OPEN TEXT BOOKS

Making education more accessible

open
textbook
alliance

Textbook prices are out of control.

$200-$400

The current cost of many **individual textbooks.**

88%

The amount textbook prices have risen over the past decade—that's **3 times the rate of inflation.**
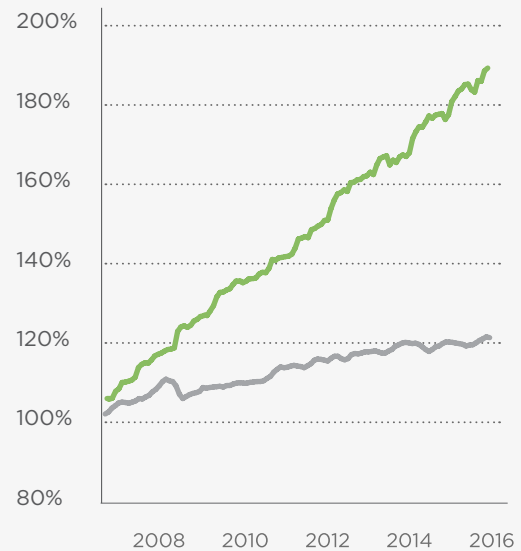
65%

The percentage of students who report that they **skipped buying or renting an assigned textbook** because of cost.

26%

The percentage of students who report that they occasionally or frequently **drop a course** because the textbook cost is too high.

THE RISING COST OF TEXTBOOKS

Source: Consumer Price Index

— Cost of textbooks
— Cost of all items

Why are textbook prices so high?

The broken textbook market allows publishers to keep driving up prices without consequences.

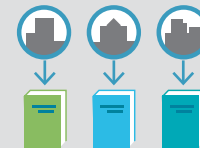## Prices are usually kept in check by two things:

1. The buying power of customers who **shop around** for the best deal.

2. Competition between companies.

But in the textbook market, those checks don't apply.

The customers – the students – don't choose their textbooks, so **they can't shop around**. Instead, books are assigned by faculty members, who don't buy the books themselves.

Just **5 publishers control 80%** of the textbook market, so they rarely compete directly on price.

Meanwhile, publishers keep **inventing creative new ways to increase profits**, like high-priced, single-use access codes or other products that eliminate the used market, prevent sharing, and limit consumer choice.

High book prices are hurting students' education.

- A 2013 report by the Student PIRGs found that a large **majority of students skip buying or renting** some of their required textbooks due to cost.

  Of those students, 94 percent recognized that skipping the book **would impact their grade** in a course, but did so anyway.

- Relatively small amounts of money can create big obstacles for students who are just getting by. Research at Morgan State University showed that **10% of students who dropped out** for financial reasons owed the university **less than $1,000**.

- High prices also **affect students' ability to enroll and stay enrolled in college.**

  In a recent study of non-college-going students by the McKinsey Center for Government, **48% cited an inability to pay** as the reason they weren't attending school, and 16% cited their need to spend time working instead of studying.

▶ Nearly half of all students say that the cost of course materials impacts **which classes** and **how many classes** they are able to take.

Open textbooks provide a solution.

Open textbooks provide an exciting alternative to traditional books that could save students money and improve the educational experience.

▶ What are open textbooks?

- Open textbooks are **faculty-written, just like traditional textbooks** - except that the authors have published them under an open copyright license.

- Open textbooks are **available free online** and for **very low cost in print**.

- Recent research has shown that open textbooks are **as effective, if not more effective**, than traditionally-published course materials.

- Individual **faculty members can customize** open textbooks to make them **better fit their classes**.

Open textbooks can save millions for students.

- Open textbooks have the potential to save students nationwide **up to a billion dollars** per year.

- In subjects where traditional textbooks cost $100-$300, switching a single classroom of 100 students to an open textbook can save students up to $30,000.

- At the University of Massachusetts, a small pilot program to help classes switch to open textbooks saved UMass students **$1.5 million in just four years.**

- At Kansas State University, an open textbooks program run by the library, provost's office, and the Center for Advancement of Teaching and Learning has **saved students over $1.1 million.**

How open & traditional textbooks compare

Traditional   Open

Traditional	Open	
✓	✓	Written by expert authors
✓	✓	Peer reviewed
✓	✓	High educational quality
✓	✓	Can include problem sets, sample exercises, etc.
✓	✓	Can be sold in campus bookstores
✓	✗	Cost up to $400
✓	✗	Publish unnecessary new editions
✓	✗	Bundle books with expensive add-ons
✗	✓	Available free and unrestricted online
✗	✓	Available in print for $20-$40
✗	✓	Electronic versions never expire
✗	✓	Can be customized by faculty

▶ **Tidewater Community College** developed a business administration degree program that relies exclusively on open course materials. Eliminating expensive textbooks **reduced the cost of attendance for participating students by 25%.**

Open textbooks can improve student performance.

Open licenses, such as the popular Creative Commons license, allow professors to adapt and customize the book's content. Professors can edit an open textbook to fit their class—adding or removing chapters, changing problem sets, and more.

• Data from Tidewater Community College shows **greater student retention and performance** when faculty members become more engaged with the classroom materials.

• A journal-published analysis of OER programs at public institutions showed that students using open materials **perform as well, if not better**, than their peers using traditional course materials.

▶ **"Open Educational Resources" (OER):** Open versions of educational materials, including open textbooks, study guides, practice tests, problem sets, exams, videos, and other classroom tools.

Open Textbook FAQs

Q: **Aren't there easier ways to save students money on textbooks?**

A: Used books, book rentals, and other programs can help, but open textbooks are by far the most effective way to save money for students.

Q: **How can I be sure an open textbook is high quality?**

A: Ultimately, each professor is the best judge of whether or not a particular book is right for their class. Many high-quality open textbooks are available right now – written by leaders in their fields, peer-reviewed, and professionally designed. In addition, a number of studies have found that OER are as or more effective than traditional books.

Q: **Who writes open textbooks? How do they get paid?**

A: There are several open textbook companies that follow the typical process of authoring, editing, and publishing books. In other cases, authors or teams of authors are funded by grants from foundations, universities, or the government.

Q: **Are open textbooks the same as e-books?**

A: No. Both are digital and can be used on laptops, tablets, and smartphones. However, typical e-books are still quite expensive and have many drawbacks, like access that expires and limits on printing. By contrast, open textbooks are free online, never expire, and have no restrictions on printing.

**Q:** **Is it legal to share and adapt open textbooks?**

A: Most open licenses allow instructors to legally adapt or edit a book's text, though authors have the option to reserve certain other rights for themselves. In any case, the original author should at least be attributed for the work.

Q: Can we get the books we're currently using as open textbooks?

A: If the book you are currently using is published by a major publisher, then the answer is probably no. Traditional publishers rely on their ability to sell their books for a healthy profit.

Q: Can we write our own open textbook if we want?

A: Yes! There are many foundations, states, companies, and institutions that will pay professors to write open textbooks. Professors can even self-publish an open textbook by releasing it under an open license.
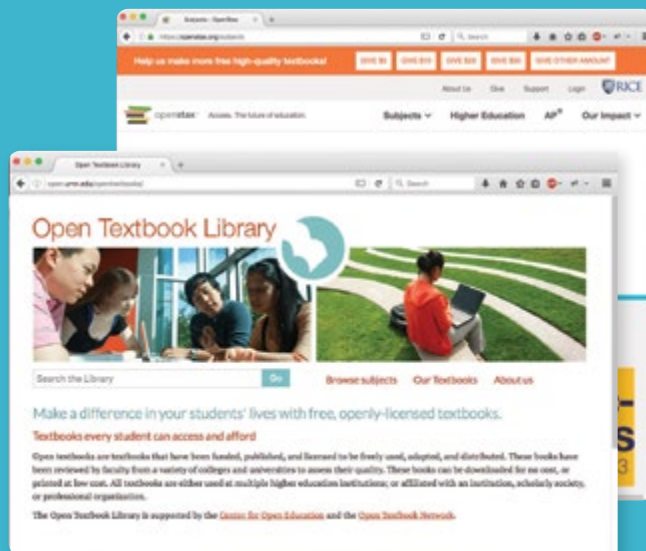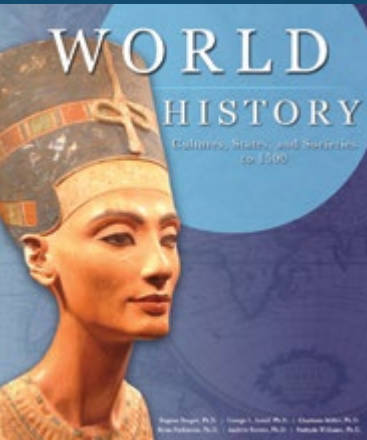
Finding Open Textbooks

These sites are good resources for finding open textbooks:

▶ The Open Textbook Library, hosted by the University of Minnesota: **open.umn.edu/opentextbooks**

▶ Open textbook publisher OpenStax, based out of Rice University: **openstax.org**

▶ The OER Commons, a project of ISKME: **oercommons.org**

WORLD HISTORY

◄ World History: Cultures, States and Societies to 1500

Eugene Berger, Georgia Gwinnett College

ART
Design, Context, and Meaning

◄ Introduction to Art: Design, Context & Meaning

Pamela Sachant, University of North Georgia

Peggy Blood, Savannah State University

► Calculus

Gilbert Strang, MIT

Edwin Herman, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point

Calc-ulus
Volume 1

► Biology

Yael Avissar, Rhode Island College

Jung Choi, Georgia Institute of Technology

Jean DeSaix, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Vladimir Jurukovski, Suffolk County Community College

Robert Wise, University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh

Connie Rye, East Mississippi Community College

Bio-logy
Now I can
EXPLORE BIOLOGY

◄ College Physics

Paul Urone, California State University, Sacramento

Roger Hinrichs, SUNY College at Oswego

Kim Dirks, University of Auckland

Manjula Sharma, University of Sydney

College
Phys-ics

◄ The Basics of General, Biologic & Organic Chemistry

Dr David W Ball, Cleveland State University

Dr John W Hill, University of Wisconsin

Dr Rhonda J Scott, Southern Adventist University

Case studies & strategies

Many colleges and universities are embracing open textbooks as a way to make education more affordable and accessible. Dozens of campuses have launched pilot programs to expand their use of open textbooks and more than 3,000 faculty members around the country have expressed their support for open textbooks.

On the following pages, we present four different examples of initiatives that an institution can undertake to introduce open textbooks on campus and start saving students money.

These programs do not represent a comprehensive approach to OER. These are initiatives that can be taken individually, in conjunction with each other, or in conjunction with other OER initiatives not mentioned here or already underway on your campus.

In addition, we strongly recommend that faculty always be given the choice of whether to opt in to any OER program —respecting their time-honored right to academic freedom.

Matej Kastelic/Shutterstock.com

Host a faculty workshop

The greatest obstacle to adopting open textbooks is a lack of widespread awareness within the faculty about their availability. Many faculty members do not know that OER are a viable or legal option for their classes, or they may be using open materials but not know how to maximize their potential.

To address this, your college or university can host introductory seminars or workshops for the faculty and invite an open textbook expert to speak.

How to proceed

Experience has shown that introducing faculty members to OER leads to increased use of OER in the classroom. Inviting open education experts to address campus faculty is a low cost, low effort way to start the conversation about OER at your institution.

For a school working within a tight budget, it may make sense for the library, campus center for teaching or learning, or provost's office to pursue this project independently within their funding structure. Ideally, your campus would also create a working group to continue the conversation about OER following the initial workshop.

FAST FACTS

> The cost of this program ranges from $0 (with grant funding) to $10,000, depending on the size of the workshop and the speakers.

> The resulting student savings often reaches more than $100,000, and has the potential to be much higher.

> **40% of faculty members** who attend a workshop **hosted by the Open Textbook Network** end up adopting open textbooks in their classrooms.

CASE STUDY

Launching open textbooks at University Of Maryland

In response to student interest around open textbooks, the Board of Regents at the University of Maryland created the Maryland Open Source Textbook Initiative, a three-part program to introduce OER to campus. Funded through the Center for Academic Innovation and in partnership with the Student Government Association, the University hosted a workshop for their faculty with the academic staff behind the Open Textbook Library. From there, they launched a working group to further investigate the potential use of OER on Maryland campuses, and have since been engaged with more than 100 faculty members from around the state. Their initiative projects more than $1 million in student savings this year.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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> MJ Bishop
   Director, Center for Academic Innovation
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Launch a local grant program

Another major obstacle to open textbook adoption is the time and resources it takes for faculty members to make the switch in their classes. With traditional textbooks, publishers aggressively market their materials to faculty, including supplemental materials like access codes and test banks, so that professors don't ever need to go looking for books. Open educational resources, on the other hand, ultimately have higher potential for student success and student retention, but they often require that faculty members spend more time adapting and curating their course materials.

To address this, your college or university can launch a program to provide faculty members with the resources and professional development it takes to adapt OER for their classrooms.

How to proceed

A grant program can either provide faculty members with direct funding to transition their classes to OER, or provide them with release time or development time to make the transition. Typically, these grant programs are overseen through a library or campus center for teaching and require staff time to administer the program. A benefit of this style of program is that it is easy to track which classes transition to OER and the resulting student savings.

FAST FACTS

> Individual grants to faculty members typically range from a few hundred to a few thousand dollars.

> A 2014 analysis of existing OER grant programs found that the **return on investment**, as measured by student savings, ranged from **6:1 to as high as 25:1**.

> As an example, UMass Amherst spent $40,000 and generated over **$1 million in student savings**.

CASE STUDY

Grant funding for open textbooks at UMass Amherst

In 2011, the University of Massachusetts Amherst launched the Open Education Initiative (OEI), a competitive grant program to help faculty members make the switch to open textbooks in their classrooms. The program is a partnership between the library, provost's office, Information Technology Department, and the UMass Institute for Teaching Excellence and Faculty Development. It provides funding for and tracks the results of faculty members who transition to OER.

Leading up to the first wave of grants, the university held a series of workshops for the faculty and offered individual consulting sessions with library staff. After disbursing 40 grants of approximately $1,000 each over the course of four years, the OEI projected student savings at almost $1.5 million.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Hire a staff person

Some faculty members have ingrained misconceptions about open textbooks that take more than a one-hour workshop to overcome. In addition, there is a minor learning curve when it comes to using open textbooks.

To address this, your college or university can assign or hire a staff person to work directly with faculty members and provide the necessary education and training to help them convert to using open textbooks.

How to proceed

While a one-time workshop can cause a significant but brief burst of interest in OER, our experience has found that a long-term investment in professional development around affordable course materials can have a much greater impact. A sustained investment is critical in order to truly maximize the potential of OER to improve learning outcomes and student retention.

Typically, the library, provost, or other department allocates part of an existing staff person's time or hires a new staff person to engage with faculty members one-on-one, hold continuing education events for the faculty more broadly, and make recommendations on how the campus can expand the use of open course materials.

FAST FACTS

> The cost of hiring a staff person ranges from a portion of a librarian's time to the creation of new, full-time OER Project Manager position.

> The resulting savings varies, but it has the potential to save students millions.

> As an example, Tacoma Community College **saved students $635,000** in two years.

CASE STUDY

Implementing OER at Tacoma Community College

At Tacoma Community College in Washington State, the college hired a full-time staff person to work directly with the faculty to help them implement the use of open textbooks. The cost of the position is split between the student government (from their Student Technology Fee) and the college's E-Learning department. Within the first two years, the program saved students more than $635,000.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Create a textbook-free degree

While open textbooks offer significant savings and represent a major step forward, some institutions are already looking beyond the textbook-centric system.

As the depth of content available has increased—Creative Commons now lists over one billion works under their open license—so has the ability of OER to lower costs for students. Rather than employing OER in the form of open textbooks, schools are increasingly turning toward building their own degree programs that use a range of openly licensed materials in place of a single textbook. Your college may choose to develop a degree program that relies entirely on OER. These textbook-free degrees are often referred to as "Z-Degrees."

How to proceed

With this initiative, your campus would transition an entire degree program to using OER. The department can create a faculty board to curate content from existing OER and develop that content into the full range of instructional course materials, or else contract with an external organization to manage that process. Once established, students would then be able to request courses from the textbook-free track toward their degree.

FAST FACTS

> Tidewater Community College's Z-Degree courses saw significant increases in student performance and retention, and reduced the **cost of attendance for participants by 25%**.

> **Achieving the Dream**, an education nonprofit, is partnering with 50 community colleges around the country to launch textbook-free degree programs.

> **California** passed legislation making over **$5 million available** for schools to create their own OER degrees.

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CASE STUDY

Textbook-free degree at Tidewater Community College

In 2013, Tidewater Community College partnered with Lumen Learning, an education nonprofit, to develop a fully textbook-free degree for their business administration program. With an initial investment of $128,000, they used existing OER to create new course materials and replace traditional textbooks.

After the second year of implementation, the program had saved students over $250,000 and lowered the cost of obtaining the degree by 25%. Additionally, 98% of students said the new classes were of equal or better quality than traditional courses, with 58% saying they were better. Student dropout and withdrawal rates were lower in Z-courses, while student success was equal.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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open
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The Open Textbook Alliance is a nationwide coalition of student government leaders who are working to bring open textbooks to college campuses.

OpenTextbookAlliance.org