

**A REPORT ON THE FEASIBILITY OF TEXTBOOK RENTAL PROGRAMS  
AND OTHER TEXTBOOK COST-SAVING ALTERNATIVES IN ILLINOIS  
PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION**

**Submitted for:** Information.

**Summary:** In spring 2006, the Illinois Senate adopted Senate Resolution 692 directing the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE), in conjunction with the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), to study the feasibility of implementing textbook rental programs at Illinois community colleges and public universities and/or other textbook cost saving alternatives.

IBHE and ICCB surveyed all community colleges and public universities and received responses from 27 community colleges and 11 public universities. IBHE also distributed questionnaires to 49 third-party bookstores and received 10 responses. In addition, the Board sent questionnaires to the Association of American Publishers, Follett Corporation, Illinois Retail Merchants Association, and the National Association of College Stores, all of whom responded to the survey.

The study concludes that a statewide textbook rental program for public colleges and universities would likely reduce costs for students and yield other benefits, such as ensuring that all students have access to required books and materials. The study further documents that rental programs could be financially feasible if funding for the very substantial initial start-up costs were secured. However, beyond the formidable financial obstacles, certain barriers and limitations would likely restrict the practicability of universal rental programs, including issues of faculty acceptance, academic freedom, and access to textbooks for online and off-campus students, among others.

A potentially more practical path for addressing textbook costs might consist of other cost-saving measures explored by the study. Examples of these measures – which variously involve faculty, publishers, bookstores, students, and administrators – include adherence to textbook adoption deadlines, unbundling of textbooks and supplementary materials, improved buy-back programs, and greater use of electronic textbooks (e-books).

The Board of Higher Education received extensive public comments on a draft report released in December 2006. The comments, as well as survey instruments and institutional submission detail, are available as appendices on the Board of Higher Education website ([www.ibhe.org](http://www.ibhe.org)).

**Action Requested:** None.