

THE HIGH COST OF MARKETING TEXTBOOKS: STUDENTS' VIEWS, ACTIVITIES AND CONSEQUENCES

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The cost of textbooks has risen sharply in recent years. New analysis by the Student PIRGs found that textbook prices increased 22% over the last four years, quadruple inflation. According to the College Board, students should expect to spend \$1,137 annually on textbooks and other course materials. The GAO estimates that textbook costs are comparable to 26% of tuition at state universities and 72% at community colleges.

“Skyrocketing textbook prices have driven many college students to risk their grades by foregoing assigned books according to a survey released today by the Student Public Interest Research Groups (PIRGs). Seven out of ten undergraduates have reported they had not purchased one or more textbooks because the cost was too high. This startling finding suggests that high college textbook expenses can impact student success.” According to Nicole Allen, Textbook Advocate for the Student PIRGs, students have been pushed to the breaking point by skyrocketing costs (1).

The price of textbooks impacts faculty members as well as students. It is important to understand how students are coping with the high prices and how it might be affecting their academic success. Armed with that information, faculty and textbook publishers can help to provide students with options that minimize the likelihood academic failure. Instead of merely complaining about high textbook costs and trying to affix blame, faculty members can help students to cope with these ever increasing prices.

Popular perception is that book publishers (with the acquiescence of professors) are engaging in price gouging of students. When textbook costs are compared to inflation rates, this appears to be the case. However, compared to other College related costs they look comparable. This special

session will explore the coping strategies employed by students and suggest some coping strategies for students.

Jack Schibrowsky and James Cross introduces the topic and serves as the session moderator. Professors Cross and Schibrowsky presents the results of a survey of 300 students enrolled in a Principles of Marketing course at a major state university. The survey asked questions pertaining to the purchase (or not) of course materials and the impact of these strategies on success in the course. Professors Ball, Nill, Maughan, Van Auken, and Wells discuss those things that faculty members can do to maximize academic success for students that cannot afford to buy all the course material. Finally, Steve Hartley discusses the issues and findings from the publisher's perspective and offers College level solutions.

This session was designed to generate a lively discussion pertaining to ways to help students and improve learning opportunities.