

Re: Affordable Textbooks, Fall Semester Update

In a message dated 10/28/2010 10:28:50 A.M. Eastern Daylight Time, nicole@studentpirgs.org writes:

Hi everyone,

There have been some exciting developments in the fight for the affordable textbooks, so please read and share!

New federal law: On July 1st, a provision from the Higher Education Opportunity Act took effect requiring publishers to disclose textbook prices, revision histories and alternate formats when marketing textbooks to faculty. Our studies have shown that publishers often withhold prices in sales conversations, so the new law ensures this information is readily available to consider on students' behalf.

Further reading:

[Analysis of HEOA Textbook Affordability Provisions](#) - The Student PIRGs

[Guidance for colleges and publishers](#) - U.S. Department of Education

[Cost of textbooks must be disclosed](#) - *Pittsburgh Post Gazette* (Jul 22)

Are publishers following the law? [Click here](#) to report your experience.

Open textbooks on the rise: With more than 1,300 adoptions this fall alone, open textbooks -- which are offered under a license allowing free online access and low-cost print options -- are rapidly gaining momentum. Options are available for several new courses, including [Sociology](#), [College Algebra](#) and [College Success](#). A [study we released last month](#) found that open textbooks can reduce costs by 80%, which would reduce average student spending from \$900 to \$184 per year. Although open textbooks aren't yet available for every course, the savings can still have a significant impact for students. For example, Professor D. Steven White at U-Mass Dartmouth saved his students \$11,000 by using an [open textbook](#) and other open resources in two of his Marketing courses.

Lists of open textbooks:

[Open Textbook Catalog](#), our list of the most widely used open textbooks.

[Orange Grove Texts](#), a project of the Univ. Press of Florida and Florida's digital repository.

[College Open Textbooks](#), a list of open texts that have been reviewed by experts.

Are you using an open textbook? [Click here](#) to let us know!

Making open textbooks sustainable: The obvious challenge is developing models that can create and sustain high-quality open textbooks. So far, a growing number of projects have proven successful on a smaller scale and could -- with enough support and investment -- work on a larger scale. Here are some of the most promising examples.

[Flat World Knowledge](#), a startup publisher of open textbooks operates on revenue from optional products such as print copies and study aids. With 25 published texts and 50 more in the pipeline, the company's business model has proven viable thus far. In fact, Dr. Mason Carpenter,

an author for both Flat World and Pearson, says the royalties on his open textbooks are tracking his other books.

[Writing Spaces](#), a project to develop a series of introduction to writing texts, uses a model similar to academic journals. Authors submit chapters or articles, which are peer reviewed by an editorial board and published as a collection. Like other scholarly works, these open textbooks benefit authors by increasing their visibility among peers and satisfying requirements for tenure at some institutions.

[The Open Course Library](#), which is jointly funded by the State of Washington and the Gates Foundation, will create open materials for the state's 81 largest community college courses. The materials will include not only open textbooks, but other openly licensed resources such as lecture notes, powerpoint slides and homework exercises.

Call on politicians, publishers and funders to create more open textbooks by signing the [Faculty Statement on Open Textbooks](#). If you already signed, spread the word to colleagues.

Other developments: In response to growing student demand, major college bookstore chains rolled out rental programs at more than 1,500 campus stores this fall. Although renting is often limited to the most popular titles, the savings are significant -- 60% on average. Another notable development is the rapidly growing assortment of digital reading options, including laptops, smartphones and e-readers like Kindle and iPad. Our research suggests that these options might take a while to catch on: 3 out of 4 students still prefer print textbooks, and unlike [open textbooks](#), e-books are mutually exclusive with print copies and prices can exceed \$100.

Further reading:

[More choices alter college textbook landscape](#) - Associated Press (Aug 8)

[Get college textbooks for less by renting instead of buying](#) -- *USA Today* (Aug 17)

[Open Textbooks and the Tech-Friendly Generation](#) -- *The Huffington Post* (Sep 30)

[In a Digital Age, Students Still Cling to Paper Textbooks](#) -- *The New York Times* (Oct 20)

Make textbooks affordable: We appreciate everything that faculty and colleges are doing to make textbooks affordable. Here are some other ways to help with the Make Textbooks Affordable campaign.

1. Forward this email or other useful information about textbook costs to colleagues, especially if you see an open textbook that might be an option for a colleague's course.
2. Organize a presentation or forum on textbook affordability for your department or campus. If appropriate, invite us to come to speak.
3. Help monitor publisher behavior. Let us know if you observe any new bad (or good) marketing practices, or if you are concerned that a publisher is not complying with the new price disclosure law.
4. Help involve more students in the campaign. We offer an internship program that gives students valuable experience working with the national campaign staff and the opportunity to earn course credit. Send interested students to sign up at: www.studentpirgs.org/textbooks/take-action.

Have any thoughts on the updates covered here? Any new developments on your end? We look forward to hearing from you. Best wishes for the rest of the semester!

Sincerely,

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