jr., Aubrey Edge, Nimna Gabadage, Charles Lydecker, Craig Mateer, and Deanna Michael. A quorum was established.

2. Approval of Committee Meeting Minutes

Governor Michael moved that the committee approve the minutes of the meeting held on January 25, 2023. Governor Lydecker seconded the motion, and the members concurred.

3. Florida Virtual Campus Textbook & Instructional Materials Survey: Key Findings

Chair Haddock introduced Dr. John Opper, Executive Director of the Florida Virtual Campus (FLVC) to provide a report of the findings of a survey of university and college students regarding their textbook buying behavior and instructional materials usage. The survey was conducted in 2022 and is the fourth survey conducted by the FLVC in the past decade.

Dr. John Opper explained that students were asked how the cost of textbooks and instructional materials affects their educational experience and were also asked questions regarding their purchasing behaviors, study aids, fee-based inclusive access programs, and online educational resources. He reported that nearly 14,000 students completed the survey. Survey findings confirmed that students are spending less on instructional materials but that costs remain a significant problem for many students. Students are utilizing a variety of strategies to reduce costs, including buying used textbooks, sharing textbooks, renting printed textbooks and renting digital textbooks via a digital sales model. The use of open educational resources continues to increase as more faculty are intentional about identifying and making available free educational materials for their courses.

Dr. Opper described a subscription model allows students to rent instructional materials to provide access to the materials for the term of the course only. He said that 82 % of student respondents reported that they would prefer to purchase a low cost, hard copy version of a textbook.

Dr. Opper confirmed that university bookstores are making less profit due to the digital book model but they remain the primary source of an actual textbook for students. With this model, students must purchase the digital access either from a university bookstore or from the publisher. These costs remain a problem, particularly for students in professional degree programs like nursing, business, and law where textbooks that are required in their major are the primary resources of their degree program and profession.

Dr. Opper concluded that the continued shift toward digital sales and delivery of textbooks by commercial publishers has lowered costs for students but has also reduced the availability of physical textbooks and instructional resources.

In Committee discussion, Governor Michael said that university libraries provide important access to students for educational materials by housing multiple copies of textbooks and facilitating electronic access of materials. Governor Diaz expressed concern that digital textbooks are often obtained as a lease arrangement and, at the end of the course, access to the materials is lost. Governor Mateer suggested that the System could provide leverage to reduce textbook costs for SUS students. Governor Gabadage explained that E-textbooks often include other course requirements such that the purchase becomes tied to success in the course. Chair Haddock expressed concern that it is a challenge for students to anticipate and plan for their educational costs without knowing the total costs of their educational materials. He expressed appreciation to Dr. Opper for his research on this important topic.

4. Ensuring Quality in Online Education in the SUS

a. Florida A & M University

Chair Haddock stated that the Committee continues to hear from and learn from our universities regarding their online programs and introduced Dr. Franzetta Fitz, Director of Instructional Technology at FAMU to provide an overview of the distance education programs at Florida A & M University.

Dr. Fitz discussed the gradual and steady growth of the online programs and classes and expressed appreciation to her SUS colleagues for their assistance and support as the FAMU programs expanded. Dr. Fitz discussed the impacts of the COVID pandemic and reported on the major commitment of faculty during that period to complete online certification programs that focused on quality. She reported that over 500 faculty have now completed professional development courses in online teaching. FAMU now offers 13 online programs and 675 online courses and continues to prioritize professionally trained faculty delivering quality classes. Dr. Fitz provided a short video of the FAMU online programs.

Chair Haddock thanked Dr. Fitz for this important information and for her leadership in this area.

5. Recognition of an Outstanding Online Student

Chair Haddock reported that the Committee continues to recognize the accomplishments of individual online students at our universities and introduced Mr. Justin Green, an outstanding former FAMU online student.

Mr. Green told the Committee that he achieved a bachelor's degree in Business at FAMU and completed the FAMU Online MBA program in 2014. He reported that the online graduate program was both rigorous and flexible and allowed him to continue to work full-time and advance in his career in the U.S. Food & Drug Office of Criminal Investigations. Mr. Green is now a Deputy Director of the Office of Criminal Investigations for the Southeast U.S. He attributed his success in his career to the education attained in the FAMU Online program.

6. Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

Chair Haddock stated that he wants to be certain that the Committee is aware of the high quality of the SUS online programs and named the highly ranked state university programs as identified by the US News & World report national rankings, as follows: UF Online is ranked as the number One bachelor's degree program in the US, UCF is ranked # 8, UNF is ranked # 39, UWF is ranked # 42, and FIU and FAU are also nationally ranked.

Following concluding remarks, Chair Haddock adjourned the meeting at 3:44 p.m.

Edward Haddock, Chair

Jon Rogers, Ph.D.
Assistant Vice Chancellor