

The Soaring Cost of Textbooks

Posted on [November 2, 2015](#)

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According to a [report](#) of the [US Public Interest Research Group \(USPIRG\)](#) published in 2014, textbook costs have gone up 82% during the last decade. The study found that the average student spends more than \$1100 a year on textbooks. Because of the high cost, some students forego buying required textbooks for classes, thus putting their academic success in jeopardy. Of those 65% who reported that they did not purchase a required text because of cost, 94% of them indicated it hurt them academically. While the price of individual textbooks varies greatly, depending on subject matter and many other factors, the National Association of College Stores (NACS) [reported that the average cost of a textbook in 2011-2012 was \\$68 dollars](#) – that cost rose to an average of \$79 for 2013-2014. Since textbook costs are increasing three to four times faster than the rate of inflation, that average price will have increased substantially in today’s market. For some classes, the cost of an average textbook will be far above the general average. On the [NACS FAQ on textbooks](#), they reported that students estimated spending an average of \$313 on required course materials during the fall 2014 term.

So, what can we do? Many universities are promoting the creation of Open Textbooks, meaning textbooks that are created by faculty and made freely available over the Internet. The University of Minnesota has established the [Open Textbook Library](#) which serves as a repository and clearinghouse for over 200 high quality textbooks in many disciplines. The textbooks can be edited and tailored to fit a specific course or instructor and faculty are encouraged not only to create their own textbooks but also to review other Open Textbooks that are already available. The University of Minnesota [reported that their Open Textbook Network](#) has so far saved students across the country \$1.5 million and they noted that [“the \\$1.5 million in student savings was reported by nine early OTN members, including California Polytechnic State University–San Luis Obispo, Cleveland State University, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, Ohio State University, Purdue University, University of Arizona, University of Minnesota, University of Northwestern St. Paul, and University of Oklahoma.”](#)

Open Textbooks are one type of Open Educational Resource



OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

which are defined in Wikipedia as [“freely accessible, openly licensed documents and media](#) that are useful for teaching, learning, and assessing as well as for research purposes. documents and media that are useful for teaching, learning, and assessing as well as for research purposes.”

The FAU Libraries will be working with the Colleges and faculty across the University to develop strategies to support the creation and adoption of Open Textbooks and other open educational resources in order to reduce the costs of an FAU degree. Stay tuned to this space for more information.