

# **The City University of New York**



**Testimony of Associate Vice Chancellor and Chief Information  
Officer Brian Cohen**

**The City University of New York**

**New York City Council Higher Education Committee**

**September 30, 2014**

Good afternoon, Chairperson Barron and members of the Higher Education Committee. I am Brian Cohen, Associate Vice Chancellor and Chief Information Officer for The City University of New York (CUNY). In that capacity I am responsible for technology initiatives University-wide. My office supports the needs of the University's students, faculty, and staff and explores ways new technologies can enhance CUNY's educational offerings in the most effective manner.

Lowering the cost of textbooks is a challenge my office has been addressing for the past several years, and the need to reduce the price of textbooks and course materials is now more important than ever. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics Census Bureau, the cost of college textbooks rose 812% between 1978 and 2012, while the cost of new homes rose 325% and medical services 575% in the same time period. If you look at the prices for the top 20 textbooks used by CUNY students, based on enrollment, the average price for a textbook was approximately \$120 for a new book, and approximately \$100 for an eBook. This comes to an average cost of \$440 for textbooks for 4 courses in one semester – a nearly impossible cost for the majority of our students.

Four years ago, my office created and now regularly updates a Textbook Savings Fact Sheet located on the CUNY.edu website as well as each individual college's homepage. This important resource provides students with information to make cost effective decisions with respect to textbooks. The flyer identifies where to find textbooks at campus libraries, access discounted resources from online bookstores, rent books, and use open source materials. My office also co-sponsored an eBook pilot program at CUNY. The pilot program funded faculty proposals to lower textbook costs for students while enhancing the teaching and learning experience. We discovered through follow-up evaluations that - cost being the main driver - students preferred eBooks if they lowered textbook costs. The results were shared with the College Provosts.

Today, I would like to discuss CUNY's Textbook Savings Committee, which was created more than a year ago, as well as several initiatives stemming from that Committee's efforts. The Textbook Savings Committee was established to bring together members of the University's community to identify other initiatives that would eventually lead to textbook savings for our students. Committee members -- from the University and college levels -- include myself, the University's Deputy Chief Operating Officer, the

Chief Librarian, the University Director of Academic Technology, faculty and student representatives, and several college Vice Presidents of Finance and Administration.

The first action of the Committee was to issue a Request for Information (RFI) to understand the constantly changing textbook marketplace and determine the best options for lowering costs to CUNY students. In September 2013, CUNY released the RFI, which contained questions on how publishers and booksellers can help CUNY ease the burden on students. We received 20 responses from publishers, bookstores, open source providers, and online marketplaces, and met with 7 of the 20 in December 2013.

Several initiatives have stemmed from these meetings. First, it became apparent that there were a number of options for colleges wishing to move from the traditional brick-and-mortar bookstore to the more competitively-priced, online bookstore. As Vice Chancellor Sapienza mentioned, John Jay College of Criminal Justice recently pursued an online book store because it wanted to find lower cost options for course materials, recognizing that students were more likely to succeed in class if they had the books in hand. John Jay has also made book purchasing convenient, providing free shipping either to the home or to the school. After a competitive procurement, the college contracted with Akademos to establish such a virtual bookstore for its faculty and its students.

The new online bookstore went live just before the start of the Fall 2014 semester and offers many benefits. For example, the virtual bookstore allows comparison pricing in a broad range of formats so a student can search for the lowest cost for a new, used, eBook, or rental. It also promotes open source content and provides less costly coursepacks or chapters. According to the latest data, as a result of lower prices (on average 8% lower) and increased availability of used books, students at John Jay have saved over \$100,000 since the online bookstore's implementation. The virtual platform also enables faculty to search, discover, and adopt new texts, including those with lower price points. Finally, having an online bookstore has freed up 9,000 square feet of space that John Jay had previously used for its brick-and-mortar store; that space can now be repurposed for other academic uses.

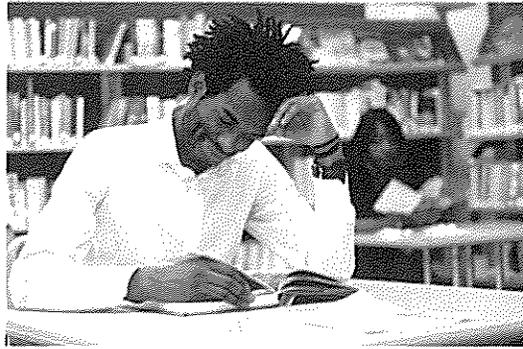
The full value of the online bookstore has yet to be realized as it was only launched recently. We are currently providing the John Jay online bookstore with data it needs to order books ahead of time, and we are working with John Jay to put a process in place where students will be able to purchase, rent, or subscribe to course textbooks immediately after registering for the course. Having access to the course materials early will assist students with their studies. The college negotiated a favorable return policy that should not financially impact students' ability to drop courses if they have already purchased the materials.

So far, no-one has raised objection to the closure of the brick-and-mortar bookstore. The college has also been working very closely with other CUNY campuses (and other higher education institutions) that have expressed interest in the new model. In fact, Queens College just issued an RFP for a campus bookstore with the option that it be virtual.

Turning to another initiative, the Textbook Savings Committee also learned that publishers might lower the cost of course materials when purchased in high volume. With more than half a million students attending CUNY's colleges, we should be able to take advantage of such volume discounts. The University Faculty Senate is now exploring an initiative to aggregate demand for the same or similar textbooks across CUNY's colleges and thereby lower textbook costs for students in those classes. This effort will start with a small pilot for an introductory level Chemistry course offered at every CUNY school. If the pilot succeeds, we hope this practice will extend to other disciplines and courses throughout CUNY.

Finally, the Textbook Savings Committee is also exploring other initiatives to lower textbook costs, such as raising adoption by our faculty of open source course materials, establishing a book swap among our students, and providing faculty with technology solutions that would allow them to produce more self-developed content.

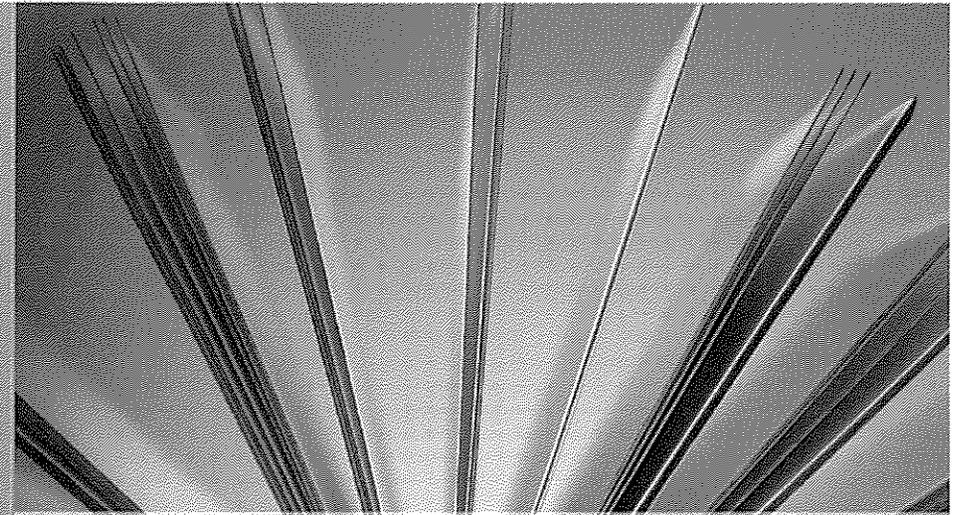
These are highlights of the work we are currently undertaking, and I look forward to providing you an update on these initiatives in the future. In the meantime, I am happy to answer any questions you may have.



## 8 ASK FOR UNBUNDLED TEXTBOOKS

Many textbooks come 'bundled' with CD-ROMs and workbooks. Ask your professor to consider assigning unbundled textbooks (i.e. just the textbook) if he/she is not going to use the supplementary material.

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# HOW TO \$AVE MONEY ON TEXTBOOKS

# Helpful Tips &

The University Office of Computing and Information Services has compiled this fact sheet to help students save money when purchasing textbooks. This list is not exhaustive, so students are encouraged to research other options.\*Be sure to check with your professor that the version of the textbook you select can be used in your class.\*

## Links to Save You Money on Textbooks

### 1 CAMPUS OPTIONS

**Library:** Your campus library may have a copy of the textbook you need.

**Bookstore:** Your campus bookstore may offer ebooks or have rental programs. Campus bookstores are also listed below when relevant.

### 2 PURCHASE USED TEXTBOOKS

Used textbooks are cheaper than new textbooks. You can purchase used textbooks from your campus bookstore or online.

### 3 EBOOKS

Electronic versions of textbooks are often cheaper than print versions. All major retailers sell eBooks. If you do not see the eBook listed on a retailer's website, check the website of the book publisher for an electronic version. Campus libraries also collect eBooks.

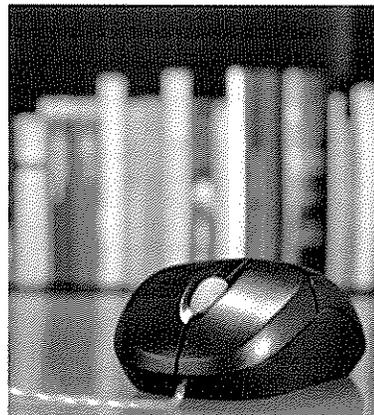
- [cuny.edu/libraries.html](http://cuny.edu/libraries.html)
- [apps.appl.cuny.edu:83/F](http://apps.appl.cuny.edu:83/F)

- [biblio.com](http://biblio.com)
- [bigwords.com](http://bigwords.com)
- [bncollege.com/\(B&N\)](http://bncollege.com/(B&N))
- [bookbyte.com](http://bookbyte.com)
- [buyusedtextbooks.com](http://buyusedtextbooks.com)
- [campusbooks.com](http://campusbooks.com)
- [chegg.com](http://chegg.com)
- [collegeswapshop.com](http://collegeswapshop.com)
- [ebay.com](http://ebay.com)
- [efollett.com](http://efollett.com)
- [fierguy.com](http://fierguy.com)
- [halfvalue.com](http://halfvalue.com)
- [half.com](http://half.com)
- [posmancollegiate.com](http://posmancollegiate.com)
- [saveontextbooks.net](http://saveontextbooks.net)
- [textbooks.com](http://textbooks.com)
- [textbookx.com](http://textbookx.com)
- [valorebooks.com](http://valorebooks.com)

- [web.cuny.edu/academics/library.html](http://web.cuny.edu/academics/library.html)
- [bncollege.com/\(B&N\)](http://bncollege.com/(B&N))
- [campusbooks.com](http://campusbooks.com)
- [cengagebrain.com](http://cengagebrain.com)
- [chegg.com](http://chegg.com)
- [coursesmart.com](http://coursesmart.com)
- [ecampus.com](http://ecampus.com)
- [efollett.com](http://efollett.com)
- [kno.com](http://kno.com)
- [pearsonhighered.com/student](http://pearsonhighered.com/student)
- [posmancollegiate.com](http://posmancollegiate.com)
- [wiley.com](http://wiley.com)

### 4 COMPARISON SHOP

Use ISBN numbers to comparison shop among the major retail sites or use sites that compare prices from multiple sources.



### 5 ONLINE BOOK SWAPS

Certain sites are set up to allow you to trade books with others online.

### 6 RENT TEXTBOOKS

Certain sites are set up to allow you to rent textbooks for a designated time-frame. Make sure to return your books on time as late fees can be substantial. Be clear on terms and conditions of rental.

### 7 FREE DOWNLOADS/ OPEN SOURCE

Many books that are no longer copyrighted can be downloaded for free.

- [abebooks.com](http://abebooks.com)
- [addall.com](http://addall.com)
- [affordabook.com](http://affordabook.com)
- [alibris.com](http://alibris.com)
- [allbookstores.com](http://allbookstores.com)
- [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)  
FREE SHIPPING  
<http://www.amazon.com/gp/student/signup/info>
- [bestbookbuys.com](http://bestbookbuys.com)
- [bookfinder.com](http://bookfinder.com)
- [bookfinder4u.com](http://bookfinder4u.com)
- [bigwords.com](http://bigwords.com)
- [bncollege.com/\(B&N\)](http://bncollege.com/(B&N))
- [campusbooks4less.com](http://campusbooks4less.com)
- [cheapesttextbooks.com](http://cheapesttextbooks.com)
- [directtextbook.com](http://directtextbook.com)
- [efollett.com](http://efollett.com)
- [gettextbooks.com](http://gettextbooks.com)
- [half.com](http://half.com)
- [kno.com](http://kno.com)
- [posmancollegiate.com](http://posmancollegiate.com)
- [textbookpricecomparison.com](http://textbookpricecomparison.com)
- [swaptree.com](http://swaptree.com)
- [bncollege.com/\(B&N\)](http://bncollege.com/(B&N))
- [bookrenter.com](http://bookrenter.com)
- [campusbookrentals.com](http://campusbookrentals.com)
- [chegg.com](http://chegg.com)
- [collegebookrenter.com](http://collegebookrenter.com)
- [efollett.com](http://efollett.com)
- [kno.com](http://kno.com)
- [posmancollegiate.com](http://posmancollegiate.com)
- [rent-a-text.com](http://rent-a-text.com)
- [saveontextbooks.net](http://saveontextbooks.net)
- [skoobit.com](http://skoobit.com)
- [textbookrentals.com](http://textbookrentals.com)
- [books.google.com](http://books.google.com)
- [flatworldknowledge.com](http://flatworldknowledge.com)
- [gutenberg.org](http://gutenberg.org)
- <http://collegeopentextbooks.org>
- <http://www.studentpirgs.org/open-textbooks/catalog>
- [ipi.org](http://ipi.org) (Internet Public Library)
- [oerconsortium.org](http://oerconsortium.org)
- [wikibooks.com](http://wikibooks.com)

# **The City University of New York**



**Testimony of University Dean for Libraries and Information  
Resources Curtis L. Kendrick**

**The City University of New York**

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**Textbook Affordability**

**September 30, 2014**

Good morning, Chairperson Barron and members of the Higher Education Committee. I am Curtis Kendrick, CUNY's university dean for libraries and information resources. It is a pleasure to be back before this committee to talk about textbook affordability.

Unequal access to high quality education is contributing to growing racial and economic disparities in academic achievement and preventing students from advancing in the world. By 2020, some 65% of all jobs will require postsecondary education<sup>1</sup>, but only 41% of the nation's 18- to 24-year-olds are pursuing the kind of postsecondary degrees that will prepare them for the high-skilled jobs that will be in demand.<sup>2</sup> One explanation for the dearth of students obtaining postsecondary degrees is the prohibitive cost of college, to which the high cost of textbooks is a major contributing factor. Students must spend approximately \$1,200 a year on textbooks and supplies, which amounts to 14% of tuition for students in public four-year colleges, and 39% for students in two-year colleges, according to the College Board.<sup>3</sup> The City University of New York's estimates are in line with these figures, with expected textbook expenditures of about 20% of tuition at baccalaureate colleges and 27% of tuition at community colleges.

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<sup>1</sup> Lumina Foundation, [A Stronger Nation through Higher Education](http://www.luminafoundation.org/stronger_nation/report/main-narrative.html#3). June 2013. URL [http://www.luminafoundation.org/stronger\\_nation/report/main-narrative.html#3](http://www.luminafoundation.org/stronger_nation/report/main-narrative.html#3) consulted June 30, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> National Center for Education Statistics, 2013 data. URL [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13\\_302.60.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13_302.60.asp) consulted June 30, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> The College Board. [Trends in College Pricing 2013](http://trends.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/college-pricing-2013-full-report.pdf). URL <http://trends.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/college-pricing-2013-full-report.pdf> consulted June 30, 2014.

These costs are a major issue for CUNY students, 39% of whom come from families with household incomes of less than \$20,000.<sup>4</sup> Financing the college degree has become an unprecedented burden for students and taxpayers, who must repay their student loan debt with interest. Textbooks contribute significantly to this debt, which, according to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau exceeds one trillion dollars nationally.<sup>5</sup> In many cases, students choose not to register for courses that require them to purchase textbooks. In a large study of enrolled students (n=14,221) across the State of Florida, 23% of respondents surveyed had not registered for a course because of the high cost of the textbooks, 10.6% had to withdraw from a course and 7.2% had failed a course because they could not afford the assigned textbook.<sup>6</sup> The cost of textbooks may prevent students from taking an optimal course load, resulting in more years in college and the reduced likelihood of completion. Some students choose not to purchase books at all, or to use outdated editions or non-assigned books, according to a study at Houston Community College.<sup>7</sup> A survey conducted by the U.S. PIRG noted that 65% of respondents opted out of buying a textbook because of its cost, and of those students 94% indicated

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<sup>4</sup> Center for an Urban Future, *Completion Day*, June 2013 ([nycfuture.org/pdf/Completion-Day.pdf](http://nycfuture.org/pdf/Completion-Day.pdf))

<sup>5</sup> Chopra, Rohit, "Student Debt Swells, Federal Loans Now To a Trillion," Consumer Financial Projection Bureau Newsroom, July 17, 2013. URL <http://www.consumerfinance.gov/newsroom/student-debt-swells-federal-loans-now-top-a-trillion/> consulted June 30, 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Morris-Babb, Meredith and Henderson, Susie, "An Experiment in Open-Access Textbook Publishing: Changing the World One Textbook at a Time," *Journal of Scholarly Publishing*, January 2012 doi: 10.3138/jsp.43.2.148.

<sup>7</sup> Hilton III, J. and Laman, C., "One College's Use of an Open Psychology Textbook," *Internet Reference Services Quarterly*, 11(4) 2007. DOI: 10.1300/J136v11n04\_11.

they suffered academically.<sup>8</sup> And textbook costs are rising. Current textbook prices represent more than an 80% increase from 2002 to 2012, according to the GAO.<sup>9</sup>

As you know, for the past several years CUNY has aggressively been taking action to help offset the burden of the high cost of textbooks for our students. Our libraries have received special funding to purchase textbooks for course reserves, as well as electronic books and other materials to support the curriculum. This past year CUNY invested \$3 million in this program. Our libraries purchased more than 30,000 textbooks plus many more stack and reference volumes, databases, video collections and e-books. Last year alone students borrowed these textbook reserve collections about 380,000 times, and downloaded tens of thousands of selections from e-books. Our libraries also endeavor to level the playing field with respect to providing students with access to technology. Our libraries typically loan sophisticated equipment such as laptops, tablets, ipads or even graphing calculators and digital video cameras.

As much as we've done, however, we recognize that it is not enough. One way to greatly reduce textbook costs is by using free and online open educational resources (OERs). Open content and open access textbooks are instructional resources that can be used, reused, often remixed and customized under an

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<sup>8</sup> U.S. PIRG. Survey Shows Students Opting Out of Buying High Priced Textbooks. January 27, 2014. URL <http://www.uspirg.org/news/usp/survey-shows-students-opting-out-buying-high-cost-textbooks> consulted June 30, 2014.

<sup>9</sup> Government Accounting Office. College Textbooks: Students Have Greater Access to Textbook Information. June 2013 Report GAO-13-368.

intellectual property license that permits their free use and re-purposing by others while ensuring authors retain copyright to their work.<sup>10</sup> CUNY took the lead in working with the New York State Higher Education Initiative (NYSHEI) on developing a proposal for the New York State Legislature to fund an open educational resource initiative. Unfortunately, NYSHEI recently ceased operations due to financial difficulties. CUNY is continuing to move forward in the area of OERs. This fall we will be offering an online workshop for faculty to provide them with guidance on how to convert their courses from using high priced textbooks to using open educational resources.

The benefits of OERs go beyond cost-savings. According to the Open Access Textbook Task Force, a group of educators that the State of Florida assembled to study distance learning, the use of OERs fosters student success, if not an improvement over commercial textbooks.<sup>11</sup> Students who used an OER math course developed by Carnegie Mellon University's Open Learning Initiative "learned more quickly and at a much lower costs, according to a carefully conducted double-blind study."<sup>12</sup> Across the United States, faculty are expressing their support for open educational resources in great numbers. More than 2,500 faculty members from 750 U.S. colleges have signed the Open Textbooks Statement, which is a manifesto for

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.hewlett.org/programs/education/open-educational-resources>.

<sup>11</sup> Open Access Textbook Task Force said that there are "compelling academic reasons to use open access textbooks, such as: improved quality, flexibility and access to resources, interactive and active learning experiences, currency of textbook information, broader professional collaboration, and the use of teaching and learning technology to enhance educational experiences."

<sup>12</sup> Plotkin, Hal. Free to Learn: An Open Educational Resources Policy Development Guidebook for Community College Governance Officials. <http://wiki.creativecommons.org/images/6/67/FreetoLearnGuide.pdf> consulted September 27, 2013.

using high quality open textbooks whenever appropriate.<sup>13</sup> Faculty and colleges are also joining collaborative ventures such as the Community College Consortium for Open Educational Resources, and the College Open Textbooks initiative to develop high quality academic materials. California has established the California Digital Open Source Library to house open source materials and provide a Web-based platform for the academic community to find, adopt, utilize or modify course materials for little or no cost.<sup>14</sup> At Temple University, some 27 faculty members have received awards to develop alternates to the commercial textbook as part of their Alternate Textbook Project. In one course, "Morality, Law & Advertising," the instructor replaced the assigned textbook with a course pack of new online sources for concepts, laws and weekly readings, resulting in improved student performance. In another successful initiative, the University of Massachusetts-Amherst awards Open Education Initiative grants to faculty members to develop new curricular resource strategies using easily identified digital resources. Faculty create a variety of alternatives, from an online open access lab manual to e-books and media streamed through the University Libraries' numerous databases. The Open

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<sup>13</sup> Allen, Nicole. A Cover to Cover Solution: How Open Textbooks are the Path to Textbook Affordability. The Student PIRGs, September 2010. <http://www.studentpirgs.org/reports/cover-cover-solution> consulted September 27, 2013.

<sup>14</sup> California Bill Number SB 1053 Enrolled Bill Text, Legislative Counsel's Digest. February 8, 2012. [http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201120120SB1053](http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201120120SB1053) consulted September 25, 2013.

Education Initiative is estimated to have saved students more than \$1,000,000 since 2011.<sup>15</sup>

The potential of open educational resources to improve opportunities has also been recognized by The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The Hewlett Foundation has been the principal funder of open educational resources, having invested \$21 million annually in online projects since 2001.<sup>16</sup> The foundation's 2010 strategic plan sees the development of OERs as a force that will contribute to "equalizing access to knowledge for teachers and students around the globe."<sup>17</sup> The Houston Community College study found that students perform better when using an open "textbook" compared to a traditional textbook. Summarizing their study of 690 students showed an improvement in GPA from 1.6 to 2.0, a reduction in withdrawal rate from 14% to 7%, and an increase in the final exam average score from 67.6% to 71.1% comparing a traditional textbook to an open textbook.<sup>18</sup>

The potential for substantial cost savings for students combine with the evidence of improved academic success make a compelling argument for providing open educational resources to CUNY's student population. According to Hal Plotkin,

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<sup>15</sup> UMass Amherst Libraries, OEI Grants Press Release, March 27, 2017. URL <http://www.library.umass.edu/about-the-libraries/news/press-releases-2014/oei-grants/> consulted June 30, 2014.

<sup>16</sup> Kelly, Andrew, "Opening Up the University," *Philanthropy* magazine, Spring 2012, [http://www.philanthropyroundtable.org/topic/excellence\\_in\\_philanthropy/opening\\_up\\_the\\_university](http://www.philanthropyroundtable.org/topic/excellence_in_philanthropy/opening_up_the_university)

<sup>17</sup> The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Education Program Strategic Plan. October, 2010. [http://www.hewlett.org/uploads/documents/Education\\_Strategic\\_Plan\\_2010.pdf](http://www.hewlett.org/uploads/documents/Education_Strategic_Plan_2010.pdf) consulted September 27, 2013.

<sup>18</sup> Hilton III, J. and Laman, C., "One College's Use of an Open Psychology Textbook," *Internet Reference Services Quarterly*, 11(4) 2007. DOI: 10.1300/J136v11n04\_11.

the senior policy advisor in the Office of the Under Secretary of Education in the Obama Administration, OERs provide “a unique and largely untapped opportunity to improve learning outcomes, reduce costs and improve the quality of teaching.” Consequently, making a modest investment in OERs will have “significant multiplier effects as the quantity of free, high-quality open learning materials steadily increases and the most relevant materials become easier to find.”<sup>19</sup>

CUNY’s Office of Library Services has begun preliminary plans to establish an Open Educational Resources Pilot Project. The project would test a model of training and incentivizing faculty and librarians to identify, adapt and adopt open educational resources and deploy them in classroom settings. The project would pilot OERs in 50 courses and in doing so capture the technological, logistical and legal processes undertaken to provide guidance to those considering OERs for the first time in the future. The project would also include assessment by the highly regarded nonprofit, Ithaka S+R to evaluate the pilot’s impact on student learning outcomes (<http://www.sr.ithaka.org>). Most importantly, students will be provided with high-quality open learning materials and save them a projected \$5.8 million over the course of the four-year project.<sup>20</sup>

The project objectives would be achieved through five concomitant streams of activity:

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<sup>19</sup> Plotkin, H., *Free to Learn: an Open Educational Resources Policy Development Guidebook for Community College Governance Officials*. October 2010. <http://wiki.creativecommons.org/images/6/67/FreetoLearnGuide.pdf> consulted October 18, 2013.

<sup>20</sup> Over the duration of the project we estimate that 52,500 students will benefit by not having to purchase a textbook. We are using a baseline cost estimate of \$100 per textbook, and escalating that cost at 6% per year. Average cost of a textbook data from Nicole Allen and David Wiley presentation at Open Education Conference, 2013. URL <http://openeducation2013.sched.org/event/90d9e1c479a944181f771f720ef967db#.UoJHdpOkEaU> consulted July 1, 2014.

- 1.) Identify courses most likely to intersect with high impact of savings for CUNY students with high probability of successful conversion;
- 2.) Create a sustainable program of faculty and librarian training for the identification of OERs and the conversion of courses;
- 3.) Pilot OERs in 50 courses using high quality free educational materials selected by faculty ultimately benefiting 52,500 undergraduate students at CUNY at a savings to students of \$5.8 million and at a return on investment of 480%;
- 4.) Develop and implement an assessment model that includes success in lowering student costs; its impact on student learning outcomes and retention; its evidence of sustainability through measures such as success in extending the converted course from the originating professor to his/her peers on the same campus or elsewhere;
- 5.) Promote collaboration with other institutions by making materials adopted freely available to everyone in New York State and beyond.

In conclusion, I have outlined just two of CUNY's strategies for addressing textbook affordability. One is the short-term strategy of investing in current curriculum materials – textbooks and the like and putting them on reserve so that students may make use of them, as well as providing access to very sophisticated technology for students to borrow. The longer term strategy speaks to addressing the textbook marketplace by providing incentives for faculty to adopt high quality open educational resources rather than using high priced textbooks as their course materials. As more and more faculty at CUNY, and across the country move in this direction, it holds the promise of having a positive effect

on the textbook marketplace. Next, Associate Vice Chancellor and Chief Information Officer Brian Cohen will speak to you about some other initiatives underway at the University to address textbook affordability.

Thank you.

PUBLIC LAW 110-315—AUG. 14, 2008

HIGHER EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY ACT

SEC. 112. TEXTBOOK INFORMATION.

(a) Amendment.--Part C of title I (20 U.S.C. 1015) is further amended by adding after section 132 (as added by section 111 of this Act) the following new section:

SEC. 133. 20 USC 1015b. TEXTBOOK INFORMATION.

(a) Purpose and Intent.--The purpose of this section is to ensure that students have access to affordable course materials by decreasing costs to students and enhancing transparency and disclosure with respect to the selection, purchase, sale, and use of course materials. It is the intent of this section to encourage all of the involved parties, including faculty, students, administrators, institutions of higher education, bookstores, distributors, and publishers, to work together to identify ways to decrease the cost of college textbooks and supplemental materials for students while supporting the academic freedom of faculty members to select high quality course materials for students.

(b) Definitions.--In this section:

(1) Bundle.--The term 'bundle' means one or more college textbooks or other supplemental materials that may be packaged together to be sold as course materials for one price.

(2) College textbook.--The term 'college textbook' means a textbook or a set of textbooks, used for, or in conjunction with, a course in postsecondary education at an institution of higher education.

(3) Course schedule.--The term 'course schedule' means a listing of the courses or classes offered by an institution of higher education for an academic period, as defined by the institution.

(4) Custom textbook.--The term 'custom textbook'--

(A) means a college textbook that is compiled by a publisher at the direction of a faculty member or other person or adopting entity in charge of selecting course materials at an institution of higher education; and

(B) may include, alone or in combination, items such as selections from original instructor materials, previously copyrighted publisher materials, copyrighted third-party works, and elements unique to a specific institution, such as commemorative editions.

(5) Institution of higher education.--The term 'institution of higher education' has the meaning given the term in section 102.

(6) Integrated textbook.--The term 'integrated textbook' means a college textbook that is-

(A) combined with materials developed by a third party and that, by third-party contractual agreement, may not be offered by publishers separately from the college textbook with which the materials are combined; or

(B) combined with other materials that are so interrelated with the content of the college textbook that the separation of the college textbook from the other materials would render the college textbook unusable for its intended purpose.

(7) Publisher.--The term 'publisher' means a publisher of college textbooks or supplemental materials involved in or affecting interstate commerce.

(8) Substantial content.--The term 'substantial content' means parts of a college textbook such as new chapters, new material covering additional eras of time, new themes, or new subject matter.

(9) Supplemental material.--The term 'supplemental material' means educational material developed to accompany a college textbook that--

(A) may include printed materials, computer disks, website access, and electronically distributed materials; and

(B) is not being used as a component of an integrated textbook.

(c) Publisher Requirements.--

(1) College textbook pricing information.--When a publisher provides a faculty member or other person or adopting entity in charge of selecting course materials at an institution of higher education receiving Federal financial assistance with information regarding a college textbook or supplemental material, the publisher shall include, with any such information and in writing (which may include electronic communications), the following:

(A) The price at which the publisher would make the college textbook or supplemental material available to the bookstore on the campus of, or otherwise associated with, such institution of higher education and, if available, the price at which the publisher makes the college textbook or supplemental material available to the public.

(B) The copyright dates of the three previous editions of such college textbook, if any.

(C) A description of the substantial content revisions made between the current edition of the college textbook or supplemental material and the previous edition, if any.

(D)(i) Whether the college textbook or supplemental material is available in any other format, including paperback and unbound; and

(ii) for each other format of the college textbook or supplemental material, the price at which the publisher would make the college textbook or supplemental material in the other format available to the bookstore on the campus of, or otherwise associated with, such institution of higher education and, if available, the price at which the publisher makes such other format of the college textbook or supplemental material available to the public.

(2) Unbundling of college textbooks from supplemental materials.--A publisher that sells a college textbook and any supplemental material accompanying such college textbook as a single bundle shall also make available the college textbook and each supplemental material as separate and unbundled items, each separately priced.

(3) Custom textbooks.--To the maximum extent practicable, a publisher shall provide the information required under this subsection with respect to the development and provision of custom textbooks.

(d) Provision of ISBN College Textbook Information in Course Schedules.--To the maximum extent practicable, each institution of higher education receiving Federal financial assistance shall--

(1) disclose, on the institution's Internet course schedule and in a manner of the institution's choosing, the International Standard Book Number and retail price information of required and recommended college textbooks and supplemental materials for each course listed in the institution's course schedule used for preregistration and registration purposes, except that--

(A) if the International Standard Book Number is not available for such college textbook or supplemental material, then the institution shall include in the Internet course schedule the author, title, publisher, and copyright date for such college textbook or supplemental material; and

(B) if the institution determines that the disclosure of the information described in this subsection is not practicable for a college textbook or supplemental material, then the institution shall so indicate by placing the designation 'To Be Determined' in lieu of the information required under this subsection; and

(2) if applicable, include on the institution's written course schedule a notice that textbook information is available on the institution's Internet course schedule, and the Internet address for such schedule.

(e) Availability of Information for College Bookstores.--An institution of higher education receiving Federal financial assistance shall make available to a college bookstore that is operated by, or in a contractual relationship or otherwise affiliated with, the institution, as soon as is practicable upon the request of such college bookstore, the most accurate information available regarding--

(1) the institution's course schedule for the subsequent academic period; and

(2) for each course or class offered by the institution for the subsequent academic period--

(A) the information required by subsection (d)(1) for each college textbook or supplemental material required or recommended for such course or class;

(B) the number of students enrolled in such course or class; and

(C) the maximum student enrollment for such course or class.

(f) Additional Information.--An institution disclosing the information required by subsection (d)(1) is encouraged to disseminate to students information regarding--

- (1) available institutional programs for renting textbooks or for purchasing used textbooks;
- (2) available institutional guaranteed textbook buy-back programs;
- (3) available institutional alternative content delivery programs; or
- (4) other available institutional cost-saving strategies.

(g) GAO Report.--Not later than July 1, 2013, the Comptroller General of the United States shall report to the authorizing committees on the implementation of this section by institutions of higher education, college bookstores, and publishers. The report shall particularly examine--

- (1) the availability of college textbook information on course schedules;
- (2) the provision of pricing information to faculty of institutions of higher education by publishers;
- (3) the use of bundled and unbundled material in the college textbook marketplace, including the adoption of unbundled materials by faculty and the use of integrated textbooks by publishers; and
- (4) the implementation of this section by institutions of higher education, including the costs and benefits to such institutions and to students.

(h) Rule of Construction.--Nothing in this section shall be construed to supercede the institutional autonomy or academic freedom of instructors involved in the selection of college textbooks, supplemental materials, and other classroom materials.

(i) No Regulatory Authority.--The Secretary shall not promulgate regulations with respect to this section."

(b) Effective Date.--The amendment made by subsection (a) shall take effect on July 1, 2010.



National Association  
of College Stores

**TESTIMONY ON BEHALF OF  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGE STORES**

**Reducing the Cost of College Textbooks**

**By Richard Hershman**

**Before the  
Committee on Higher Education  
New York City Council**

**September 30, 2014**

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**September 30, 2014**

Chairman Barron and members of the Committee on Higher Education, on behalf of the National Association of College Stores (NACS), I thank you for the opportunity to testify today on how college textbooks can be made more affordable for college students. My name is Richard Hershman and I am the Vice President of Government Relations for NACS. Headquartered in Oberlin, Ohio, NACS is the professional trade association representing the collegiate and elementary and secondary retailing community. NACS member stores serve nearly all college students while supporting the academic missions of education institutions.

When I last testified before this committee in November 2010, we were on the cusp of a transformation in college textbook affordability efforts that are resulting in reduced costs, more transparency and greater choice in the marketplace. The federal Higher Education Opportunity Act's (HEOA) textbook provisions had just taken effect requiring disclosures by publishers and institutions, unbundling of materials, and collaboration among stakeholders. Several studies have found the HEOA provisions to be successful in helping empower students, reducing costs, and fostering innovation. Most recently, the U.S. Government Accountability Office found in its June 2013 report

that students have benefited from the timely and dependable release of course material information by institutions.

The good news is student spending on required course materials has essentially remained flat to declining for the last six years, despite improvements in the quality of course materials. The average student nationally spent \$638 in the 2013-2014 school year, which is lower than it was in 2007 when students on average spent \$702.

Students today have far greater information, choice, and options than they did just five years ago in how to acquire and consume course material content. Faculty also have more affordable options in the marketplace to choose from including more affordable commercial course materials and free openly licensed materials. Most campus bookstores provide students a choice between new, used, rental, and digital options. College store inventory management, ecommerce, and campus integration systems continue to improve -bringing greater integration with institution course schedule and registration systems resulting in more seamless and accurate information for students. New online and in store software platforms, mobile apps, and kiosks are enhancing the student experience and choice. Tools to help faculty select appropriate materials also continue to improve.

For example, designed with input from faculty across the country, FacultyEnlight by Barnes and Noble, is an online adoption website that allows faculty to research and select textbooks in one, convenient place -- saving time and making textbook adoption easier than ever. Product reviews let faculty learn from colleagues around the country. And, by showing the available formats and prices for each textbook, FacultyEnlight and

similar services ensure that faculty can find and select the most affordable options for their students.

Various pro-active campus initiatives are helping drive lower costs for students. Low cost textbook rental programs which were only at about two dozen higher education institutions in 2008 have exploded to more than 3,400 institutions today including almost every institution in New York City. Few similar examples exist in education reform demonstrating that level of a scale-up of a successful practice at that many institutions over the course of only a few years.

Meanwhile, other efforts such as e-textbooks, course-packs (print and digital) with copyright clearance, smarter cost-conscious custom packaging, used books, open educational resources, and library reserves are all helping to reduce costs and increase faculty and student consumer choices. College stores are also collaborating with libraries to eliminate institutions and students double paying for content that may already be available in the library, while working with commercial publishers and open educational resource developers on initiatives and pilots to reduce costs without sacrificing quality.

Earlier this year we announced a distribution partnership with OpenStax (the largest publisher of open-textbooks) that will allow the nonprofit publisher to drop prices on all its print textbooks and distribute them to more than 3,000 college stores.

College stores are increasingly providing peer-to-peer marketplaces, price match guarantees, and online price comparison and shopping. For example, the NYU bookstore provides on their website a comparison shopping tool that lets students search all their books and get pricing from NYU, rental sites, Amazon, Half.com, Barnes and

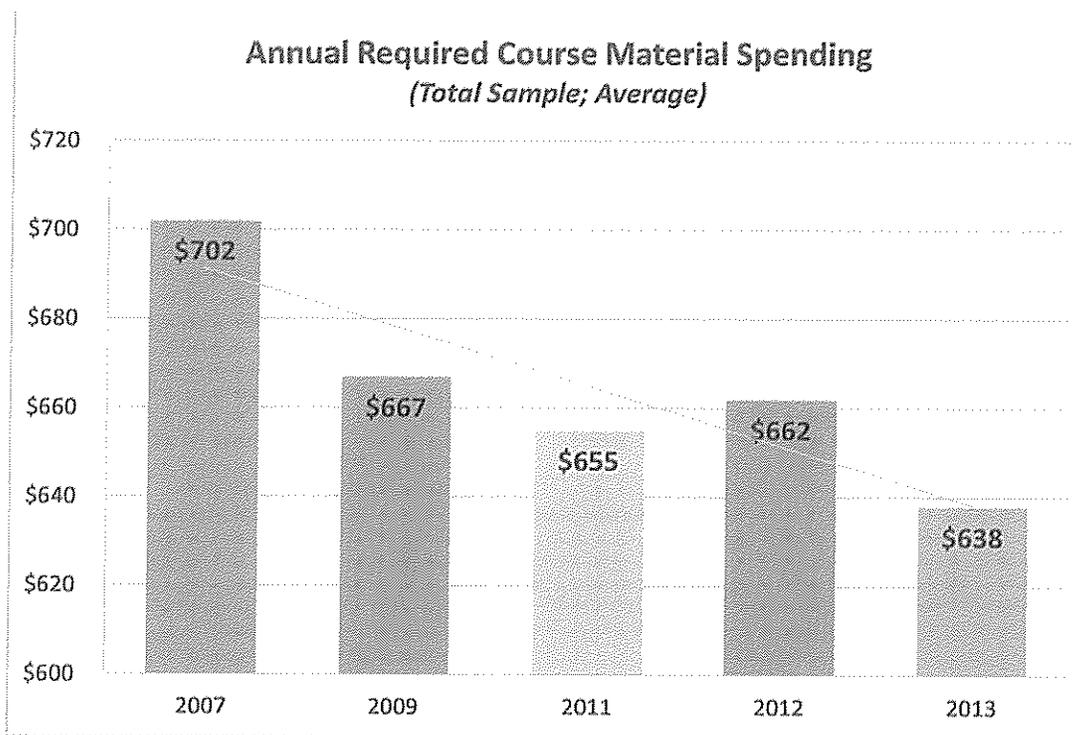
Noble, and others. They can then make a decision to order from whomever they choose. Some faculty are also adopting fewer required textbooks and being more cost sensitive in their selections.

Here are a few specific recommendations that would help strengthen various existing efforts here in New York to make course materials more affordable.

1. Improve CUNY's dated textbook adoption platform by integrating individual campus bookstore adoption systems that are more robust and feature rich and backed by course material specialists. This will lead to more accurate information for students and faculty to make better informed choices.
2. Promote adherence to campus due dates for faculty to identify required and recommended textbook and supplemental materials, while minimizing changes to the information after it has been finalized and posted for students. Such improvements would not only directly help students, but also support bookstores', disability support services', and libraries' efforts to better serve students. For example, the Federal Advisory Commission on Accessible Instructional Materials in Postsecondary Education for Students with Disabilities (AIM Commission) found timely adoptions by faculty are critically needed for Disability Support Services. This modest change would help provide greater support for bookstores and DSS offices to work together to identify options that will work for all students, including for students with print disabilities, and at more affordable cost for students and institutions.

3. Ensure textbook adoption information is “verified” for accuracy before posting. While supporting academic freedom and faculty ability to select the materials best fit for their courses, students are ill served when information is provided which may contain errors in it.
4. Establish textbook advisory committees where faculty, students, library, and bookstore personnel work together on strategies to reduce costs and improve classroom use of required materials.

The NACS supports efforts to enhance affordable and equitable access to quality course materials, and will continue to work as an ally for student interests. Thank you for this opportunity to testify on this important issue.



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Based on results from Student Watch™ study

*Please note: For the years not included in the above chart, the annual course material spending question was not included in that year's survey.*



# Rice University

Office of Public Affairs / News & Media Relations

## NEWS RELEASE

**EDITORS** — Links for video and high-resolution images are included at the end of the news release.

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## **College textbook publisher drops price on every title**

*NACSCORP agreement includes distribution to more than 3,000 college stores*

HOUSTON -- (April 28, 2014) -- Rice University-based publisher OpenStax College today announced a distribution partnership with NACSCORP, a subsidiary of the National Association of College Stores (NACS), that will allow the nonprofit publisher to drop prices on all its print textbooks and distribute them to more than 3,000 college stores.

"All our books are free online, but many students prefer a printed copy, and thanks to our partnership with NACS, we plan to do something next year that no major publisher has done for a generation -- reduce the price of every print title in our catalog," said Richard Baraniuk, founder of OpenStax College and the Victor E. Cameron Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering at Rice.

OpenStax College is one of the nation's fastest-growing college textbook publishers. It launched in 2012 with the goal of making college more affordable by publishing free, high-quality textbooks for 25 of the nation's most-attended college courses. Based at Rice University, OpenStax College uses philanthropic gifts from major foundations to produce "open education resources" (OER) -- free, full-color, peer-reviewed textbooks that have the same look and feel as books that cost \$100 or more.

Baraniuk said OpenStax College's print edition prices are already exceptionally low -- about \$30-\$54. He said the NACS agreement will allow OpenStax College to lower prices by about 2 percent next year. Beyond the per-copy drop in prices, Baraniuk said the NACS agreement will also save students money by reducing how much OpenStax College has to pay for shipping.

The Oberlin, Ohio,-based NACS is a not-for-profit, professional trade association that represents more than 3,000 collegiate and K-12 stores, including stores that are school-owned and operated, private, or managed by bookstore companies. NACS member stores serve nearly all college students while supporting the academic missions of educational institutions. NACS' members also include higher-education professionals, organizations, associations and more than 1,000 companies that supply goods and services to the college retailing industry. Its subsidiary, NACSCORP, helps educational retailers compete more successfully by providing consistent and

reliable wholesale distribution of products and services, including textbooks and other course materials.

"We are committed to providing a range of options to our college store partners, including inexpensive titles from the growing OER market," said Kurt Schoen, NACSCORP president and chief operating officer. "OpenStax College's high-quality books stand out in the OER market, and we're pleased to partner with OpenStax College to lower the cost of print editions of these books and make them available to many more students worldwide."

OpenStax College's first seven books have already saved students more than \$9 million, been downloaded more than 500,000 times and been adopted by more than 600 high schools, community colleges, four-year colleges and research universities.

"It's difficult to overstate the benefits that NACSCORP's international distribution network will bring to us," said Daniel Williamson, managing director of OpenStax College. "Students and instructors have flocked to our books because they are the right quality and price, but we are a small nonprofit. This agreement will be an enormous aid to us in getting the right amount of print copies to the right campus stores each semester.

"NACSCORP distributes to the vast majority of college campuses across the country and many more outside the U.S., and they are committed to making a college education accessible to as many students possible," Williamson said. "This deal will make it possible for us to expand our reach but also to lower the prices on our print books at the same time."

Williamson said the deal is aptly timed, because OpenStax College is in the midst of rolling out its biggest-impact titles to date. Its seventh book, *Principles of Economics*, which debuted in March, is the first in a string of new titles OpenStax College will publish this year for courses that typically enroll more than a million U.S. students each year.

"We're planning to debut titles for precalculus, psychology and U.S. history later this year," Williamson said. "We look forward to working with NACS to widen access to higher education by putting both these and our existing titles into the hands of as many students as possible."

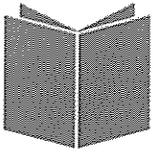
NACS Chief Executive Officer Brian Cartier said the new partnership fits perfectly into the organization's objectives.

"As a trade association, NACS is committed to the mission of making sure course materials and all aspects of a higher education are more affordable to students," Cartier said. "I'm proud to say that this new partnership between NACSCORP and OpenStax College fully supports that mission."

OpenStax College's catalog also includes titles for introductory physics, sociology, statistics, anatomy and physiology, and both majors and nonmajors biology. It also plans to publish a title for introductory chemistry this year, and its catalog will eventually cover 25 of the nation's most-attended college courses.

OpenStax College is made possible by the support of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Laura and John Arnold Foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the 20 Million Minds Foundation, the Maxfield Foundation, the Calvin K. Kanzanjian Foundation and the Leon Lowenstein Foundation.

For more information, visit <http://openstaxcollege.org>.



# Open Education

## What is Open Education?

Open Education is the critical link between teaching, learning, and the collaborative culture of the Internet. SPARC supports policies and practices that advance the creation and use of Open Educational Resources (OERs) — academic materials that everyone can use, adapt, and share freely.

## What are Open Educational Resources?

Open Educational Resources (OERs) are teaching, learning, and research resources released under an open license that permits their free use and repurposing by others. OERs can be textbooks, full courses, lesson plans, videos, tests, software, or any other tool, material, or technique that supports access to knowledge.

## Why are Open Educational Resources important?

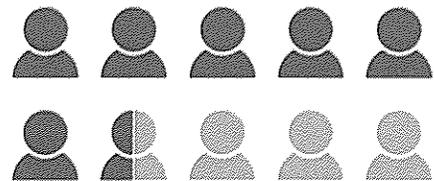
Technology creates an unprecedented opportunity to expand access to knowledge. Yet, our systems for communicating knowledge still have many of the same cost barriers and use limitations present in the pre-Internet, print-based world. This is especially true for educational resources. *The cost of college textbooks has risen rapidly, forcing many students to forgo required materials due to the expense.* Digital alternatives have offered little financial relief, and are typically sold on a subscription basis with heavy restrictions on access. Moreover, traditional publishing systems too often discourage, rather than enable, the adaptation or improvement of content for the classroom.

Educational materials are both an important output of the scholarly research process and, in turn, an essential part of educating tomorrow's scholars. SPARC believes that OERs are the ideal model to leverage the digital environment to unlock the full potential for education.

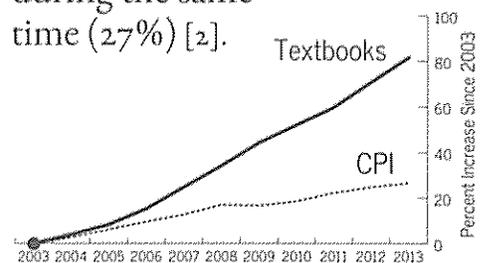
## Case studies: What does the data show?

Studies conducted at Virginia State University and Houston Community College found that students who used open textbooks tended to have *higher grades* and *lower withdrawal rates* than their peers who used traditional textbooks [3][4].

65% of students report not purchasing a textbook because of its high price [1].



College textbook prices rose 82% between 2003 and 2013, approximately *triple the rate of inflation* in overall consumer prices (CPI) during the same time (27%) [2].



## How Are Open Educational Resources Created?

OER publishing efforts mirror the traditional publishing process, including author compensation and peer review, and release the output under an open license.

OpenCourseWare (OCW) are OERs created by educators and presented in course format, often including both course planning materials and instructional materials.

Publicly-funded initiatives support the development of OER and ensure that taxpayer-funded educational resources are openly licensed.

Individual authors who receive support from their institution or write on their own time can share their work freely through OER repositories.

## How Are Open Educational Resources Used?

Students can access OERs online for zero cost, download and keep a digital copy, and print or purchase a low-cost hardcopy.

Educators can curate, tailor, and share OERs to perfectly suit their curriculum, and share their innovations freely.

Authors can disseminate their work to a worldwide audience while still receiving attribution.

Institutions can leverage OERs to reduce student out-of-pocket costs.

Entrepreneurs can build businesses around OER by offering value-added products.

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## How Can You Support Open Education?

SPARC supports the creation and adoption of OERs to be used in teaching, along with collaborative new approaches to learning, where knowledge is created and shaped openly, and promotes practices and policies that advance this vision. You can help support OERs by:

Increasing OER awareness and adoption. Students, professors, librarians, and administrators can help raise awareness, increase discoverability, and advocate adoption of OERs whenever appropriate.

Supporting OER development. Institutions, foundations, authors, and researchers can support or participate in frameworks for creating, vetting, and evaluating the efficacy of OERs.

Advocating effective policies. Policymakers can fund programs that support OER creation and adoption, ensure that publicly-funded educational resources are openly licensed, and remove policy barriers that hinder OER.

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- [1] U.S. PIRG Education Fund and the Student PIRGs. 2014. Fixing the Broken Textbook Market. <http://www.studentpirgs.org/reports/sp/fixing-broken-textbook-market>
  - [2] Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2014. Consumer Price Index Databases. <http://www.bls.gov/cpi/data.htm>
  - [3] Hilton III, J., & Laman, C. 2012. One college's use of an open psychology textbook. *Open Learning: The Journal of Open, Distance and e-Learning*, 27(3), 265-272.
  - [4] Feldstein, A., Martin, M., Hudson, A., Warren, K., Hilton III, J., & Wiley, D. 2012. Open Textbooks and Increased Student Access and Outcomes. *European Journal of Open, Distance and E-Learning*.





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**Testimony of Nicole Allen, Director of Open Education**  
New York City Council Higher Education Committee  
College Textbook Affordability Hearing  
September 30, 2014

Good afternoon Chairperson Barron and members of the Higher Education Committee. I am Nicole Allen, Director of Open Education for the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC), an alliance of academic and research libraries working for a more open system for sharing knowledge. We have four member libraries in New York City, Columbia, CUNY, NYU, and Rockefeller University. Prior to joining SPARC, I directed a national grassroots student campaign for textbook affordability with the Student PIRGs for six years, becoming one of the nation's leading experts on this issue.

I first became aware of the high cost of textbooks the hard way, as a freshman in college caught completely unaware by a \$400 bookstore bill. I remember feeling angry, abused, and above all confounded that with the rapid advancement of technology around me, my college curriculum still revolved around expensive, often out of date, paper books.

That was eleven years ago in 2003, four years before the iPhone and a year before Facebook, when people still used dial-up internet connections. We've made enormous advances in technology since then, which has made it possible to dramatically increase the speed and efficiency at which we share and develop information. Yet the problem with textbook costs has only gotten worse. Textbook prices have nearly doubled, rising 82% or about three times the rate of inflation between 2002 and 2012 according to the Government Accountability Office.<sup>1</sup> The College Board's estimate for the average annual budget for books and supplies has risen from \$745<sup>2</sup> to \$1,270<sup>3</sup> for students at 2-year public institutions. One textbook I bought for about \$150 back in college now sells for \$350 on Amazon.com<sup>4</sup> – and it's a math textbook, a subject which is not likely to have changed significantly in the intervening years.

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<sup>1</sup> Government Accountability Office (2013). College Textbooks: Students Have Greater Access to Textbook Information. (GAO 13-368). Retrieved from <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-13-368>

<sup>2</sup> College Board (2003). Trends in College Pricing 2003. Retrieved from [http://www.collegeboard.com/prod\\_downloads/press/cost03/cb\\_trends\\_pricing\\_2003.pdf](http://www.collegeboard.com/prod_downloads/press/cost03/cb_trends_pricing_2003.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> College Board (2013). Trends in College Pricing 2013. Retrieved from <http://trends.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/college-pricing-2013-full-report-140108.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Amazon.com. Linear Algebra and Its Applications. Retrieved from <http://www.amazon.com/Linear-Algebra-Its-Applications-Edition/dp/0030105676>.

Despite the rising prices, students do have many ways to save money. Back when I was in college, the only way to save on textbooks was to shop on Amazon.com or hope that another student in my dorm had a copy from the previous semester. Today there are significantly more diverse options. Students are able to rent textbooks on virtually every campus, and the online bookselling market has grown exponentially, offering deals both on up front prices and for buying back. However, each of these options comes with its own sacrifice. Online books, while cheaper, can be unpredictable and may be missing supplemental materials. Rentals are a good option for students who just want to finish the class and never look back, but not for students who want to keep their books for future reference – or those who are taking a multi-semester course.

On the digital front, traditional publishers now offer “e-textbook” versions for most textbooks. Students typically “rent” e-textbooks for periods ranging 180-360 days, for a price comparable to half the cost of purchasing a new printed textbook.<sup>5</sup> This model is still very expensive considering that many e-textbooks still cost more than \$100, and the files carry heavy digital rights management restrictions designed to curtail unauthorized use. While e-textbooks enable features such as annotation, highlighting, and searching, they restrict actions that have become second nature in the digital environment such as copying, sharing, and editing.

Not surprisingly, a 2013 study of a 23-campus e-textbook pilot program found that less than one third of students believed that using e-textbooks significantly improved their learning or engagement in a course.<sup>6</sup> In 2011, a study at Daytona Beach Community College found that e-textbooks resulted in virtually no cost savings and more than half of the students expressed dissatisfaction with using e-textbooks.<sup>7</sup> E-textbooks have been widely available since 2008, but analysts put the estimated market share at only 6% in 2012.<sup>8</sup> This is relatively small given the rapid adoption of other technology, such as smartphones and tablets. Therefore, in many ways, e-textbooks are digital in name only, as they retain many of the limitations present in the print format.

In today’s world we can and should be doing better. This is certainly not the future I expected back when I was a student. Imagine this makes students feel today.

It’s no wonder that study after study has documented that high textbook costs impact student study habits negatively. A report released earlier this year by the Student Public Interest Research Groups found that 65% of the students surveyed had skipped one or more required textbooks due to cost, even though more than three quarters of those students believed it could

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<sup>5</sup> The Student PIRGs (2010). *Course Correction: How Digital Textbooks Are Off Track and How to Set Them Straight*. <http://www.studentpirgs.org/reports/course-correction>

<sup>6</sup> EDUCAUSE (2013). *Understanding What Higher Education Needs from E-Textbooks: An EDUCAUSE/Internet2 Pilot*. <http://www.educause.edu/library/resources/understanding-what-higher-education-needs-e-textbooks-educauseinternet2-pilot>

<sup>7</sup> Graydon, B., Urbach-Buholz, B., Kohen, C. (2011). *A Study of Four Textbook Distribution Models*. *EDUCAUSE Quarterly*, v34 n4. <http://www.educause.edu/ero/article/study-four-textbook-distribution-models>

<sup>8</sup> Xplana (2011). *Digital Textbooks Reaching the Tipping Point in U.S. Higher Education: A Revised Five-Year Forecast*. [http://info.xplana.com/report/pdf/Xplana\\_Whitepaper\\_2011.pdf](http://info.xplana.com/report/pdf/Xplana_Whitepaper_2011.pdf)

hurt their grade.<sup>9</sup> A 2010 survey of Florida students found that nearly one in four students had not registered for a course because of the associated textbook costs.<sup>10</sup> A 2013 study by the Book Industry Study Group found that less than half of college students now purchase a current version of their assigned textbook – opting for older editions or unauthorized copies – down from nearly two thirds in 2010.<sup>11</sup> Finally, *The Washington Post* recently reported an alarming increase in students downloading illegal copies of textbooks for free,<sup>12</sup> which is another manifestation of the difficult decisions students face when they cannot afford their textbooks.

This brings me to a key point that I urge the committee to keep in mind throughout this hearing. The cost of textbooks has escalated to a point where it creates two classes of students: those who can afford reliable access to their course materials, and those who cannot. All of us here share a goal of delivering the highest quality, most effective learning materials for students. However, students cannot learn from materials they cannot afford.

So the question remains, how do we actually leverage all of the potential that exists in today's world to reduce costs and expand access to knowledge. That is where Open Educational Resources come in.

Open Educational Resources (OER) are teaching, learning, and research resources that reside in the public domain or have been released under an intellectual property license that permits their free use and re-purposing by others.<sup>13</sup> OER include open textbooks, video lectures, tutorials, readings, and even full online courses.

There are two key features of OER. First, they are free, meaning they are available in a digital format – where the cost of distribution is virtually zero – and also free of barriers such as passwords or DRM. Second, they are open, meaning they carry the appropriate legal permissions to allow users to fully use, adapt, print and share the work. These legal permissions are typically granted through open copyright license, which changes the default terms of “all rights reserved” to “some rights reserved.” The non-profit organization Creative Commons has developed a set of six open copyright licenses that are broadly used for licensing OER and other creative works.<sup>14</sup> Everyday resources including Wikipedia, and some of the content on Flickr and YouTube use this kind of license. In fact there are more than 400 million works that use Creative Commons licenses.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> The Student PIRGs (2014). Fixing the Broken Textbook Market. <http://uspirg.org/reports/usp/fixing-broken-textbook-market>

<sup>10</sup> The Florida Distance Learning Consortium (2011). 2010 Florida Student Textbook Survey. [http://www.openaccesstextbooks.org/pdf/2012\\_Florida\\_Student\\_Textbook\\_Survey.pdf](http://www.openaccesstextbooks.org/pdf/2012_Florida_Student_Textbook_Survey.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Book Industry Study Group (2013). Student Attitudes Toward Content in Higher Education, Volume Three. <http://www.bisg.org/news-5-815-press-releasestudent-response-to-digital-textbooks-climbs-says-new-bisg-study.php>

<sup>12</sup> Strauss, Victoria (2014). “More students are illegally downloading college textbooks for free” *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2014/09/17/more-students-are-illegally-downloading-college-textbooks-for-free/>

<sup>13</sup> The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. Open Educational Resources. Retrieved from <http://www.hewlett.org/programs/education/open-educational-resources>.

<sup>14</sup> Creative Commons. About the Licenses. Retrieved from <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/>.

<sup>15</sup> Creative Commons. Metrics. Retrieved from <https://wiki.creativecommons.org/Metrics>.

Making a resource digital is a step in the right direction, and making it available for free is even better. But not until a resource is open does it truly unleash the full potential of technology to improve education. Unlike e-textbooks or other traditional digital content, OER content is specifically intended to be freely used, adapted, shared and improved. Teachers can assemble and tailor OER to suit their curriculum, and share their innovations with other educators. At the same time, OER provides students numerous low-cost options for accessing the content, ensuring that the entire class is on an even playing field.

There is a global movement for OER extending from international governmental organizations like UNESCO down to individual teachers and learners in countries around the world. It spans a wide range of sectors and media, but given the topic of today's hearing, I will focus on OER textbooks, or "open textbooks."

Currently, there are more than 150 open textbooks available for undergraduate college courses according to the Open Textbook Library, a project based at the University of Minnesota that curates and reviews open textbooks.<sup>16</sup> These books have been produced through a variety of projects, including state or institutional funding, charitable foundations, individual authors seeking greater reach for their work, and entrepreneurs exploring innovative business models.

One notable project is OpenStax College based at Rice University, which is publishing 20 open textbooks for the highest enrollment courses in U.S. schools. Their existing seven titles are used by more than 900 courses worldwide and has saved students more than \$13 million to date.<sup>17</sup> Like most open textbooks, the OpenStax books are available online for free, immediate download in PDF and epub format. They can also be printed locally, or purchased in print for \$30-50 dollars depending on the title.

States, institutions, and individual professors across the country are already leveraging these textbooks to substantially reduce or eliminate course material costs for students. A 2010 study by the Student Public Interest Research Groups found that using open textbooks in place of traditional textbooks reduces costs 80%, or an average of \$107 per course.<sup>18</sup> Many projects are actually seeing higher savings.

One of the earliest major programs to pursue open textbooks as a textbook affordability strategy comes from Washington State. In 2009 the state legislature recognized that most of the enrollments in the community and technical college system were heavily concentrated in a small number of courses, and that state student financial aid was being used to purchase the same textbooks over and over again each year. So, the legislature appropriated funding for a program called the Open Course Library to outfit the system's 81 largest enrollment courses with OER and other low-cost materials. So far it has saved students an estimated \$8.3 million dollars to date – more than quadruple the state's initial investment. Those savings will only continue to grow as more colleges, students and instructors make use of the materials.

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<sup>16</sup> Open Textbook Library. Retrieved from <http://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/>.

<sup>17</sup> Rice University (2014). Rice's OpenStax College will add 10 new titles by 2017 [press release]. Retrieved from <http://openstaxcollege.org/news/rice-s-openstax-college-will-add-10-new-titles-by-2017>.

<sup>18</sup> 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>.

Tidewater Community College in Virginia has developed an entire Business Administration degree program that uses open textbooks in every single course.<sup>19</sup> They estimate that by eliminating the cost of course materials cuts the cost of a degree by about a third. A few months ago I spoke with a student who had taken courses as part of this program, Melissa Hoch who is a single mother of two. She said that the money she saved on textbooks allowed her to put braces on her daughter, which she could not have done otherwise. This is just one example of the tough choices students are forced to make because of the added cost of textbooks.

Another compelling case study comes from upstate at Mercy College, where the Mathematics Department replaced a \$170 textbook and software package for Developmental Math – a key gatekeeper course – with an open textbook and open source software alternative. It took a small up-front investment to adapt and adjust the curriculum to fit the course, but the result was virtually eliminating the cost of textbooks as a barrier. After fully implementing the open replacements, the instructors observed a 12 percentage point increase to the number of students passing the course with a C or better – meaning that many more students advance on in their degree, and fewer students are forced to repeat the course, costing themselves and taxpayers money. Studies of other OER programs have produced similar findings that reducing textbook costs is associated with better student outcomes.<sup>20 21</sup>

These three examples are just a few of many impactful initiatives that leverage OER to make college textbooks affordable for students. The most important point about all of these programs is that because the material is openly licensed, it is freely and legally available online for anyone, anywhere to download, customize and begin using – whether it's a student enriching her own education, a business looking to improve the skills of employees, or an institution seeking to reduce the cost of textbooks. In fact, both Mercy and Tidewater made use of some of Washington's materials to build their courses.

This is the opportunity for New York City. The infrastructure of high quality OER content is out there, and with an up-front investment for localizing the materials and supporting professors, it can make textbooks affordable for the students who need it most. Therefore, my recommendation to the Committee is to consider how the City Council can provide funding, resources, encouragement and recognition to the city's institutions to advance OER in higher education to achieve savings for students, equal access to essential learning materials, faster graduation rates, and a better-educated workforce.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to connect this topic to the parallel crisis happening in the K-12 sector. The State of Utah recently ran a pilot program in high school math and science courses that replaced traditional textbooks – which are typically purchased

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<sup>19</sup> Tidewater Community College (2014). TCC's Textbook Free Degree Earners National Attention [press release]. Retrieved from: <http://www.tcc.edu/news/press/2014/zdegreecbn.htm>.

<sup>20</sup> Hilton III, J., & Laman, C. (2012). One college's use of an open psychology textbook. *The Journal of Open, Distance and e-Learning*, 27(3), 265-272.

<sup>21</sup> Feldstein, A., Martin, M., Hudson, A., Warren, K., Hilton, J., & Wiley, D. (2012). Open Textbooks and Increased Student Access and Outcomes. *European Journal of Open, Distance and E-Learning*. <http://www.eurodl.org/?p=current&article=533>

every five years – with open textbooks that were free online and provided in print form, which students could keep at the end of the year.<sup>22</sup> The 2011 pilot cut the participating districts' costs in half without impacting state standardized test scores.<sup>23</sup> Just to put things in perspective, the city's \$25.9 billion budget for just the Department of Education<sup>24</sup> is nearly twice the size of the entire State of Utah's \$13 billion budget.<sup>25</sup> Common Core-aligned textbooks for dozens of K-12 courses are available today. Imagine if the city could cut the budget for public school textbooks in half for even some of those courses. How many more teachers could you hire? How many more classrooms could you update? How many after school programs could be saved?

Thank you.

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<sup>22</sup> Utah Education Network. Open Educational Resources. Retrieved from <http://www.uen.org/oe/>.

<sup>23</sup> Wiley, David (2011). "Efficiency Data Are In." Utah Open Textbook Project [blog]. Retrieved from <http://utahopentextbooks.org/2011/10/12/efficacy-data-are-in/>.

<sup>24</sup> New York City Department of Education. DOE Overview. Retrieved from <http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/funding/overview/default.htm>.

<sup>25</sup> Utah Legislature. State Budget Overview. Retrieved from [http://le.utah.gov/lfa/reports/bbib/APPEXE\\_03-08-12\\_5.pdf](http://le.utah.gov/lfa/reports/bbib/APPEXE_03-08-12_5.pdf).



TESTIMONY OF THE  
NEW YORK PUBLIC INTEREST RESEARCH GROUP  
BEFORE THE  
NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
HEARING ON TEXTBOOKS  
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30<sup>TH</sup> 2014

Hello my name is Aileen Sheil. I am a student at Queens College and the Chairperson of the New York Public Interest Research Group's board of directors. We appreciate the opportunity to share our perspective on the cost of textbooks.

The New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) is the state's largest student directed non-partisan research and advocacy organization. Our board of directors consists of college and university students elected from campuses with NYPIRG chapters from across the state.

### **Background**

This August marked the beginning of the semester for college students everywhere. As students begin their next collegiate experience, they must tackle how to pay for it. But since the 1980s, there has been a shift in the burden of paying for public college from government to the families of those in college. The clearest evidence of that shift has been the drastic slashing in state dollars going to public colleges and the dramatic increase in tuition. The nation now has over \$1 trillion in outstanding college debt and, in New York State, a student attending college now has an average debt of over \$25,000. Adding to those costs has been the rapid increase in the price of textbooks.

### **The Rising Cost of Textbooks**

Over the past decade, college textbook prices have increased by over 80%, or at three times the rate of inflation.<sup>1</sup> Textbooks are one of the largest out-of-pocket expenses for students and families trying to afford college every year. Students are spending \$1,200 *on average* on books and supplies this year, according to the College Board.<sup>2</sup>

We recently conducted a survey of New York State college students at seventeen campuses to see what impact increasing textbook prices were having. We found that the percentage of students stating that they were considering not purchasing a required textbook ranged from a low of 57 percent to a high of 74 percent (see attached chart).

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<sup>1</sup> United States Government Accountability Office: Report to Congressional Committees, "College Textbooks Students Have Greater Access to Textbook Information," Page 10, June 2013, <http://www.gao.gov/assets/660/655066.pdf> (September 29, 2014, 2013)

<sup>2</sup> The College Board: Big Future, "Quick Guide: College Costs," <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/pay-for-college/college-costs/quick-guide-college-costs> (September 29, 2014).

These findings are consistent with other college student surveys on this subject. According to a national report released earlier this year, “65% of students said that they had decided against buying a textbook because it was too expensive.”<sup>3</sup> Moreover, that report found that 94 percent of those who did not purchase a required textbook were concerned that the failure to do so may affect their academic performance.

As mentioned earlier, not only are textbook costs increasing dramatically, but students are now considering not purchasing required books – even if it may harm their studies.

### **There Are Alternatives to the Current Textbook Market**

Open textbooks are faculty-written and peer-reviewed like traditional textbooks, but they are published under an open license, meaning they are free online, free to download, and affordable in print.

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.

The Washington Open Course Library has developed open course materials – including open textbooks – for the courses with the highest enrollment 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.

NYPIRG strongly recommends the creation of a City Council taskforce made up of students, faculty, CUNY, and lawmakers to examine ways to lower textbook costs. The taskforce could consider, among other items, the following:

- Providing programmatic and financial support to create more open textbooks;
- Researching ways to fast-track the production of vital high-quality classroom ready texts; and
- Providing colleges and faculty with the resources they need to use available open textbooks in their classrooms immediately.

### **In Closing**

Thank you for providing this opportunity for us to share our thoughts on college textbooks.

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<sup>3</sup> United States Public Interest Research Group, “Fixing The Broken Textbook Market: How Students Respond To High Textbook Costs and Demand Alternatives,” [www.uspirg.org/reports/usp/fixing-broken-textbook-market](http://www.uspirg.org/reports/usp/fixing-broken-textbook-market) (September 29, 2014)

**RESULTS OF NYPIRG SURVEY OF NEW YORK COLLEGE STUDENTS  
REGARDING TEXTBOOK COSTS<sup>4</sup>**

<b>School</b>	<b>For this semester only, are you considering against buying (or renting) a textbook (this includes other required course material and supplies) because you thought it was too expensive? (Percentage who answered YES)</b>		<b>For this semester only, do you plan on using at least one online textbook? (Percentage who answered YES)</b>	
SUNY Binghamton	66%	(244 out of 372 responses)	43%	(159 out of 372 responses)
SUNY Buffalo State	64%	(236 out of 371 responses)	39%	(144 out of 371 responses)
SUNY Cortland	62%	(444 out of 719 responses)	32%	(227 out of 719 responses)
SUNY Nassau CC	57%	(214 out of 376 responses)	20%	(77 out of 376 responses)
SUNY New Paltz	66%	(239 out of 364 responses)	32%	(117 out of 364 responses)
SUNY Purchase	65%	(235 out of 362 responses)	34%	(122 out of 362 responses)
CUNY Bronx CC	74%	(275 out of 372 responses)	44%	(162 out of 372 responses)
CUNY Brooklyn College	71%	(273 out of 384 responses)	52%	(198 out of 384 responses)
CUNY City College	70%	(281 out of 404 responses)	62%	(251 out of 404 responses)
CUNY City Tech	70%	(277 out of 395 responses)	47%	(187 out of 395 responses)
CUNY CSI	71%	(280 out of 392 responses)	43%	(169 out of 392 responses)
CUNY Hunter	69%	(312 out of 454 responses)	56%	(256 out of 454 responses)
CUNY Manhattan CC	65%	(284 out of 435 responses)	37%	(159 out of 435 responses)
CUNY Queens College	63%	(242 out of 382 responses)	42%	(161 out of 382 responses)
CUNY Queensborough CC	71%	(280 out of 394 responses)	41%	(162 out of 394 responses)
Pratt Institute	73%	(248 out of 341 responses)	42%	(142 out of 341 responses)
Syracuse University	68%	(226 out of 332 responses)	40%	(134 out of 332 responses)

<sup>4</sup> NYPIRG survey of 6,849 students at seventeen New York State colleges, from September to October 2013. In an effort to get a broad sampling of students, undergraduate students were approached at common campus sites during high-traffic weekday hours, and asked to respond to the two survey questions, listed above. There were two questions asked and they are listed in the columns of the chart. Limitations on the study include that the surveys were conducted during daytime hours and that students surveyed were those most likely to be using common areas. All responses were recorded and grouped by school. Margin of error for each campus proportion cited is no more than plus/minus 6%.



# HIGHER EDUCATION BRIEF: TEXTBOOK COSTS Draft Brief #1, Fall, 2014

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This *Higher Education Brief* is one of a series of examinations of higher education policy in New York State. Each of these *Briefs* offers policymakers and the public information on how best to ensure that New Yorkers who both wish to attend, and are capable of, college can afford to do so.

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**Problem:** College students and their families are facing increased costs not only in tuition and fees, but textbooks as well. The costs of textbooks have jumped and large percentages of students now report that they may not purchase textbooks due to the high costs involved.

**Solution:** Faculty, colleges and policymakers should look at ways to curb the increased costs associated with attending college. In particular, steps must be taken to help offset the rising costs of textbooks. One alternative is to move to an “open source” textbook process which could help reduce costs. “Open source” textbooks are licensed under an open copyright license and made available online to be freely used by students, teachers and members of the public. Many open textbooks are distributed in print, e-book, or audio formats that may be downloaded or purchased at little or no cost.<sup>1</sup> NYPIRG strongly recommends the creation of a taskforce made up of students, faculty, college administrators, and lawmakers to examine ways to lower textbook costs.

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**Introduction:** American higher education has seen a dramatic shift in who pays for public college.

Since the 1980s, there has been a shift in the burden of paying for public college from government to the families of those in college. The clearest evidence of that shift has been the drastic slashing in state dollars going to public colleges and the dramatic increase in tuition. In New York State, for example, the average tuition and fee amount charged at State University of New York (SUNY) in 1987 was about \$1,673. Today, that cost has jumped 340% (for academic year 2013-14, SUNY *average* tuition and fees was \$7,500).<sup>2</sup> By comparison, during that same period, the average income of families in New York has largely been stagnant.

Many students and families have to take out loans to cover the costs of rapidly increasing tuition and fees. The nation now has over \$1 trillion in outstanding college debt<sup>3</sup> and, in New York State, a student graduating from SUNY now has an average debt of over \$25,000.<sup>4</sup>

For poor and working-class New York State families, who devote up to 37% of their income to pay for college costs, high textbook prices present a substantial barrier to college access.<sup>5</sup> With tuition at City and State public colleges rising 58% and 42%, respectively from 2008-2016 and with student loan debt surpassing \$1 trillion, more needs to be done to help students better afford college.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Student Public Interest Research Groups, “Make Textbooks More Affordable,” <http://studentpirgs.org/campaigns/sp/make-textbooks-affordable?id=wi>.

<sup>2</sup> State University of New York, see: <http://www.suny.edu/smartrack/tuition-and-fees/>. (September 30, 2014)

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, “Annual Report of the CFPB Student Loan Ombudsman,” October 2012, Page 2, [http://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/201210\\_cfpb\\_Student-Loan-Ombudsman-Annual-Report.pdf](http://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/201210_cfpb_Student-Loan-Ombudsman-Annual-Report.pdf) (September 30, 2014)

<sup>4</sup> The Institute for College Access and Success Project on Student Debt, [http://projecostudentdebt.org/state\\_by\\_state-view2013.php?area=NY](http://projecostudentdebt.org/state_by_state-view2013.php?area=NY) (September 30, 2014)

<sup>5</sup> Office of the State Comptroller, NY, “Textbook Pricing Disparities,” Page 1, <http://www.osc.state.ny.us/reports/highered/textbookpricing12-18-08.pdf> (September 30, 2014)

<sup>6</sup> New York State United Teachers, “NYS Public Tuition Rates 1971-Current,” Jacob Crawford, (10 January 2013).

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**Problem: Adding to those costs has been the rapid increase in the price of textbooks.**

Over the past decade, college textbook prices have increased by over 80%.<sup>7</sup> Textbooks are one of the largest out-of-pocket expenses for students and families trying to afford college every year. Students are spending \$1,200 *on average* on books and supplies this year, according to the College Board.<sup>8</sup>

Textbook prices are soaring at faster rates than other consumer goods. According to the US Census Bureau, since 1978 the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which is the average change in prices of goods and services over time, has increased 250%. Meanwhile, the CPI “Educational Books and Supplies” series, a majority of which is college textbooks, has increased 813%.<sup>9</sup>

The structure of the industry and the failures of the marketplace contribute to the skyrocketing cost of textbooks. Typically in the American marketplace, the consumer can choose which products to purchase based on value and price, and the competition among producers of those products helps keep prices affordable and helps maintain reasonable quality. The college textbook industry offers no such market forces.

College professors are often forced to choose from a small range of major textbook publishers. 80% of the nearly \$9 billion publishing market is controlled by just five textbook companies, giving them a near market monopoly and protecting them from serious competition.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, professors are too often limited in their choices of textbooks and students have little or no control over the products that they must purchase. The college professor chooses the book and the student is forced to buy it with little or no room for negotiation. Without access to more affordable options, college textbook publishers are able to increase prices without fear of economic repercussion.

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**Problem: Many students report considering not purchasing a required textbook due to the high cost.**

Recently, the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) conducted a survey of New York State college students to examine what impact, if any, the high cost of textbooks were having. As seen below, the percentage of students stating that they were considering *not* purchasing a required textbook ranged from a low of 57% to a high of 74%:

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<sup>7</sup> United States Government Accountability Office: Report to Congressional Committees, “College Textbooks Students Have Greater Access to Textbook Information,” Page 10, June 2013, <http://www.gao.gov/assets/660/655066.pdf> (September 30, 2014)

<sup>8</sup> The College Board: Big Future, “Quick Guide: College Costs,” <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/pay-for-college/college-costs/quick-guide-college-costs> (September 30, 2014), NYS textbooks <http://www.suny.edu/smarttrack/tuition-and-fees/> (September 30, 2014)

<sup>9</sup> American Enterprise Institute, “The college textbook bubble and how the “open educational resources” movement is going up against the textbook cartel,” December 2012, <http://www.aei-ideas.org/2012/12/the-college-textbook-bubble-and-how-the-open-educational-resources-movement-is-going-up-against-the-textbook-cartel/> (September 30, 2014)

<sup>10</sup> Allen, Nicole, “The Future of Digital Textbooks,” *American Association of State Colleges and Universities*, see: [www.aascu.org/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=6308](http://www.aascu.org/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=6308). (September 30, 2014)

RESULTS OF NYPIRG SURVEY OF NEW YORK COLLEGE STUDENTS  
REGARDING TEXTBOOK COSTS<sup>11</sup>

School	For this semester only, are you considering against buying (or renting) a textbook (this includes other required course material and supplies) because you thought it was too expensive? (Percentage who answered YES)		For this semester only, do you plan on using at least one online textbook? (Percentage who answered YES)	
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Pratt Institute	73%	(248 out of 341 responses)	42%	(142 out of 341 responses)
Syracuse University	68%	(226 out of 332 responses)	40%	(134 out of 332 responses)

As seen above, in every college surveyed, students reported that the high cost of textbooks was forcing them to consider skipping the purchase altogether. In addition, the survey shows that in many instances, a sizable minority of students will use on online textbooks.

These findings are consistent with other college student surveys on this subject. According to a report released by United States Public Interest Research Group (USPIRG) earlier this year, “65% of students said that they had decided against buying a textbook because it was too expensive.”<sup>12</sup> Moreover, that report found that 94 percent of those who did not purchase a required textbook were concerned that the failure to do so may affect their academic performance.<sup>13</sup>

**Solutions:** As seen above, not only are textbook costs increasing dramatically, but students are now considering not purchasing required books – even if it may harm their studies.

There are alternatives to the current textbook market.

Recently, rental programs, used book markets and e-textbooks have become alternatives to brand-new, print edition textbooks. While these options offer students upfront savings, their prices are still driven by the prices of

<sup>11</sup> NYPIRG survey of 6,849 students at seventeen New York State colleges, from September to October 2013. In an effort to get a broad sampling of students, undergraduate students were approached at common campus sites during high-traffic weekday hours, and asked to respond to the two survey questions, listed above. There were two questions asked and they are listed in the columns of the chart. Limitations on the study include that the surveys were conducted during daytime hours and that students surveyed were those most likely to be using common areas. All responses were recorded and grouped by school. Margin of error for each campus proportion cited is no more than plus/minus 6%.

<sup>12</sup> United States Public Interest Research Group, “Fixing The Broken Textbook Market: How Students Respond To High Textbook Costs and Demand Alternatives,” January, 2014.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

the new print editions. In order to ease burden of high textbook prices, students need to have other (and better) low-cost alternatives *outside* of the traditional market. That alternative is open textbooks.

Open textbooks are faculty-written and peer-reviewed like traditional textbooks, but they are published under an open license, meaning they are free online, free to download, and affordable in print. 80% of students surveyed said they would do significantly better in a course if the textbook were free online and a hard copy was optional, which is exactly how open textbooks work. Open textbooks save students \$100 per student, per course on average.<sup>14</sup>

And there is movement in the direction of such open textbooks.

More than 3,000 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.<sup>15</sup>

The government can help by investing funds and programmatic support to create more open textbooks. 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 has developed open course materials – including open textbooks – for the 81 courses with the highest enrollment 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.<sup>16</sup>

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(Albany) Blair Horner, 518-436-0876, [bhorner@nypirg.org](mailto:bhorner@nypirg.org)

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<sup>14</sup> United States Public Interest Research Group, "Fixing The Broken Textbook Market: How Students Respond To High Textbook Costs and Demand Alternatives," January, 2014.

<sup>15</sup> The Student PIRGs, "Faculty Statement on Open Textbooks," [www.studentpirgs.org/open-textbooks/faculty-statement](http://www.studentpirgs.org/open-textbooks/faculty-statement). (September 30, 2014)

<sup>16</sup> The Student PIRGs (2013), "Updated Cost Analysis of the Open Course Library," see: <http://studentpirgs.org/resources/updated-cost-analysis-open-course-library>. (September 30, 2014)

# OPEN COURSE LIBRARY

download.remix.teach

## COURSES AND MATERIALS

*Free to download, edit and use*

## ABOUT

*What is the Open Course Library?*

## RESOURCES

*Publications, OCL history, ...*

### What is it?

The Open Course Library (OCL) is a collection of shareable course materials, including syllabi, course activities, readings, and assessments designed by teams of college faculty, instructional designers, librarians, and other experts. Some of our materials (also called open educational resources, or OER) are paired with low cost textbooks (\$30 or less). Many of the courses can be taught at no cost to students. Unless otherwise noted, all materials are shared under a Creative Commons (CC BY) license. OCL courses and materials have undergone testing for accessibility and have been designed using the industry-standard Quality Matters (QM) rubric for assessing the quality of online courses.

Our goals:

1. Lower textbook costs for students
2. Provide high quality, open resources for faculty

### It is important to remember:

Washington community and technical colleges' Open Course Library simply offers collections of course materials that cost \$30 or less for our 81 highest enrolled courses. OCL leverages open educational resources (OER) that can be used, adapted and shared for free as well as low-cost publisher materials.

The Open Course Library is not about replacing faculty's current teaching practice or course materials. The sole intention is to provide high quality materials that have the potential to lower instructional costs for students.

Faculty members do not need to use entire OCL courses — or even to use the

materials as developed for the courses. Faculty might choose the same open or low-cost textbook that the OCL faculty chose, they might use OCL videos that are freely available on YouTube, they might take a course module or document, revise it, and put it in their own online course, or they might suggest that students use an app built with OCL content. They might build a course around current library or web resources.

### **Is it designed to replace face-to-face instruction?**

No, Open Course Library materials are not all specific to online learning. OCL materials can easily be adapted for your online, hybrid, or f2f courses.

### **I already have a great course! Do I have to adopt the whole course?**

No, you do not have to adopt the entire course. You can navigate through the course contents and simply take what you need; you are free to modify those parts and use them as you like.

### **Who owns the courses?**

These course materials were created through an optional Washington State Board for Community & Technical Colleges (SBCTC) grant, and the SBCTC Open Licensing Policy requires that all materials created through optional grants carry an open license. Unless otherwise noted, the Open Course Library materials are owned by SBCTC and are freely shared to the world with a Creative Commons Attribution-only license (CC-BY)

### **How do faculty use the course contents?**

Everything developed for the Open Course Library is free, digital, and shareable (unless otherwise noted). We invite faculty everywhere to explore, copy, customize, translate and adopt any and all course materials.

We do ask that you give us credit somewhere in your course – attribution is the heart of the CC-BY license utilized by OCL. Here's an example: "[Portions of] or [This] course adapted from the Open Course Library of the Washington State Colleges. More information at <http://opencourselibrary.org>." SBCTC encourages and supports the use of the CC-BY to openly-license your own course materials and share them with others. SBCTC offers How to Use Open Educational Resources, an online course in finding, using and creating OER to support your own course-building projects.

## Are there any costs?

Some courses currently require the purchase of a low-cost textbook. If an OCL course requires the purchase of a textbook or other resource, the cost may not exceed \$30 per student. All other materials are free and there is no cost to adopt the course.

## How can I contribute to the Open Course Library?

Though the OCL project is itself completed, there are many options for contributing to the OER community either by using OCL or using and contributing to the growing number of OER collections available. Adopt OCL materials, spread the word about OER and share your own course materials online with a Creative Commons open license.

If you have specific suggestions or comments regarding OCL, please contact us at [bchae@sbctc.edu](mailto:bchae@sbctc.edu).



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**Contact Us**



**Testimony of Vice Chancellor Matthew Sapienza**  
**The City University of New York**  
**New York City Council Higher Education Committee Hearing:**  
**"Reducing the Cost of College Textbooks"**  
**September 30, 2014**

Good morning, Chairperson Barron and members of the New York City Council Higher Education Committee. I am Matthew Sapienza, Vice Chancellor for Budget and Finance at The City University of New York. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about reducing the costs of college textbooks. I am joined this morning by Associate Vice Chancellor and Chief Information Officer Brian Cohen, University Dean for Libraries and Information Resources Curtis Kendrick, and the University Student Trustee Muhammad Arshad.

We are grateful to the Council's Higher Education Committee for drawing attention to this topic as being critical for student success. Nationwide, the overall burden of higher education costs is increasing. With American student debt topping \$1.2 trillion, this issue is an urgent national concern. College textbook expenses, in particular, are a significant component of these growing obligations. In the 2013-2014 academic year, on average, students in the United States paid \$1,200 for books and course materials. These high costs create significant roadblocks to student success.

Although we would all agree that more needs to be done to ease the barriers to a higher education degree, we are proud of the University's accomplishments in keeping the costs of attendance as low as possible, and that students continue to seek CUNY as their institution of choice. In fact, the enrollment for the Fall 2014 semester has never been higher in the University's history; over 274,000 students have enrolled at CUNY campuses. This represents

an increase over forty percent since the year 2000. In addition, freshman enrollment is also an all-time high, totaling 38,000 for this semester. Please be assured that we are committed to ensuring that all members of this historic student population receive the maximum academic and financial support that is possible.

For several years now, the University has been acutely aware of the difficult challenge that the increasing costs of textbooks has had on our students, and has implemented several solutions to help alleviate this burden. One of these successful methods was through our Student Financial Assistance Initiative, which commenced in 2010 and provides \$10 million annually for students whose matriculation is at risk due to financial challenges. A significant and effective component of this allocation is the Student Textbook Initiative. Initially established at \$2 million, this appropriation has proven so successful that the allocated amount has been increased to \$3 million.

Through the leadership of University Dean Kendrick, these funds are allotted directly to campus libraries, and are used specifically to support currently enrolled students in their coursework.

The goal of the initiative is to help defray the cost of textbooks and other course related materials for students. We continue to receive positive feedback from the students, librarians, and college administrators as to the effectiveness of this program.

An additional example where the University is leading in providing access to textbooks for our students is through the thriving Accelerated Studies in Associate Programs, or ASAP, Initiative. ASAP exists at our six traditional community colleges, and has been recently launched at

Medgar Evers College. One of the incentives that is made available to financial aid eligible ASAP students is the free use of textbooks. ASAP has been one of the University's most successful innovations over the past decade, and has garnered national recognition. The ASAP graduation rate is more than three times the national three-year graduation rate for urban community colleges.

There are several other programs at the University whereby students can receive assistance with the cost of textbooks. For example, the SEEK program – which is funded by the State of New York – provides grants to eligible students for the costs of books and supplies. And, of course, the City Council Merit Scholarship is another shining example of a program that is providing critical assistance in helping to reduce the costs of textbooks. This scholarship initiative was put forth by Trustee Arshad and the University Student Senate, and was championed in the Council by Speaker Barron and the Higher Education Committee. We are extremely pleased that \$11 million has been made available by the Council in order to assist about 13,000 first-year CUNY students with supplies, textbooks and other expenses.

The federal Pell Grant program is another essential tool that provides financial support to needy students. The maximum Pell Grant award has increased by \$85, to \$5,730, for this academic year, and can be used for books and supplies. Since Pell Grant awards for the Fall semester are not paid until October, and Spring awards are not paid until March, the University's Financial Aid Office advances Pell payments for eligible students at the beginning of each semester. These advance payments are intended to provide students a portion of the Pell award at the beginning of the semester to help purchase books and supplies.

Another innovative solution is taking shape at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, where a new online bookstore launched this past summer. Like many institutions, John Jay has recognized that online shopping is a key part of the solution to bring students back to the school bookstore. The college's expectation is that this progressive, new initiative will help deliver low-cost materials to John Jay's students, and provide a personalized student shopping experience that will be accessible from any device, at any time. The online bookstore will create a simple way to select new, used, rental, or eBooks at significant discounts.

The University commends John Jay College for its leadership in this area, and expects that this pilot will be of great benefit to its students. We will continue to work with John Jay to ensure the success of this initiative, and will strongly encourage our other colleges to replicate this innovation at their campuses.

Under the direction of Associate Vice Chancellor Cohen, a link has been established on CUNY's main website which provides students with a myriad of options when it comes to keeping the costs of textbooks as affordable as possible. This webpage includes access to all campus library catalogues, and lists dozens of electronic links where students can directly access websites to comparison shop and purchase used textbooks, eBooks, or even rent textbooks for the semester. The CUNY website also includes a link to online book swaps, where students can trade books with others.

While I've described several ways in which the University is assisting students with the costs of textbooks, all of us at the University realize more can be done, and we are constantly analyzing best strategies for doing so. One of these ways is through open educational resources, in which textbooks and other instructional resources can be legally accessed for free use, while ensuring authors retain copyright to their work. We are seeking an investment of \$1 million over the next four years, and project that a total of 50 open courses can be established with these funds, which will then generate a savings of almost \$6 million to our students over that timeframe. Dean Kendrick has crafted this proposal, in which we have consulted with the University Faculty Senate leadership, and will provide more details about this initiative in his testimony.

Chairperson Barron and committee members, we are grateful for your constant leadership in ensuring that a high-quality and accessible CUNY continues to be a mandate for a successful and progressive City. We look forward to working with you to uphold that commitment.

I would now like to ask University Dean Curtis Kendrick to provide his testimony.

## FOR THE RECORD

SUBMITTED TESTIMONY OF PHIL CHRISTOPHER  
SENIOR DIRECTOR, BOOKSTORES & NYU CARD SERVICES, NEW YORK UNIVERSITY  
NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION  
SEPTEMBER 30, 2014

New York University (NYU) provides textbook sales as a service for our students and faculty to fulfill their academic mission. While the bookstore does not interfere with the faculty's academic freedom regarding which titles they choose each semester, we do our best to source as many used textbooks as possible. In an average semester, 25% of the titles chosen by faculty have used textbooks available that sell for 75% of the new book price. In addition to this overall effort, the NYU Bookstore has instituted many policies in recent years to provide students with a variety of ways in which they can purchase textbooks to make them more affordable. A handful of these initiatives and programs are highlighted below.

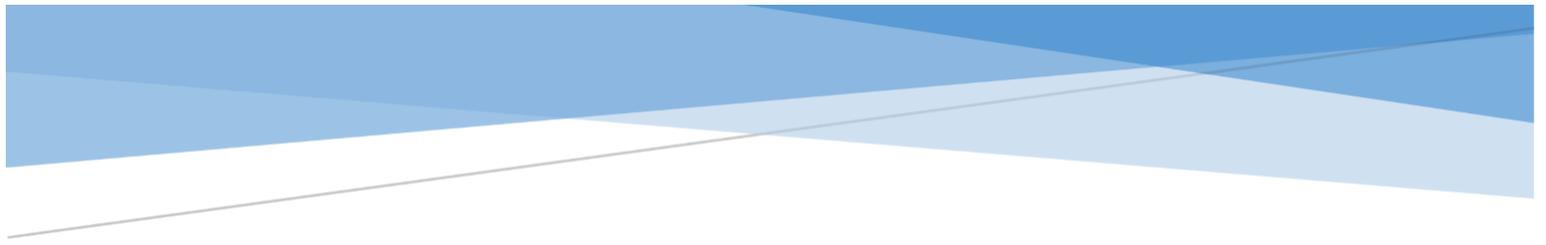
In 2010 NYU began a rental book program that allows students the option of renting books from the campus store. In an average semester, we have approximately 1000 students rent or lease at least one of the textbooks they need. In this semester, the NYU bookstore had 2,800 titles that were available for rent and, on average, the rental price was 60% of the new book price. In addition NYU has partnered with an online rental company that will rent books for 40-50% of the new purchase price through an online service.

NYU also partners with textbook digital delivery programs such as Jumpbooks and Coursesmart e-books. These programs provide the digital format of textbooks with the same content as print versions to allow students to follow their assignments. If a class has a digital book available, students enrolled in that class receive an email notifying them about the program and the cost savings associated with it. Students can then choose the digital version and order it right from our web site. This gives students a choice between purchasing books and digitally subscribing to the book for the semester. In the current semester, our bookstore had over 900 titles with e-book versions, selling for approximately half of the price as a used book. Additionally, we participate in a pilot program for free book downloads for college and university students from a wide variety of authors.

The NYU Bookstore also runs a book buyback program in which the bookstore purchases the textbooks back from students after their coursework is complete. We solicit early textbook adoptions from faculty in order to pay students as much as possible for their used books. In many cases, once the book is sold back to the bookstore, it can cut the overall cost of a textbook for students in half.

Furthermore, NYU has always sought to provide the book title and ISBN book identifier number to students as soon as possible. Our website provides a comparison shopping tool that lets students search for all their books and provides pricing from the NYU Bookstore, our e-book and rental partners, Amazon, Alibris, Half.com, and Barnes and Noble so students can make the appropriate decision on where to order their textbooks from. We provide information regarding the rental and e-book programs described above to all students on the [NYU Bookstore website](#) so they are aware of their options prior to purchasing books.

The University will continue to explore alternative mechanisms that will continue to reduce the textbook costs to our students. If you have any questions about our programs, please contact Jennifer Pautz, Assistant Director of Government Relations, at 212-998-2407 or [jennifer.pautz@nyu.edu](mailto:jennifer.pautz@nyu.edu).



## Textbook Testimony

Muhammad Arshad  
Chairperson, University Student Senate

Muhammad Arshad

University Student Senate

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Chairwoman Barron and committee members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Muhammad Arshad, Chairperson of the University Student Senate (USS), which is the student government body for CUNY. USS is composed of all the branches of the University and we are responsible for representing the over 450,000 students of CUNY.

I am certain I speak for all students when I say that textbooks are too expensive. However, that statement does not give you the full picture. I believe, that textbooks are WAY too expensive. There is no denying the value of having texts to guide our studying throughout a given semester. I will not diminish the value of having textbooks as a reference along with notes from lectures and other required readings for a class.

In this age of technology and E-readers, why do textbooks continue to remain so expensive? When the DVD arrived, the value of VCRs diminished as did its market value. When CDs arrived, the same happened for the audio cassette tape. When MP3 players arrived, the same fate befell the CD player. We can cite numerous examples and instances of newer improved technology reducing the costs of older versions. However, over the past decade, the prices of textbooks have increased by 82%, an increase that is three times the rate of inflation. Why is this the case?

According to College Board, the average student pays \$1200 a year on textbooks. In addition to this, according to recent surveys conducted by the University Student Senate, the cost of textbooks have caused some students to withdraw from courses. It has caused other students to fail courses because they couldn't afford to buy the textbook. 77% of the students in the survey are shoppers who like to make sure they get the absolute best price for the product, yet more than 35% of our students are paying more than \$300 a semester for textbooks. Some students are paying more than \$750! In the same survey, 50% of those students find that the textbooks only contribute moderately to their success in the course. There is no justification as to why a student should have to pay this much for textbooks on top of the rising costs of living, the rising costs of tuition, the rising costs of transportation, in a city that fashions itself as progressive, a city that is supposed to embody the energy and spirit of its citizens. The CUNY student is the lifeblood and the spirit of everything that this city stands for, and we need this city to stand for, and by, these same people.

According to the same survey, more than half of the students do not have financial aid paying for their textbooks, and more than 40% of those students do not receive financial aid. We cannot continue to have students footing the bill without some form of relief. Most of our students are parents, full-time and part-time workers. We have priorities and responsibilities beyond the classroom and beyond the campus. We are not yet fully entrenched in our careers. To have the costs of a textbook cause a student to withdraw from a course, is perhaps the most heartbreaking scenario I can imagine.

I know students who are homeless, I know students who can not afford meals, I know students who if they do not have this as something to look forward to, they have nothing at all. We must do something to help our students. We can find some form of alternative solution to this issue. I know we can. Let's continue to work toward this goal, together. Thank you.

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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Name: Aileen Shell (PLEASE PRINT)

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I represent: NYPIRG / Students

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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Address: 21 Dupont Circle NW, Suite 800, Wash, DC 20036

I represent: SPARC

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Name: Richard Hershman (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 1233 20th St NW Washington, DC

I represent: National Association of College Stores

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Isiah Hoffman

Address: 15 Lenox Ave Lenox Hill 1165

I represent: myself

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: VICE CHANCELLOR MATTHEW SAPIENZA

Address: ASSOC. VICE CHANCELLOR BRIAN COHEN

I represent: UNIVERSITY DEAN CURTIS KENDRICKS

Address: UNIVERSITY STUDENT SENATE CHAIR  
MUSTAFA ASSAD

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