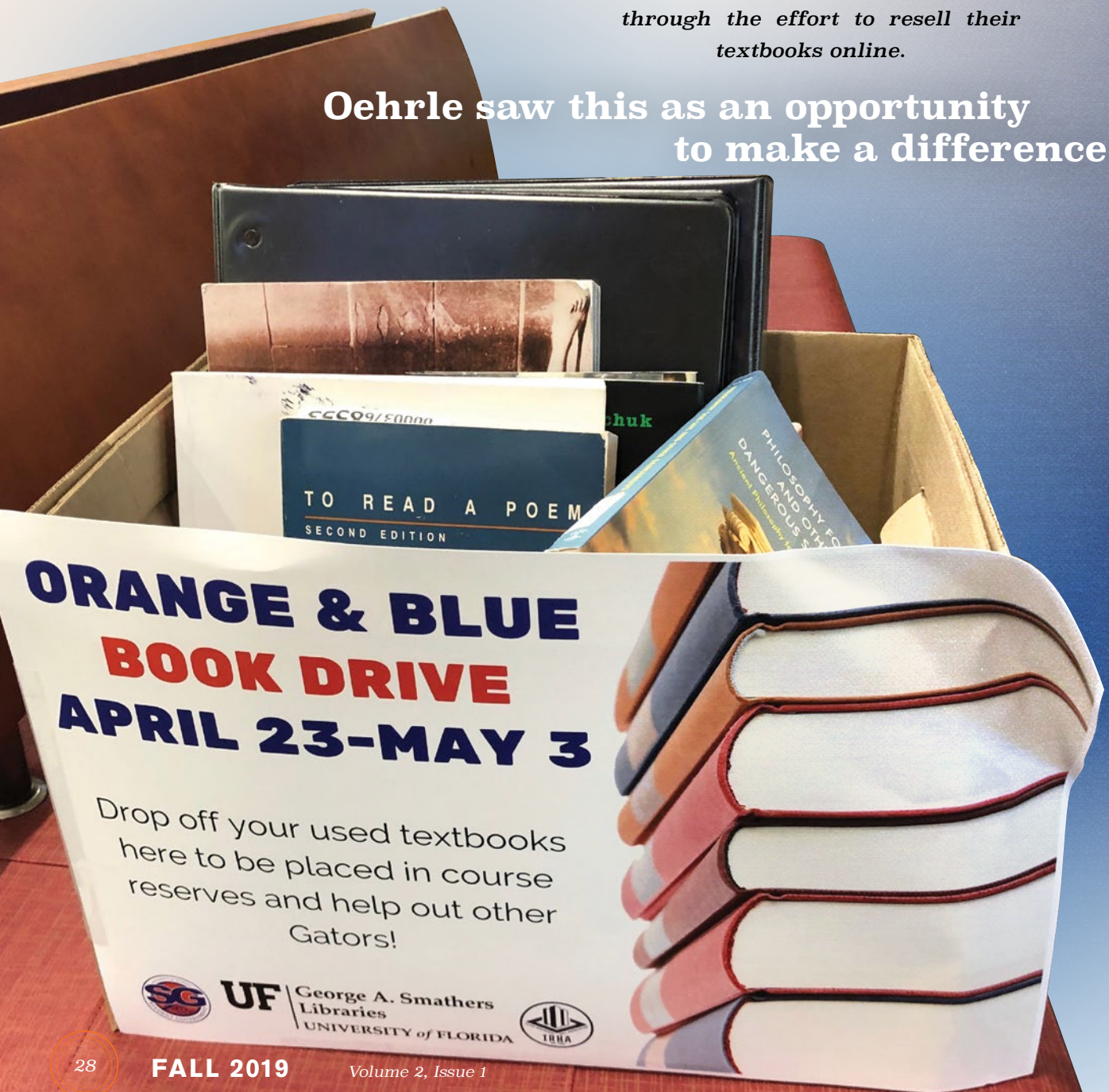

STUDENT GOVERNMENT ORANGE & BLUE BOOK DRIVE

Authors: Ashley Grabowski, Affordable UF Intern
Perry Collins, Scholarly Communications Librarian

In spring of the 2019-2020 academic year, Student Government Internal Affairs Director Brett Oehrle was inspired by a Facebook Group commonly used by University of Florida students – the UF Textbook Exchange – in which students buy and sell used textbooks at a reduced cost. The group has over 23,000 members, but many students are unable or unwilling to go through the effort to resell their textbooks online.

Oehrle saw this as an opportunity to make a difference.

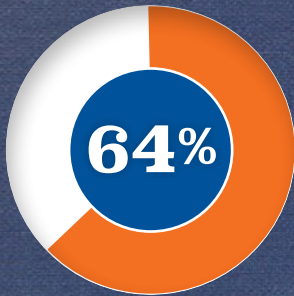


IMPACT OF TEXTBOOK COST ON STUDENT PROGRESS

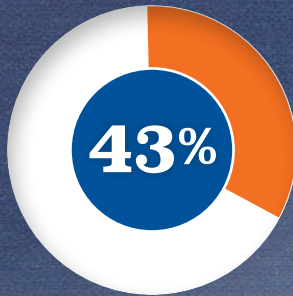
A 2018 survey of 21,400 Florida students showed the negative consequences when students aren't able to afford textbooks.

(Florida Virtual Campus)

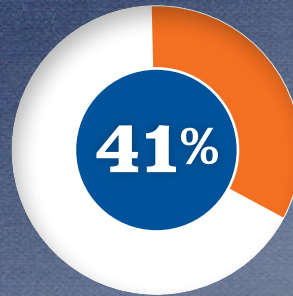
**DON'T BUY
REQUIRED BOOKS**



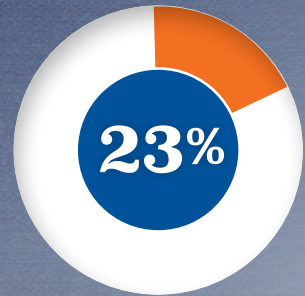
**TAKE FEWER
COURSES**



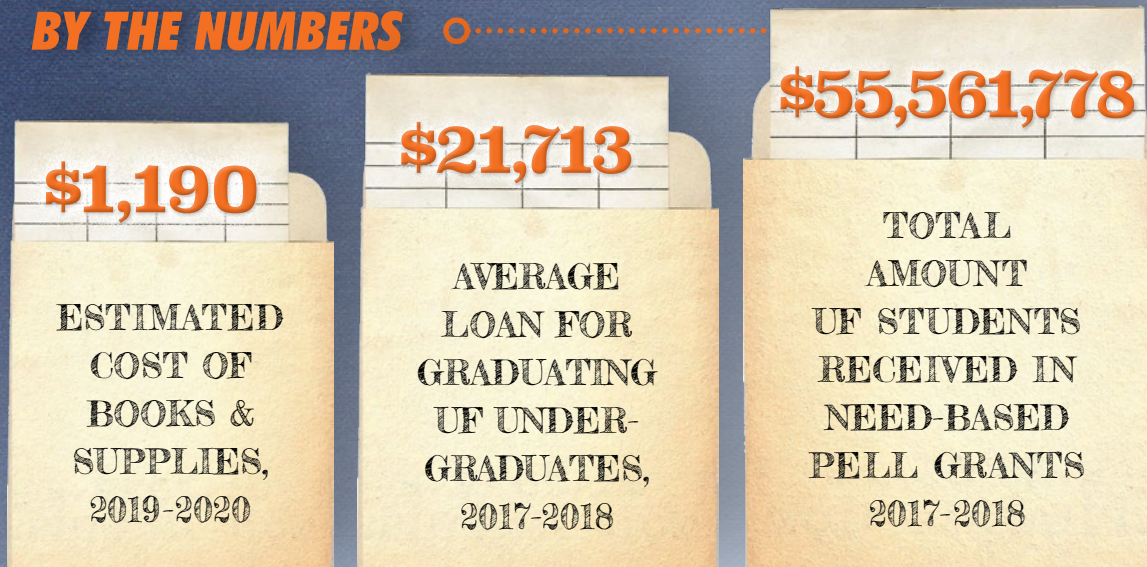
**DON'T REGISTER
FOR A COURSE**



**DROP
A COURSE**



BY THE NUMBERS



The average college student can expect to spend over \$1200 per year on textbooks. For many students, this cost is too much to bear: as a result, a 2017 survey found that over 85% of college students delay or avoid purchasing course materials, impeding their ability to succeed academically. The University of Florida's Student Government grew tired of seeing students struggle to afford course costs and decided to help.

Pang noted that one title received during the drive, an introductory physics textbook, is in especially high demand from students.

Oehrle knew that many students would be happy to pass their used books along to future Gators if it were convenient to do so; they just needed a more accessible process. Oehrle decided to spearhead the Student Government Textbook Drive, an initiative to meet students at times and locations that were easy for them in order to encourage textbook reuse across campus.

Oehrle began by reaching out to the George A. Smathers Libraries to determine how the Libraries could easily put textbooks received from the drive into the hands of future students. The Libraries have long made copies of highly used textbooks available through the course reserves program, which provides students with access to both hard copy and electronic resources they need in the classroom. By keeping a copy or two of many textbooks available, the Libraries support students who may be unable to afford their own copies. Because of the number of UF courses and the high cost of textbooks—particularly in STEM courses—the Libraries cannot purchase every book, so a textbook drive offered one appealing way to collect some much-needed resources.

In collaboration with the Inter-Residence Hall Association (IRHA), Oehrle mapped out a workflow for collecting books from students. Student Government and IRHA coordinated locations at residence halls across campus where students could drop off textbooks as they moved out at the end of the spring semester. Doing so made donating textbooks

just as easy as discarding them.

On the Libraries' end, a cross-departmental team collaborated to pick up donated books and to select titles that would be valuable to

future students. The course reserves team, led by Lily Pang and Paul McDonough, selected nearly 30 books across subjects as diverse as microeconomics, public health, political science, and media studies. Pang and other Libraries colleagues are exploring other ways to increase the number of textbooks available on reserve for students in large STEM courses.

Oehrle recognizes that textbook affordability is a significant obstacle, but he knows the University of Florida has a better chance at addressing affordable education when it comes together to develop solutions. He said that the textbook drive would not have been possible without the collaboration of groups across campus, including Student Government, the Libraries, and the IRHA. With continued collaboration, he hopes that someday no student will have to choose between textbooks and necessary life expenses like rent or food. In the meantime, he believes the Student Government Textbook Drive is a step in the right direction: students coming together to pass along what they have learned and to help one another. 