

Textbook loan program at Ventura College draws a crowd

By Jeremy Foster Special to The Star

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Ventura College student Lauren Dunn never had to choose between paying rent and attending college.

The 21-year-old said that is because the college's library and learning resource center has provided textbooks on loan to students for a semester as part of its effort to make college more affordable.

On Wednesday, a line of nearly 1,000 students snaked from outside the library and through the building to take advantage of Ventura College's lending library.

Dunn, a third-year engineering student, said she saved \$500 on books, or roughly half the cost of her tuition. Students like Dunn say textbooks on loan make a big difference, especially as the cost of textbooks rises.

"If this lending program didn't exist, I wouldn't be able to afford the books," she said. "And if I can't afford the books, I can't afford school."

The average cost of a new textbook is \$225, up from \$150 last year, according to Dana Boynton, a library assistant at Ventura College.

Ventura College started its textbook lending library in fall 2007 with the financial support of the Ventura College Foundation, according to Sandy Hajas, the learning resources center supervisor. The program is available to all students who are registered for classes, which begin Monday.

The timing couldn't have been better for struggling students, Hajas said.

"When the recession happened, we had a lot of students who were out of work, and their parents couldn't help because they were often out of work, too," she said.

Last year, because of demand, the school started a lottery system, which issued students ticket numbers that would determine when they could select their books. Students were split into four groups and each entered the library Wednesday every hour from 9:30 a.m. through 12:30 p.m.

Hajas said access formerly was on a first-come, first-serve basis. That created a security risk when students began camping around the school the night before, she said.

On Wednesday, the library provided 4,333 free loan textbooks to students, up from 3,576 last year. Some of the books were donated by students and faculty members, she said.

Students could borrow up to three textbooks.

“We do surveys, so we know why there is a strong need for free textbooks,” Hajas said. “Students tell us that without this program, they wouldn’t be able to afford classes, rent and other needs.”

Lisa Corbett, programs coordinator for the Ventura College Foundation, said many students benefit from Ventura College Promise, a grant program that covers fees for local high school graduates in their first year. But the program does not cover books, which for some students can cost as much as tuition, she said.

Trixie Rogers, 18, saved \$450 on books Wednesday.

“I work two part-time retail jobs, and books are still expensive for me,” she said. “Without this, I wouldn’t be able to take as many classes as I needed.”

Rogers, who is majoring in business administration, took three classes her first semester. She is now enrolled in six.

The college also makes available more than 1,000 textbooks for in-library use, but that isn’t ideal.

Christian Radomski, an 18-year-old engineering student, said it was important that students take textbooks home.

“Without that, it doesn’t give an equal learning experience to all the students,” he said.

Joseph Cardenas, 21, said he saved more than \$500 through the lending library.

“Most of us really don’t have this kind of money for books,” he said. “That’s why we’re at a community college. If I had to buy all my books, I’d be scrambling for money, and I don’t know how I’d be financially prepared for a university.”

Freshman Ryan Buchanan, 18, works part-time at an auto dealership to help with school.

“Most of my paycheck at the beginning of each semester goes toward textbooks, materials and enrollment fees,” he said. “Gas and rent are hard to come by.”

Like many students, Kathryn Mares, 19, blamed rising costs on the updated textbook editions that many instructors require every two to three years.

“Today, I couldn’t find some of my books because some of my teachers want 2014 editions, so some of the used books I need aren’t here.”

Her brother is a year behind her and taking the classes she already completed.

“But he can’t use half the books I did,” Mares said.



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