



FIXING THE BROKEN TEXTBOOK MARKET

HOW STUDENTS RESPOND TO
HIGH TEXTBOOK COSTS AND
DEMAND ALTERNATIVES

Arizona PIRG
Education Fund

FIXING THE BROKEN TEXTBOOK MARKET:

**HOW STUDENTS RESPOND TO HIGH TEXTBOOK COSTS AND DEMAND
ALTERNATIVES**

**ETHAN SENACK
THE STUDENT PIRGS
JANUARY 2014**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to acknowledge the MASSPIRG, CALPIRG, WISPIRG, ConnPIRG, MaryPIRG, NJPIRG, OSPIRG, and WashPIRG students and staff who assisted with research for this report, especially the chapters at University of Maryland College Park, University of Wisconsin Madison, University of Massachusetts Amherst, and University of Connecticut Storrs.

Thank you to Christine Lindstrom, Higher Education Program Director of the U.S. Public Interest Research Group Education Fund for her help developing this report, and to Nicole Allen, of the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC) for reviewing this report and for her years of research and advocacy on the issue.

Additionally, thank you to Nicole Hochsprung at the American Federation of Teachers for her feedback, and to Chelsea Fowler for her work proofing and editing this report.

Special thanks to the William & Flora Hewlett Foundation for their support of this project.



© 2014 Center for Public Interest Research, Inc. Some rights reserved.
This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License. To view the terms of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

To attribute this work, please credit the Student PIRGs and provide a link to <http://www.studentpirgs.org/textbooks>.

The Student Public Interest Research Groups (Student PIRGs) are independent statewide student organizations that work on issues like environmental protection, consumer protection, and hunger and homelessness. For nearly 40 years students working with their campus PIRG chapters have been making a real difference in people's lives and winning concrete changes to build a better world.

U.S. PIRG Education Fund conducts research and public education on behalf of consumers and the public interest. Our research, analysis, reports and outreach serve as counterweights to the influence of powerful special interests that threaten our health, safety or well-being.

Ethan Senack
218 D St, SE
Washington, DC 20003
202-461-3841
@HigherEdPIRG

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	4
Introduction	6
Publisher Practices Drive Prices Skyward	
The Industry's Lock on High Prices Drives the Marketplace	
Publisher's Products are Evolving but Restrictive Tactics Are Not	
Used and Rental Markets are Making a Difference	
Purpose of Study	10
Key Findings	11
Conclusions	13
Recommendations	15
Methodology	17

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The cost of college textbooks has skyrocketed in recent years. To students and families already struggling to afford high tuition and fees, an additional \$1,200 per year on books and supplies can be the breaking point.

As publishers keep costs high by pumping out new editions and selling books bundled with software, students are forced to forgo book purchases or otherwise undermine their academic progress.

In recent years, some steps have been taken to provide relief from runaway costs. The Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 requires publishers to disclose textbook prices to professors during the marketing process, and for students to see textbook prices during course registration.

▪ **Short-term cost-reducing options:**

Recently, publishers have increased cost-saving options like e-textbooks. Rental programs and used book markets have also emerged as more consumer-friendly options to new books. According to the National Association of College Stores, more than 3,000 schools offer rental programs, up from 300 in 2009. Unfortunately, since the price of rental, used, and e- books is dictated by the price of the new print edition, these models can only take us so far.

▪ **Long-term alternative models:** Open-source textbooks, which are free online and

“While more students are realizing cost savings through used books and rentals, more needs to be done to bend back the price curve and ensure textbook affordability over time.”

affordable in print, are gaining significant traction as an innovative replacement for print textbooks. More than 2,500 professors have agreed to adopt open-source textbooks in their classrooms. Some colleges have created their own campus-wide pilot programs to encourage the use and development of open textbooks.

The Student PIRGs conducted this study to investigate the continued effects of high textbook prices on students and higher education, as well as to

evaluate student interest in alternatives to the traditional textbook.

Report Findings

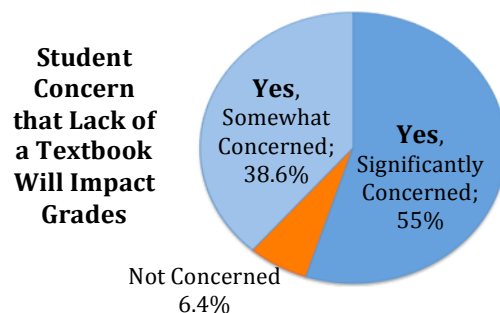
During the fall of 2013, the Student PIRGs conducted a survey of 2,039 students from more than 150 different university campuses. Here are the major findings:

1. High textbook costs continue to deter students from purchasing their assigned materials despite concern for their grades.

65% of students said that they had decided against buying a textbook because it was too expensive.

The survey also found that 94% of students who had foregone purchasing a textbook were concerned that doing so would hurt their grade in a course. More than half of the students felt *significant* concern for their grade.

It is concerning that students are forced to forego



assigned textbooks – which are an essential aid in learning new material, completing assignments, and studying for exams – because they are too expensive.

This also means that students are not only choosing *not* to purchase the materials they are assigned by their professor, but they are *knowingly* accepting the risk of a lower grade to avoid paying for the textbook.

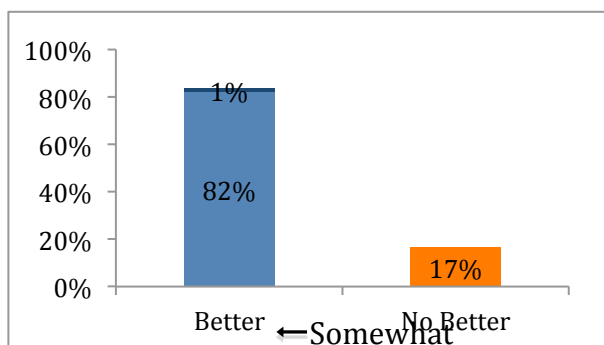
2. High textbook costs can have a ripple effect on students' other academic decisions.

Nearly *half* of all students surveyed said that the cost of textbooks impacted how many/which classes they took each semester.

Students attend college seeking job preparation and/or degree attainment. Careful course selection is often necessary in order to yield the results that a student is seeking within the timeframe they are prepared to study. It is especially concerning that this process may be being undermined by high textbook costs.

3. Students want alternatives, expressing support for textbooks that are available free online and buying a hard copy is optional.

82% of students felt they would do *significantly better* in a course if the textbook was available free online and buying a hard copy was optional. This is exactly how open textbooks are designed.



Not only is the open textbook an ideal alternative to a traditional textbook from a student point of view, but it is the only product in the marketplace that can directly challenge the high prices that publishers charge for new editions. These high prices, which outpace inflation, underpin the entire textbook marketplace, and drive market conditions for other alternatives such as the used book and rental markets.

Conclusion

Overall, this study demonstrates that despite recent steps forward in the marketplace, high textbook costs will continue to be a problem for students unless the cost of high-priced, new editions of college textbooks comes down.

Moreover, the study demonstrates that students are ready for an alternative to traditional textbooks in their classrooms. Open textbooks are the ideal

model that student respondents felt would improve their classroom performance.

In addition to upfront student savings, open textbooks can help reduce costs in the long run and drive real change in the market. With free online versions and with *optional* purchase of a hard copy, open textbooks give purchasing power back to the student, removing the market failure that allows high prices for traditional textbooks while protecting the rights of faculty to assign the textbook they feel most appropriate. In contrast, options like rentals and e-books offer no such fix to the market and allow prices to continue rising.

While the current supply of open textbooks is expanding quickly, they still cover only a fraction of all college courses. To introduce competition into the market and to make open textbooks a real alternative to traditional textbooks, there needs to be more 'start-up' investment in the creation and development of open textbooks.

On many campuses, faculty members have championed open textbooks – but widespread

knowledge about available materials is lacking. Additionally, it often takes time and effort to make the switch to an open textbook. The single most effective way for campuses, state, and federal policy makers to overcome this challenge is to provide faculty with the resources they need to make the switch.

Recommendations

- **Students** should directly advocate for open textbook use in their classrooms
- **Faculty** should consider adopting open textbooks in their classrooms. They should check the U. Minnesota Open Textbook Library to see if there's a book available for your class.
- **Campus administrators** should consider creating an open textbook pilot program on their campus. They can see the University System of Maryland's MOST Initiative as a sample.
- **State and federal legislatures** should invest in the creation and development of more open textbooks. See Washington state's Open Course Library as an example.
- **Publishers** should develop new models that can produce high quality books without imposing excessive prices on students.

INTRODUCTION

College textbook costs have skyrocketed in recent years. College textbooks remain one of the largest out of pocket expenses for students and families – meaning that high price tags are yet another threat to affordability and accessibility of higher education in the United States. According to the College Board, the average student spends \$1,200¹ per year on textbooks and supplies. That’s as much as 39% of tuition and fees at a community college and 14% of tuition and fees at a four-year public institution.

Worse, new textbook prices underpin the entire college textbook marketplace,² and continue to grow at an explosive pace. Over the past decade, textbook prices have increased by 82% - that’s an increase of three times the rate of inflation.³

These high textbook costs are set to a backdrop of more than \$1 trillion dollars in college student loan debt and skyrocketing tuition. For many students and families that are already struggling to afford college, \$1,200 per year on textbooks is simply too much – forcing them to incur more debt, work longer hours, or make choices that undermine academic progress.

Publisher Practices Drive Prices Skyward

Over the past decade, the Student PIRGs have conducted numerous studies to investigate the rising cost of college textbooks and its impact on students. The underlying cause for high prices comes from a fundamental market flaw in the publishing industry. In a typical market, there is a direct relationship between consumer and provider. The consumer exercises control over prices by choosing to purchase products that are a good value, and the competition forces producers to lower costs and meet demand. In the textbook industry, no such system of checks and balances exist. The professor chooses the book, but the student is forced to pay the price. Because of this, the student is, in essence, a captive market. Without the ability of the student to choose a more affordable option, publishers are able to drive prices higher without fear of repercussion

It is also important to note that just five textbook companies control more than 80% of the \$8.8 billion publishing market,⁴ giving them near market monopoly and protecting them from serious competition.

While the establishment and proliferate growth of campus rental and used book programs has helped save students money upfront, these programs are readily undermined by the publishing industry.

¹ Baum, Sandy. Trends in Higher Education 2013-14. Retrieved from <http://trends.collegeboard.org/college-pricing/figures-tables/average-estimated-undergraduate-budgets-2013-14>

² General Accountability Office. (2013). College Textbooks: Students Have Greater Access to Textbook Information. Retrieved from <http://www.gao.gov/assets/660/655066.pdf>

³ General Accountability Office. (2013). College Textbooks: Students Have Greater Access to Textbook Information. Retrieved from <http://www.gao.gov/assets/660/655066.pdf>

⁴ Allen, Nicole. (2013). The Future of Digital Textbooks. *American Association of State Colleges and Universities*. Retrieved from <http://www.aascu.org/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=6308>

Publishers use a set of tactics that drive prices skyward by reducing student choice:

- **New editions:** Publishers release new editions every 3-4 years regardless of changes in the subject, with prices that are 12% higher on average.⁵ Once a new edition is released, that copy takes the place of older editions on stores shelves. That means the students are not only forced to buy the more expensive new edition, but are also unable to sell back their used book from the previous semester.
- **Costly bundles:** Publishers also increase costs by packaging textbooks with online pass-codes or CDs that increase prices 10-50%.⁶ These pass-codes often expire after a limited time period, eliminating the viability of a textbook for selling back.
- **Resale sabotage:** New “cost-saving” options like loose-leaf and custom editions are more affordable upfront, but often end up costing more because they have no resale value.⁷ Second, the sky high prices of new print books drives the prices in the rest of the marketplace.

The Industry’s Lock on High Prices Drives the Marketplace

In June 2013, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) completed a report on college textbooks as requested by the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008. That law required that publishers increase textbook price transparency, that they offer books ‘bundled’ with supplemental materials also as individual texts and supplements, and that colleges list the prices of textbooks in the course catalog for registration.

The GAO report found that, in particular, efforts by colleges to disclose textbook prices during course registration were successful, helping students take advantage of cost-saving options like used books and renting.⁸ However, the report found that new textbooks prices rose 82 percent between 2002 and 2012, at approximately three times the rate of inflation.

While more students are able to achieve cost savings through used book sales and renting, these products can only do so much to keep costs down. The cost of used books and rentals will continue to rise, as the amount students pay for them are pegged to the prices of new editions in the marketplace. As new print editions continue to be priced high, prices on used books and rentals are driven up too.

⁵ The Student PIRGs. (2004). Ripoff 101: How the Publishing Industry's Practices Needlessly Drive Up Textbook Costs. Retrieved from <http://www.studentpirgs.org/news/new-report-shows-college-textbooks-are-ripoff-101>

⁶ The Student PIRGs. (2005). Ripoff 101: How the Current Practices of the Textbook Industry Drives Up the Cost of College Textbooks. Retrieved from <http://www.studentpirgs.org/sites/student/files/reports/ripoff-101-2nd.pdf>

⁷ The Student PIRGs. (2008). Course Correction: How Digital Textbooks Are Off Track and How to Set Them Straight. Retrieved from <http://www.studentpirgs.org/reports/course-correction>

⁸ General Accountability Office. (2013). College Textbooks: Students Have Greater Access to Textbook Information. Retrieved from <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-13-368>

While the report concludes that the HEOA provisions are beneficial to students, it is clear that price transparency alone is not solving the problem of current market conditions. If we are to rein in an industry that will do what it takes to lock students in to high prices, then we need a solution to the problem that actually drives down prices in the marketplace.

Publisher’s Products Are Evolving, But Restrictive Tactics Are Not

As technology progresses and knowledge sharing through the Internet becomes faster and more widespread, it is clear that there is great potential to harness that power and revolutionize the college textbook market. At face value, it seems to be working.

Today’s marketplace offers more digital textbook options to the student consumer than ever. “E-textbooks” are digitized texts that students read on a laptop or tablet. Similar to PDF documents, e-textbooks enable students to annotate, highlight and search. The cost may be 40-50 percent of the print retail price, and access expires after 180 days. Publishers have introduced e-textbooks for nearly all their traditional textbook offerings. In addition, the emergence of the e-reader like the Kindle and iPad, as well as the emergence of many e-textbook rental programs, all seemed to indicate that the e-textbook will alter the college textbook landscape for the better.

“The publishing companies’ venture into e-textbooks is just a continuation of the practices they use to monopolize the print market.”

However, despite this shift, users of e-textbooks are subject to expiration dates, on-line codes that only work once, page printing limits, and other tactics that only serve to restrict use and increase cost.⁹

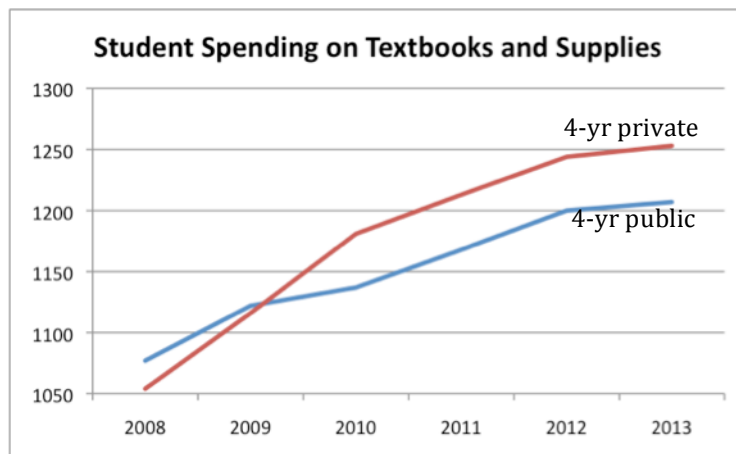
Unfortunately for students, the publishing companies’ venture into e-textbooks is a continuation of the practices they use to monopolize the print market.

Used and Rental Markets are Making a Difference

Fortunately for students, rental programs and used book markets have emerged as more consumer-friendly options to new print books. These programs offer students significant up-front savings. Just a few years ago, the benefits of these programs were limited to small minority of campuses – just 300 of the National Association of College Stores’ members offered renting in 2009.

⁹ Young, Jeffrey. (2013). What is an Access Code Worth? *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from <http://chronicle.com/article/What-Is-an-Access-Code-Worth-/134048/>

Helped along by funding from the U.S. Department of Education to help college bookstores launch course material rental pilots,¹⁰ that number had increased ten-fold to more than 3,000 by 2013.¹¹ In addition, the large visible online wholesaler, Amazon.com, launched a college textbook rental program in 2012. The proliferation of these programs seems to have mitigated the cost curve for students over the past several years.



While used books and rentals can only go so far to depress cost within a publisher-controlled system, it is heartening that more and more students can realize cost savings as the programs increase in availability over the next several years.

Another new development is the massive, open, online course, also known as the MOOC. MOOCs are high quality lectures that are available for free online, and many new enterprises and colleges have begun to develop them. Their emergence is accompanied by the theory that they may one day supplant college textbooks.¹² However, it is hard to imagine that even an accessible, high quality lecture could replace all the information in a good textbook. Nonetheless, MOOCs are contributing to the notion that student consumers need alternative and affordable course material.

“The emergence of open textbooks represents a parallel track that can truly challenge the publishers’ lock on book prices in the market.”

Finally, the emergence of open textbooks represents a parallel track that can truly challenge the publishers’ lock on new book prices in the marketplace. Open textbooks, which will be discussed more in depth later in this report, are college texts that are released under an open-source license allowing free digital access, low-cost printing, and customization by instructors. The use

of open textbooks has rapidly expanded in recent years, helped along by federal, state, and institution investment in development of classroom ready texts. Today, there are over 140 titles available under an open license in the University of Minnesota Open Textbook Library alone, and open textbooks are used hundreds of classrooms each semester.

¹⁰ United States Department of Education. (2013). Pilot Program for Course Material Rental. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/ppcmr/index.html>

¹¹ National Association of Campus Stores. (2012). College Stores Earn Gold Medal for Textbook Rentals. Retrieved from <http://www.nacs.org/advocacynewsmedia/pressreleases/collegestoresearngoldmedalfortextbookrental.aspx>

¹² Young, Jeffrey. (2012). American Council on Education May Recommend Some Course Offerings for College Credit. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from <http://chronicle.com/article/article-content/135750/>

Purpose of Study

Though there have been steps forward in recent years, as student consumers begin to benefit from alternatives like used books and rental programs, there is still much to be done to remove the cost barrier that high college textbooks prices pose in higher education.

The Student PIRGs conducted this study to investigate the continued effects of high textbook prices on students and higher education, as well as to evaluate student interest in alternatives to the traditional textbook.

KEY FINDINGS:

During the fall of 2013, the Student PIRGs conducted a two-part study to investigate the effect of high textbook costs on students and higher education, as well as to evaluate student interest in alternatives to the traditional textbook. The study consisted of a survey of 2,039 students from more than 150 different university campuses across the country.

We found that high textbook costs continue to be a problem for students. We also found that there is significant student interest in free, online textbooks.

Finding 1: High textbook costs continue to deter students from purchasing their assigned materials – despite concern for their own grades.

In this survey, 65% of all respondents said that they had decided against buying a textbook because it was too expensive.

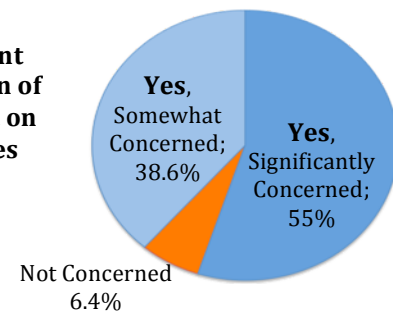
We've known that high prices were deterring students from purchasing the textbooks they need in a class for years: a Student PIRGs survey in 2011 found that 70% of students had skipped buying book due to cost.

It is concerning that students are forced to forego assigned textbooks – which are an essential aid in learning new material, completing assignments, and studying for exams – because they are too expensive.

In fact, this survey found that 94% of students who had foregone purchasing a textbook were concerned that doing so would hurt their grade in a course. More than half of the students felt *significant* concern for their grade.

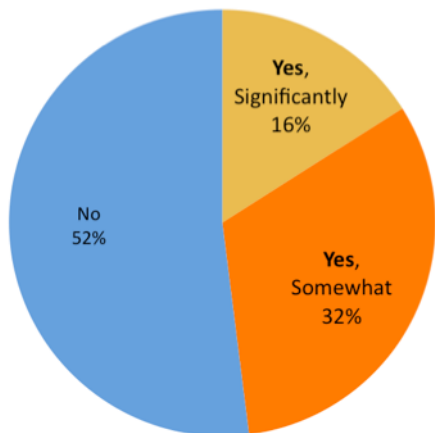
Not only are students choosing not to purchase the materials they are assigned by their professor, but they are *knowingly* accepting the risk of a lower grade to avoid paying for the textbook.

**Student
Concern of
Impact on
Grades**



Finding 2: High textbook costs have ripple effects on other academic decisions.

Did textbook costs impact which/ how many classes you took?



The student survey also reveals that high textbook costs have ripple affects beyond whether or not to purchase particular textbooks.

Nearly half of all students surveyed said that the cost of textbooks impacted how many/which classes they took each semester.

Students attend college seeking job preparation and/or degree attainment. Careful course selection is often necessary in order to yield the results that a student is seeking within the timeframe they are prepared to study.

It is especially concerning that this process may be being undermined by high textbook costs.

Finding 3: Students believe that hard-copy optional, free online alternatives to the traditional textbook would improve their performance.

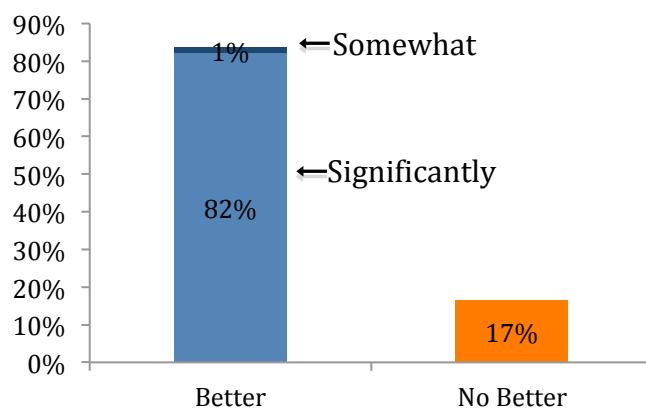
82% of students felt they would do SIGNIFICANTLY BETTER in a course if the textbook was available free online and buying a hard copy was optional.

While students have been wary of digital alternatives in the past,¹³ this study reveals significant student interest in breaking away from the traditional textbook market and exploring the use of technology to make knowledge more

accessible. To no small degree, either: responses were overwhelmingly in the “significantly better” column rather than in “somewhat better” or “no better”.

Most importantly, student support for a textbook that is “free online and buying a hard copy is optional” directly indicates that open textbooks are indeed the ideal model to replace traditional textbooks, as

Performance if Textbook Free Online and Hard Copy Optional



¹³ The Student PIRGs. (2010). A Cover to Cover Solution: How Open Textbooks are the Path to Textbook Affordability. Retrieved from <http://www.studentpirgs.org/reports/cover-cover-solution>

this is exactly how open textbooks work.

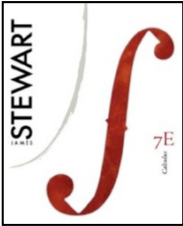
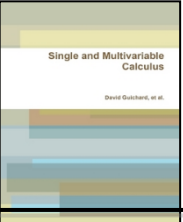
CONCLUSION

Overall, this study demonstrates that despite recent steps forward in the marketplace, high textbook prices continue to be a problem for students. Moreover, the study demonstrated that students are ready for an alternative to traditional textbooks in their classrooms.

The ideal alternative is open textbooks. Free online, free to download, and affordable in print: open textbooks operate in the exact way student respondents felt would improve their performance in class.

Not only are open textbooks more accessible, but they have the potential to save students \$100 on average, per course, per semester. If every student at the University of Wisconsin – Madison were assigned *just one* open textbook each semester, it would generate over \$6 million in student savings in just one year.

The ‘return on investment’ for open textbooks is huge. Campus and state programs that invested in the creation and use of open textbooks have generated millions of dollars more in student savings in a single year than was originally invested. See the Washington Open Course Library section in ‘Recommendations’ for more information.

	<u>Traditional Textbook</u> <i>Calculus</i> James Stewart Print \$224.95 Ebook \$117.99 (180 days)
	<u>Open Textbook</u> <i>Calculus</i> David Guichard, et al. Print \$22.95 Ebook \$0 (forever) Online \$0

In addition to upfront student savings, open textbooks can help reduce costs in the long run and drive real change in the market. The structure of open textbooks – where hard copies and spending money are optional – incentivizes the use of a wider range of products at fair prices to earn students’ business. Through this process, open textbooks give purchasing power back to the student, removing the market failure that allows high prices for traditional textbooks, while also protecting the right of faculty to assign the textbook they feel most appropriate. In contrast, options like rentals, e-books, and e-readers offer no such fix to the market, and allow prices to continue rising.

“To make open textbooks a real alternative to traditional textbooks, there needs to be more start-up investment.”

One barrier to open textbook use in classrooms is the size of the pool of high-quality materials ready for use in classrooms. While the current supply of open textbooks is expanding quickly, they still cover only a

fraction of all college courses. To introduce competition into the market and to make open textbooks a real alternative to traditional textbooks, there needs to be more 'start-up' investment in the creation and development of open textbooks.

The second barrier to widespread use is to demonstrate the quality and usability of open textbooks to faculty members. On many campuses, faculty members have championed open textbooks – but widespread knowledge about available materials is lacking. Additionally, it often takes time and effort to make the switch to an open textbook. The single most effective way for campuses, states, and the federal government to overcome this challenge is to provide faculty with the resources they need to make the switch.

“The single most effective thing for campuses, states, and the federal government to do is to provide faculty with the resources they need to make the switch to open textbooks.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Students and campus administrators should work together to create their own open textbook pilot programs.

Colleges can help create open textbooks by funding and organizing open textbook authors and by promoting awareness of open textbooks among their faculty. Specifically, colleges can provide compensation for faculty members who write or customize open textbooks to incentivize the creation of high-quality material. Colleges can also organize workshops and seminars to educate faculty about open textbooks and to assist them in the adoption process.

Students are powerful advocates on the issue of high textbook costs. As the most affected by high textbook prices, students can play a large role in spreading the word about alternatives to the traditional textbook. Whether it's one-on-one meetings with faculty or gathering grassroots support on campus, students have the ability to work directly with key decision-makers to build open textbook use on their campus.

Here are a few outstanding examples of students and administrations working together:

- The Maryland Open-Source Textbook (MOST) Initiative: The University System of Maryland recently held a seminar for their faculty, connecting experts from the Open Textbook Library and university staff. Professors and other administrators were able to ask questions and learn more about the open textbook process. This workshop was the first step of a three-part program to engage faculty and evaluate the potential for open textbooks on system campuses. The initiative was originally developed by students, who also organized the campaign and brought the proposal to the attention of campus and system administrators.
- Tacoma Community College OER Project: After students and staff voiced concerns over rising textbook costs, the student government and college administration partnered to create a new program focused on using open educational resources (OER) in campus classrooms. The joint project focuses on supporting faculty in integrating open materials into their classes and exploring a wide application of OER standards in their curriculum. The student government and university fund a full-time employee to direct the project. So far, the program has saved TCC students more than \$266,000 in just two semesters.¹⁴

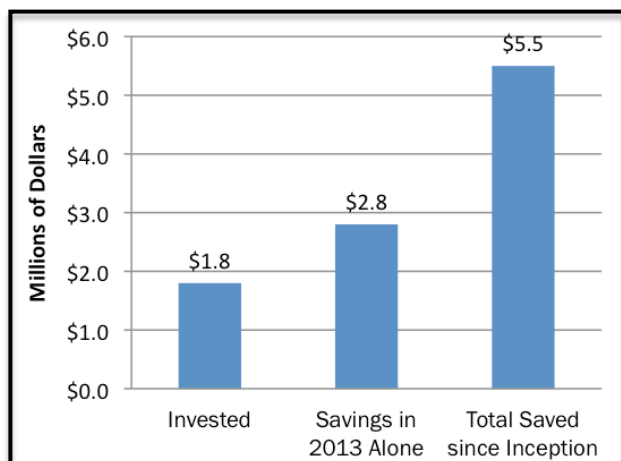
2. State and federal legislatures should invest in the creation and development of more open textbooks.

The government can help by investing funds and programmatic support to create more open textbooks. While government support should not be a defining force in the long-term – nor should it be responsible for sustaining the movement – it would provide critical capital needed to fuel innovation in the short term.

¹⁴ Tacoma Community College. (2013). Saving Students a Quarter Million on Textbooks. Retrieved from <http://www.tacomacc.edu/newsandevents/campusnews/?storyid=722>

Investment from the government would fast-track the production of vital high-quality classroom-ready texts, as well as providing colleges and faculty the resources they need to use available open textbooks in their classroom immediately.

The Washington Open Course Library



The Washington Open Course Library, jointly funded by the State of Washington and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, has developed open course materials – including open textbooks – for the 81 highest enrolled courses in Washington’s community and technical colleges. The program, funded by an initial investment of \$1.8 million, has so far saved students \$5.5 million since its inception, including \$2.8 million in student savings so far this semester.¹⁵ More importantly, the materials created by the program will be open and available forever, so savings will continue to grow over time.

3. Faculty should consider adopting open textbooks in their classrooms.

Faculty members hold a unique position to advance textbook affordability since they have the decision-making power in the publishing market. While we recognize the critical importance of the ability of a faculty member to select the best textbook for their students, we encourage them to consider cost to students in their decision. As faculty review textbook options for each semester, we strongly recommend they seek out and adopt open textbooks and other low-cost options whenever possible.

More than 2,500 faculty members from 750 U.S. colleges have signed the Faculty Statement on Open Textbooks, which expresses their intent to consider using high-quality open textbooks whenever appropriate.¹⁶

Faculty can check the University of Minnesota’s Open Textbook Library to see if there’s a book available for their class.¹⁷

4. Publishers should develop new models that can produce high-quality books without imposing excessive costs on students.

Major publishers need to develop new models that can create high quality textbooks with imposing excessive costs on students. Publishers should transition to models that are more efficient, affordable and accessible for all students.

¹⁵ The Student PIRGs. (2013). Updated Cost Analysis of the Open Course Library. Retrieved from <http://studentpirgs.org/resources/updated-cost-analysis-open-course-library>

¹⁶ The Student PIRGs. Faculty Statement on Open Textbooks. Retrieved from www.studentpirgs.org/open-textbooks/faculty-statement

¹⁷ University of Minnesota. Open Textbook Library. Retrieved from <https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/>

METHODOLOGY

Student Survey

This study consisted of a survey conducted during September and October of 2013. Student PIRG staff and student volunteers conducted an anonymous, multiple-choice survey in person on college campuses and through email outreach. 2,039 surveys were collected in 33 states and 156 different campuses.

Selecting a truly random sample that would represent the entire population of college students would be difficult, so we chose a method that emphasized collecting a large number of opportunistic responses from a range of institutions that would provide a general snapshot of student opinions.

Collection

The majority of the surveys (approximately $\frac{3}{4}$) were collected by PIRG volunteers with clipboards in busy areas on campus. Volunteers approached passing students and asked them to stop and take the survey. Students would then fill out the paper form and return it to a volunteer. All volunteers were asked to use a standard script during interactions to avoid biasing responses. Once the surveys were collected, PIRG volunteers entered the results into a spreadsheet. To diversify results, some outreach to campuses without on-the-ground accessibility were conducted via email. Emails were sent to lists of students who had previously volunteered their email to a local Student PIRG chapter.

Calculations

All of the statistics from the student survey are calculated based on the number of students selecting a specific answer divided by the total number of students answering the question.

Top 15 States (by responses collected)	
State	Responses
MA	466
CA	251
WI	178
CT	170
MD	166
NJ	161
OR	101
WA	87
PA	79
CO	65
NM	61
OH	57
NC	39
TX	35
ME	33

Top 15 Colleges (by responses collected)	
College	Responses
Univ. of Maryland, College Park	161
Univ. of Wisconsin, Madison	143
UMass, Amherst	124
UConn, Storrs	109
UC Davis	77
Southern Oregon Univ.	73
Salem State Univ.	69
UMass, Dartmouth	65
Univ. of Pittsburgh	62
Trinity College	61
Evergreen State Univ.	60
Mass. College of Liberal Arts	53
UC Santa Cruz	48
Oberlin College	42
Univ. of New Mexico	40