

**Textbook Cost Report for the Board of Regents  
University of Wisconsin - Madison  
November 2, 2007**

**Introduction**

Textbook costs matter. A typical first-year undergraduate, taking the typical first-year course load—including introductory Chemistry, Calculus, a foreign language, English 100 or Communication Arts 100, introductory Psychology, introductory Economics, along with a handful of other courses—can expect to pay over \$700 for textbooks in the first year. While this is a fraction of the total cost to attend UW-Madison for Wisconsin residents (approximately \$18,000 for the 2007-08 year), it is not insignificant. At the very least, the University has the responsibility to help students anticipate the approximate cost for textbooks as they calculate the total price to attend UW-Madison. The University can provide good advice and guidance to our students so that textbook costs are not a barrier for attendance.

The Board of Regents has requested that each campus submit a report identifying how it is helping students address textbook costs, and how it plans to help in the future. Its specific resolution is as follows:

BUSINESS, FINANCE, AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

Resolution I.2.e.(1)  
May 11, 2007

Whereas, there is debate about the average amount students spend per year on textbooks, increases in textbook costs, combined with increases in other educational costs, make it more difficult for some students to afford a college education, and

Whereas, efforts to control textbook costs are important as part of any effort to increase access to higher education, and

Whereas, the Office of Operations Review and Audit, in its Program Review of Textbook Costs in Higher Education recommends that each UW institution, particularly those without a textbook rental program, involve faculty, students, bookstore managers, and others with relevant experience in the reviewing the institution's practices for selecting and selling textbooks, to identify approaches to control textbook costs.

Therefore, be it resolved that, upon the recommendation of the President of the University of Wisconsin System, the Board of Regents endorses the findings, recommendations, and cost-saving strategies identified in the Office of Operations Review and Audit program review entitled Textbook Costs in Higher Education, and requests that each institution provide to the Board of Regents by its December 2007 meeting, a description of strategies the institution has already adopted to control textbook costs and additional strategies the institution anticipates adopting in the future.

At UW-Madison, a shared-governance task force issued a report in May 2004 on how the University is and should address textbook costs (attached as Appendix A). A new taskforce was created in Fall semester 2007 to generate this report. This report will

highlight current campus activities, as well as offer our recommendations for future activities.

### **Assumptions and Guiding Principles for this Report**

We used several assumptions and guiding principles to generate this report:

1. Faculty/instructors refer to all instructors in classrooms: tenured and untenured faculty, instructional academic staff who are on long-term contracts as well as those on semester-by-semester contracts, graduate student teaching assistants, and post-doctoral student on teaching contracts.
2. All required readings add significant expenses for our students, but for this report, we focus attention on those books that have limited-life “value” to students—i.e., textbooks purchased for their introductory courses taken in their 100- and 200-level courses. Thus, we are not considering works of literature (anthologies, books of poems, novels, etc.) in this report since we believe that these works have value to students beyond the semester in which they were purchased. Moreover, many of these works are readily available online and in mass-market bookstores. We also do not consider in this report advanced-level texts and primary-source nonfiction since we believe that these materials have reference-book value to students beyond the semester in which they were purchased. At the same time, the strategies and initiatives included in this report can, of course, be applied to literature and advanced texts.
3. UW-Madison offers approximately 3,200 lectures and 11,000 course sections each semester. If we look only at 100- and 200-level courses, we offer approximately 1,000 lectures and 2,500 course sections each semester.
4. We believe that students are best served when faculty/instructors retain their rights to select their course materials. We do not see value in standardizing, or “franchising,” course material and pedagogy, whether it is dictated by individual universities, by regional “buying groups” of universities, by disciplinary organizations, or by publishers. Instead, students are best served when faculty and instructors are able to select the course materials that they believe will enable them to best deliver the content of their courses, and when they are free to do so in their own way.
5. At the same time, we believe that faculty and instructors should select their course materials fully cognizant of the costs that their students will incur. They should require only those materials that they believe are essential to the delivery of their course.
6. We believe that students have the right to timely textbook information; they should know the ISBNs (International Standard Book Numbers) for texts they need to purchase about 2-3 weeks before the semester begins. Our committee estimates that

this is adequate to provide students with enough time to act on information related to textbook purchases and for faculty/instructors to finalize instructional materials.

7. Unlike many other UW institutions, UW-Madison does not own a bookstore. *The University Book Store* (UBS), located on the State Street Mall, is a trust, established in 1914 as a successor to the University Cooperative Company. The trust is established for the benefit of the students of the University of Wisconsin (Madison). It is a tax-paying entity located on private property. According to its by-laws the trustees “shall consist of two members of the UW-Madison faculty, two alumni of UW-Madison, 2 students currently enrolled at UW-Madison, one member of the UW-Madison academic staff, and the President of *The University Book Store*.” Thus UW-Madison does not control UBS’s operating practices.
8. There is a growing competitive textbook market, beyond UBS and including online sources, accessible to UW-Madison students. A number of independent bookstores are located physically in the campus area (e.g. The Underground Bookstore, A Room of One’s Own, etc.). These bookstores make it a point to stock books required for UW-Madison classes on a selective basis as determined by their business plans. This competition holds down the markup on publishers’ prices of textbooks. In addition, several online sites (Amazon, Borders, etc.) exist for the purchase of textbooks, and various swap and auction sites, likewise, are a source of texts (eBay, craigslist.com, etc.). Finally, a national textbook swap market has developed that has spawned several .com sites. For example bookswap.com, campusbookswap.com and exchangehut.com all were created to allow students to buy and sell used books.
9. UW-Madison does not believe that a textbook rental program operated by the University is feasible. In addition to concerns for competition with the private sector, the University’s initial capital investment would be too high and too risky for this effort to be undertaken. Furthermore, other logistical considerations face a campus as large as UW-Madison, such as the requirement for enormous space for warehousing books when not being rented and a large staff to manage the rental program.
10. Finally, our committee believes that the future of textbook publishing lies in electronic and web-based materials. This future ranges from fully online versions of textbooks, to quasi-customizable texts where instructors pull together web-based textbook chapters and other materials currently “bundled” with texts, to “virtual” texts where instructors pull educational materials from all across the web into specialized readings and activities for each different course taught. We believe that the very nature of textbooks will evolve into something different five to ten years into the future.

## Current Programs and Initiatives at UW-Madison

### UW-Madison Libraries initiatives and programs:

1. The Library Textbooks Initiatives
  - a. The Libraries have designated a special fund to support the purchase of many “additional” copies of textbooks for high enrollment courses. (Note: this is in addition to the many books and materials that are requested to be purchased for classroom use). Over the past four semesters approximately \$10,000 has been spent on these additional textbooks.
  - b. Textbooks have been purchased for courses that include: American Government, Biology, Calculus, Chemistry, Chemical Analysis, Nutrition, Food Science, Geography, Human Anatomy, Microeconomics, Spanish, Italian, Genetics, Statistics, and Family Studies.
  - c. Books are selected for purchase via the usual reserve process: when faculty/instructors initiate a request that their books go on reserve, library staff assess the request to determine if it fits the criteria for purchase (over 100 students in the class and the book is more than \$100.00). If so, it is recommended for purchase.
  - d. The reserve textbooks are located in many campus libraries including: College, Steenbock, CIMC, Biology, Math, Chemistry, Ebling, Business, and Wendt.
  - e. Use of textbooks from a recent semester ran about 30-50 checkouts per copy. Some have a cumulative history of 300-500 checkouts.
2. The Libraries, Student Affairs, and the Associated Students of Madison (ASM) jointly published a brochure for students titled *The High Cost of Textbooks: Options and Alternatives for Students*. This brochure is designed to help students and their families anticipate textbook costs and suggests ways to obtain books. The brochure is posted on the Libraries’ Web page:  
  
<http://www.library.wisc.edu/reserves/textbooks.pdf>
3. The Libraries have a Web page that provides additional tips and resources for students: <http://www.library.wisc.edu/reserves/textbooks.html>
4. The Libraries have worked with ASM to help them develop a textbook swap program. Though this program has not been offered on a regular basis, the Libraries provided space for book storage when it was needed.

### Student-driven initiatives:

1. The College of Engineering student organization, Polygon (<http://www.engr.wisc.edu/studentorgs/polygon/index.htm>), runs a successful “textbook swap” program each semester. ASM is talking with them about how to either expand this to other schools/colleges or start up new programs in other schools/colleges.
2. An example of a grassroots/entrepreneurial program is Exchangehut.com. This is a social networking website started by a UW–Madison graduate and his father; it offers a successful “craigslist”-like program for students to sell and purchase used textbooks.
3. WISPIRG (<http://www.wispirgstudents.org/>) has done a lot of groundwork on the types of textbook programs that can impact students. Results from their initiative on textbook costs can be found at [wispirgstudents.org/textbooks](http://wispirgstudents.org/textbooks). Included in their work is a link to their national book swap program [campusbookswap.org](http://campusbookswap.org). Their statistics indicate that nationally, they sell about 500 books each semester through this program. Additionally, CALPIRG has generated the most extensive set of reports on textbook costs, including recommendations and resources for students:

<http://www.calpirg.org/issues/affordable-higher-education/affordable-textbooks>

4. ASM has drafted a guide for faculty and departments with information on their role for holding down textbook costs. This guide remains in draft form.

### Division of Enrollment Management Initiatives:

1. Course Guide is an ambitious project that will provide course information, including textbook information, in an easily-accessible and timely format for students. A web-based tool, the Course Guide will have the ability to display information about courses and instructors in addition to the basics currently available in the Catalog and Timetable. The feature relevant for this report is that as students “drill down” into faculty/instructor-specific course information, they will be able to find current course textbook titles and ISBN numbers. With this information, students can seek the lowest prices for their texts. Version 1.0 of the Course Guide is anticipated to go “live” in the fall semester of 2008.
2. The Office of Student Financial Services (OSFS) already includes textbook costs in its cost of attendance estimates; these materials are continually updated with current textbook costs.
3. It is also possible for financial aid recipients to petition for additional funds if they face excessive costs, including higher-than-usual textbook expenses. Modest short-term loans (at zero percent interest), which can be used to buy textbooks, are also an

option for students whose regular financial aid is not yet available at the start of a semester.

4. OSFS is also actively involved in ongoing fundraising to assist students with their total costs for education.

### **Recommendations for Additional Initiatives Planned, and as Resources Permit**

We believe that the strongest program to manage textbook costs will be the “one-two punch” of providing timely textbook information to students, coupled with setting and reinforcing expectations that students are entitled to know within 2-3 weeks of the beginning of the semester which textbooks they will be required to purchase. The Course Guide will be the primary mechanism to provide students with timely textbook information; expectations will be set and reinforced to students and faculty/instructors through a variety of mechanisms, including during summer orientation for new students (SOAR), up-to-date information and recommendations communicated through various campus websites, orientations for new faculty, and routine emails to faculty/instructors at the beginning of each semester.

We believe that these initiatives will increasingly allow students to use market pressure as they make decisions to purchase textbooks at the lowest costs; with timely information, students will be able to search the entire world before making their purchases. Additionally, with clear expectations communicated to students and faculty/instructors to release timely textbook information, students will communicate directly with faculty/instructors in order to receive the textbook information that they need.

Our specific recommendations are as follows:

1. Encourage continued work of the Course Guide and Web Content Management System initiatives once they are launched, to assure that textbook information is accessible as well as easily and consistently maintained.
2. Update the faculty/instructor brochure. Add advice on how faculty/instructors can use intellectual property and communicate better the copyright/fair use guidelines so faculty can put as much material online as possible. Distribute this brochure to new faculty during their orientation, and to existing faculty/instructors through department offices and University websites.
3. Update the student brochure to reflect current statistics, and also new alternatives and options for obtaining books. Distribute hardcopies through SOAR as well as all the “usual places” (University Residence Halls, Dean of Students offices, advising, the Unions, the libraries, academic departments, Registrar and Student Financial Services offices, etc.). Link these materials in electronic form through a variety of websites.

4. Increase “targeted marketing” of alternatives and suggestions that are available for students and faculty. For example, SOAR and Transfer SOAR are times when we can communicate relevant information to our new students: a one-pager can be created with information about where to access the various resources above (i.e., the Library’s site, ASM’s, how to access Course Guide, etc.), and instructions and “permission” can be given to students for how to contact their instructors to get textbook information. We can use SOAR to help set the expectations that students can have textbook information 2-3 weeks before the semester begins. This one-pager can be posted on the Vice Provost for Teaching & Learning’s website, and linked to the Parents Program site, Office of New Student Programs, ASM, and other prominent places. Additionally, appropriate information can be incorporated into the materials that are used to orient new faculty to campus in order to reinforce expectations about textbook selection and communicate choices to students.
5. ASM is currently working on a textbook swap program, modeled after Polygon’s successful College of Engineering textbook swap program, and Hoofers ski/snowboard swap meet. The textbook swap essentially takes out the middleman in the used textbook market. One scenario being explored is to hold one event where students who are selling drop off their books at one set time, fill out a form with their contact information, the price of the used book, and their preferred method of payment. At another set time, students will arrive who are interested in buying books. Finally, after the buying time is complete, checks will be processed for those students who sold books.

ASM is currently working through the logistical details for this program, and is looking for a department or college willing to pilot the program for one semester. They have already met with a variety of department chairs, deans, and assistant deans. The Vice Provost for Teaching & Learning will work with ASM to help launch this program.

6. To support the above activities, the Provost Office, through the Vice Provost for Teaching & Learning, will send an email each semester with recommendations to faculty/instructors on how they can help they can explicitly be cost-conscious when making their textbook selections:
  - a. Faculty/instructors should look at the price of the book they are requiring (on Amazon or wherever) so they know the cost that they’re asking their students to bear.
  - b. Suggest that older editions can be used when possible; if new editions are to be used, encourage faculty/instructors to help students “translate” between old editions and new editions.
  - c. Ask faculty/instructors to make a commitment to use a new edition for a set number of years. This helps bookstores buy back used copies with confidence, and therefore, at the highest price they are able to.

- d. Ask faculty/instructors to use “unbundled” versions of texts if they are not using the extra materials included in the bundle. At the very least, faculty/instructors should be explicit about which extra materials they will use in the bundled versions.
- e. More generally, faculty/instructors will be encouraged to be very deliberate about only asking students to buy course material that they will use—i.e., not asking students to purchase entire texts if they only use half the chapters, etc. This message can be coupled with a better explanation of the Fair Use Guidelines so faculty/instructors know what they can copy out of a text and/or put online.
- f. Encourage faculty/instructors to use online resources as much as possible.
- g. Encourage faculty/instructors to be cognizant of their publishing rights and Fair Use Guidelines. Information on copyright and publishing rights can be found at:

[http://oscp.library.wisc.edu/take\\_action.html#copyright](http://oscp.library.wisc.edu/take_action.html#copyright).

Fair use information can be found on the course reserves Web site at

<http://www.library.wisc.edu/reserves/copyright.html>.

- 7. Encourage parents/students to donate used textbooks to the libraries, noting that these donations are tax deductible. Information on donations can be added to the student brochure as well as publicized through the Library’s web site.

### **2007 Textbook Costs Task Force Committee:**

Aaron Brower, Vice Provost for Teaching & Learning, Professor of Social Work (Chair)  
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Ken Frazier, Director, General Library System  
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Jessica Pavlic, Chair, Academic Affairs Subcommittee, Associated Students of Madison  
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William Tracy, Professor and Chair, Agronomy, University Committee Representative  
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