

# RIPOFF 101

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How The Current  
Practices Of The  
Textbook Industry  
Drive Up The Cost Of  
College Textbooks

**The State PIRGs**  
Higher Education Project



# **RIPOFF 101:**

**How the Current Practices of the Publishing  
Industry Drive Up the  
Cost of College Textbooks**

**Merriah Fairchild  
State PIRGs  
Higher Education Project**

**January 2004**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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Additional copies of the report can be obtained by visiting [www.pirg.org/highered](http://www.pirg.org/highered).

**“This report is an impressively researched piece of work and gives a fine perspective on the problem of high textbook prices along with some possible solutions. It should be carefully reviewed by everyone who has buying authority for college textbooks.”**

*- Erwin V. Cohen, Former publishing industry executive for the Academic Press*

**“A hard-hitting report. Solid research and effective recommendations. This is not just a student issue but a faculty issue, too. Students need choices and faculty need to insist they be given choices.”**

*- Christy A. Jensen, Professor of Public Policy Administration, California State University, Sacramento, and Chair of Fiscal and Government Affairs, CSU Academic Senate*

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**W**ith student and faculty complaints about the price of college textbooks on the rise, the California Student Public Interest Research Group (CALPIRG), the Oregon Student Public Interest Research Group (OSPIRG) and the OSPIRG Foundation conducted a survey of the most widely assigned textbooks in the fall of 2003 at 10 public colleges and universities in California and Oregon. Student volunteers and staff also interviewed 156 faculty and 521 students about the cost of textbooks and their purchasing practices. Key findings from this survey include:

### **Textbooks are Expensive and Getting Even More Expensive**

- Students will spend an average of \$898 per year on textbooks in 2003-04, based on surveys of University of California (UC) students in the fall of 2003. This represents almost 20 percent of the average tuition and fees for in-state students at public four-year colleges nationwide. In contrast, a 1997 UC survey found that students spent an average of \$642 on textbooks in 1996-97.

### **Textbook Publishers Add Bells and Whistles that Drive Up the Price of Textbooks; Most Faculty Do Not Use These Materials**

- Half of all textbooks now come “bundled,” or shrink-wrapped with additional instructional materials such as CD-ROMs and workbooks. Students rarely have the option of buying the textbook “a la carte” or without additional materials.
- In the one instance that a textbook was available both bundled and unbundled (only the textbook), the bundled version was more than twice as expensive as the unbundled version of the same textbook.
- Sixty-five (65) percent of faculty “rarely” or “never” use the bundled materials in their courses.

### **Textbook Publishers Put New Editions on the Market Frequently – Often With Very Few Content Changes – Making the Less Expensive, Used Textbooks Obsolete and Unavailable**

- Seventy-six (76) percent of faculty report that the new editions they use are justified “never” to “half the time.” Forty (40) percent of faculty report that the new editions are “rarely” to “never” justified.
- A new textbook costs \$102.44 on average, 58 percent more expensive than the price of an average used textbook, \$64.80.
- Fifty-nine (59) percent of students who searched for a used book for the fall 2003 quarter/semester were unable to find even one used book for their classes.

## **Faculty and Students Support Alternatives That Lower Students' Costs, Maintain Quality**

- Eighty-seven (87) percent of faculty support including new information in a supplement instead of producing a new textbook edition.
- Eighty-six (86) percent of students are considering buying and selling used textbooks through an online bookswap; 14 percent reported already using online bookswaps.

## **Online Textbooks Hold Promise for Dramatically Lowering the Cost of Textbooks**

- According to the Association of American Publishers and the National Association of College Stores, paper, printing and editorial costs account for an average of 32.3 cents of every dollar of the textbook cost – the largest share of the total.
- Online textbooks could eliminate this cost and significantly lower the retail cost of textbooks.
- Some authors and publishers are currently experimenting with online textbooks, a new industry trend that holds great promise.

The production and pricing of college textbooks merits scrutiny from educators and lawmakers because they affect the quality and affordability of higher education. As this report shows, the cost of textbooks is a growing expense for students. The high cost is primarily due to publishers producing new editions like clockwork, regardless of how much new educational content exists, and including expensive bells and whistles, such as CD-ROMs, that professors rarely find useful. The more expensive new editions force the older, less-expensive editions off the market.

Publishers should produce more affordable, quality textbooks. They also should offer faculty and students the option to purchase textbooks unbundled and provide faculty with more information on the company's materials, their prices, intended length of time on the market and substantive content differences from previous editions. Faculty should use their decision-making power to demand substance over bells and whistles and should consider cost and accessibility of previous editions secondary only to educational value when selecting books for their courses.

Finally, students and universities can help make used books available to students by sponsoring on-campus and online bookswaps, campus rental programs and other means.

# INTRODUCTION

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*“Publishers release new editions of successful textbooks every few years — not to improve content, although that may be a byproduct — but to discourage the sales of used books by making them seem obsolete.”*

*- Erwin V. Cohen, former publishing industry executive for the Academic Press*

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An educated, skilled and engaged citizenry is essential to the economic and social health of a nation; ensuring that all Americans can afford a college education — by funding higher education institutions and student aid programs and keeping students’ costs low — is a critical tool to pursue such ends.

College costs are rising; according to The College Board, tuition and fees in 2003-04 are 14.1 percent higher than last year for public four-year institutions.<sup>1</sup> Student grant aid is failing to keep up with mounting costs. Over the past ten years, grant aid has increased by 85 percent while loans have increased 173 percent.<sup>2</sup> As a result of this gap, borrowing is on the rise. Thirty-nine (39) percent of student borrowers now graduate with unmanageable levels of debt, meaning that their monthly payments are more than 8 percent of their monthly incomes.<sup>3</sup> According to recent data from the Department of Education’s National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, not only are the majority of students turning to loans to finance college, but debt levels are also escalating.<sup>4</sup> In 1999-2000, 64 percent of students graduated with student loan debt, and the average student loan debt has nearly doubled over the past eight years to \$16,928.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to borrowing, many students must work long hours to finance their education. According to a survey conducted by the State PIRGs, nearly half of all full-time working students are working enough hours to hurt their academic achievement and the overall quality of their education. At the same time, the majority of these students (63 percent) reported that they would not be able to attend college if they did not work.<sup>6</sup>

Given the current trends in higher education funding, the rising cost of textbooks has come under intense scrutiny. In October 2003, the *New York Times* reported that American textbook publishers sell textbooks overseas for as little as half the price of the same textbook sold in the United States.<sup>7</sup>

Even insiders from within the textbook industry have joined the growing criticism of the publishing industry. According to Erwin V. Cohen, a former publishing industry executive for the Academic Press, “Publishers release new editions of successful textbooks every few years — not to improve content, although that may be a byproduct — but to discourage the sales of used books by making them seem obsolete.” He goes on to say, “Before color printing, fancy graphics and electronic supplements, it was no harder for students to learn chemistry, physics and psychology than it is now. Costs could be cut in half by using simple book designs, streamlining the review process and adding less fluff. And, most important, by publishers not churning out more of the same each year.”<sup>8</sup>

Several policy-makers have proposed solutions to address the rising cost of

textbooks at American colleges and universities. U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer (NY) released a study showing that undergraduates at New York colleges and universities are confronting skyrocketing costs for textbooks. The Schumer study found that the average New York freshman or sophomore paid \$922 for textbooks this year – an increase of approximately 41 percent since 1998.<sup>9</sup> Senator Schumer has proposed making up to \$1,000 of textbook costs tax deductible to help lower the overall cost of higher education for working families.<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, Congressman David Wu (OR), a member of the House Education Committee, has introduced legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives to require an investigation of the college textbook industry's pricing practices.<sup>11</sup>

These skyrocketing costs would be reason for concern under any circumstances. Coupled with a political context in which state and federal aid for higher education has been failing to keep pace with rising college costs, high textbooks costs may be prohibitive to many already struggling to pay for college.

## SURVEY FINDINGS

*"Textbooks have become ridiculously expensive because the people who choose the books (faculty) are not the ones who pay for them (students). Publishers spend a lot of money trying to get me to choose their book. They sponsor wine and cheese parties at conferences, they mail me free sample books and they send representatives from Portland (to Eugene) to sell to me.... This is a problem that needs addressing."*

*- Lane Community College Math Professor*

In the fall of 2003, the California Student Public Interest Research Group (CALPIRG), the Oregon Student Public Interest Research Group (OSPIRG) and the OSPIRG Foundation conducted a survey to address increasing student and faculty complaints about the rising cost of college textbooks. Surveyors identified the five most widely assigned textbooks for the fall 2003 semester at 10 public colleges and universities in California and Oregon. From that list, surveyors found and compared consecutive editions of 33 textbooks. Approximately 30 student volunteers and 15 staff examined the textbooks and

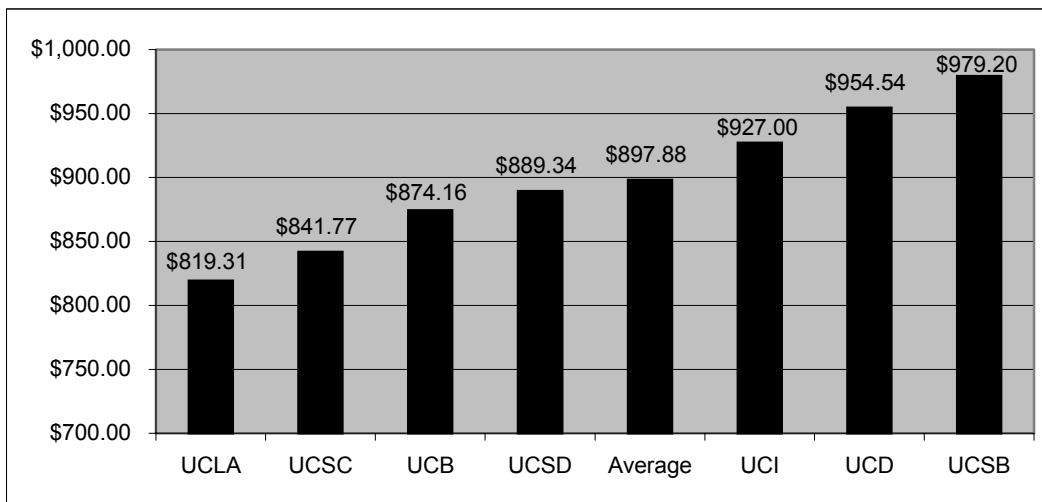
interviewed 156 faculty who used one or more of those books. Volunteers and staff also surveyed 521 students about the total cost of their textbooks and methods used to purchase textbooks.

The survey resulted in the following findings:

### ❶ Textbooks are Expensive and Getting Even More Expensive

**Students' Textbook Costs Are On The Rise**  
Based on surveys of University of California (UC) students in the fall of 2003, students will spend an average of \$898 on textbooks in three quarters or two semesters (Figure 1A). If they attend summer school, they are likely to spend more than \$1,000 a year. The University of California Office of the President has tracked students' textbook costs over the last seven years and found that their textbook expenses have increased 24 percent since 1996-97.<sup>12</sup>

Figure 1A. Average Amount Spent on Textbooks by School Surveyed for 2003-2004



## Textbook Publishers Add Bells and Whistles that Drive Up the Price of Textbooks, But Faculty Do Not Use These Materials

*"I had to (use the bundled materials) once because that was the deal that was struck with the book company, but I generally wouldn't do that. Most ancillary material is not all that useful to students."*

- Lane Community College Psychology Professor

*"I find that moving the class to the computer lab (to use the bundled CD-ROMs) causes time waste and logistics issues and asking everyone to do stuff 'on their own computer/own time' is rather hit and miss."*

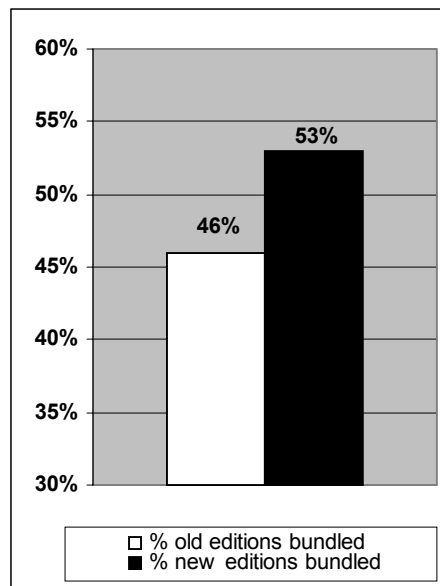
- Lane Community College Math Professor

### Half of All Textbooks Now Come "Bundled" - Shrink-Wrapped with Additional Instructional Materials, Such as CD-ROMs and Workbooks

The practice of bundling the required textbook with non-required materials such as dictionaries, CD-ROMs and study-guides increased 21 percent between the consecutive editions surveyed (issued an average of 3.8 years apart). The older edition surveyed was bundled 46 percent of the time compared with the newer edition of the same textbook that was bundled 53 percent of the time, a seven percent increase (Figure 2A).

The number of items included in the bundle also increased by almost 50 percent, from 1.2 items with the older edition to 1.7 items with the newer edition.

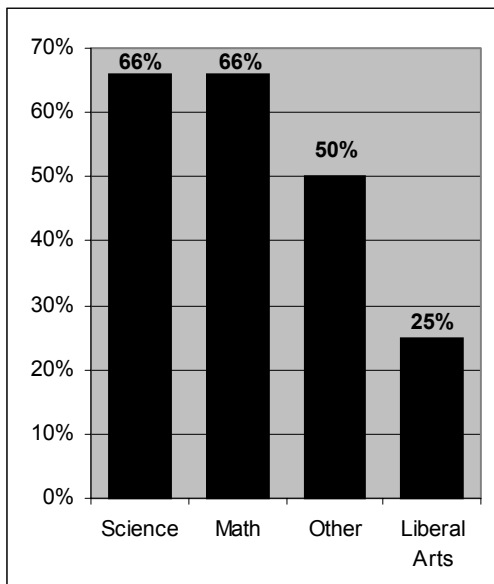
**Figure 2A. Comparison of bundling among new and old editions of the same textbook**



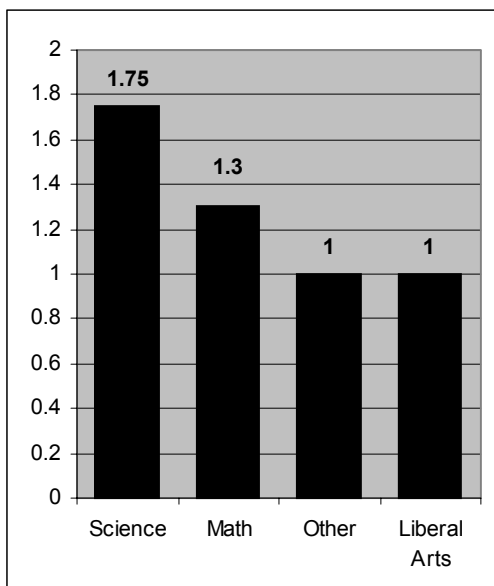
### Certain Subjects Have More Non-Required Materials Bundled than Others

Textbooks for science and math classes were bundled in 66 percent of the cases we studied, containing an average of 1.75 and 1.3 additional items, respectively. In contrast, only 25 percent of the liberal arts books were bundled, with an average of one other item. Books for other classes, including honors colloquium, business, and business administration, were bundled 50 percent of the time, with an average of one other item (Figures 2B and 2C).

**Figure 2B. Percentage of Textbooks Bundled, by Subject**



**Figure 2C. Average Number of Bundled Materials in Addition to the Textbook, by Subject**



**Books that Are Sold Bundled Are Rarely Offered Separately; Indications Are That Bundled Books Are More Expensive**

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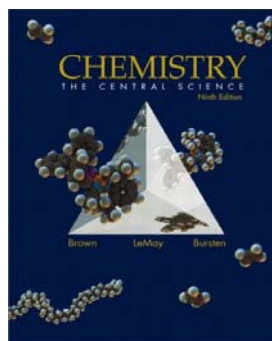
*"It seems to me that the "all-in-one package" drives behind these books is what makes them so expensive: if we leave it up to the instructors, who are, after all, trained professionals, to "fill in the gaps" in an edition that is perhaps not "up to the minute," then we may be able to reduce the cost of these things. New editions are quite simply produced more often than needed and students actively resent this and tend to see it as profiteering."*

- UC Davis English Professor

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Of the books surveyed, only one textbook was available for purchase both bundled and unbundled. The bundled version was \$130, more than double the unbundled price of \$60 (Figure 2D).

**Figure 2D. Price Comparison of Bundled and Unbundled Version of Same Book**



**School:** UCSB  
**Book:** Chemistry: The Central Science  
**Publisher:** Pearson Education  
**Author:** Brown  
**Year:** 2003  
**Edition:** 9<sup>th</sup>  
**Bundled Cost:** \$130  
**Unbundled Cost:** \$60

## Professors Rarely Include Non-Required Bundled Materials in Curriculum

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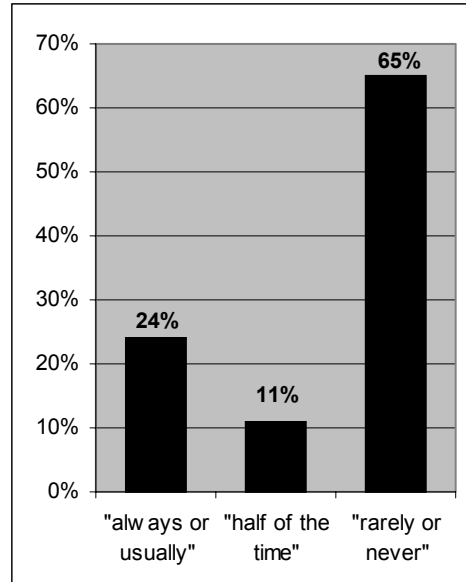
*"I tried using a floppy once, and it was nearly impossible to run. I'm sure there are few to no students who will ever use these additional materials."*

- UCSD Professor

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Sixty-five (65) percent of professors estimate they "never" or "rarely" include information from the additional bundled items in their courses, compared with only 24 percent who estimated they do "always" or "usually", and 11 percent use the material "half of the time" (Figure 2E).

Figure 2E. Comparison of Faculty Use of Bundled Materials in Their Curriculum



**③ Textbook Publishers Issue New Editions Frequently — Often Without Content Changes — Making Less Expensive, Used Textbooks Obsolete and Unavailable**

*"I know the main purpose for a new edition is for the textbook publisher to make money. Unfortunately, we are forced to go to the new edition because our current edition will be obsolete."*

- Lane Community College Math Professor

**New Textbook Editions Are Published Routinely**

The average time difference between the two consecutive editions of the textbooks surveyed was 3.8 years, with 75 percent of the books surveyed (25/33) in the three to four year range (Figure 3A). This finding falls in line with what many faculty surveyed also reported. It is customary for publishers to issue a new edition approximately every three years for all subjects. According to many professors, three to four years is the industry standard regardless of how the subject has changed since the previous edition.

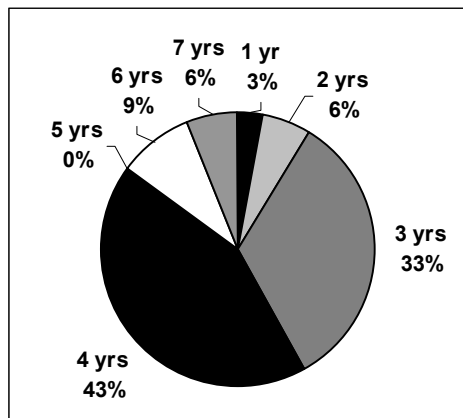
*"In my opinion, they produce a new edition when the number of second hand copies of an old edition seriously dents their sales figures."*

- UCSD Math Professor

*"New editions are driven by profit potential of publishers. There isn't that much new information in a field to change in an intro text."*

- University of Oregon Business Professor

Figure 3A. Frequency with which Publishers Issued New Editions of Textbooks Surveyed



**New Editions Replace Used Editions – Costing Students More, Increasing Faculty Workload**

*"I don't look forward to changing texts because I have to reinvent the wheel every time I re-prepare lessons."*

- Lane Community College Math Professor

Of the textbooks surveyed, the new editions cost 58 percent more than the used copy of the older edition. The average price of the new edition is \$102.44, compared with \$64.80 for the used edition. Because students can earn money selling back their books if they have not been replaced with newer editions, students both save money by buying used books and earn money selling them back.

The following chart (Figure 3B) is an example of the price difference between consecutive editions of the same textbook. While the percentage varies, the overall trend is that each new edition is more expensive than the previous edition purchased new and significantly more expensive than the previous edition purchased used.

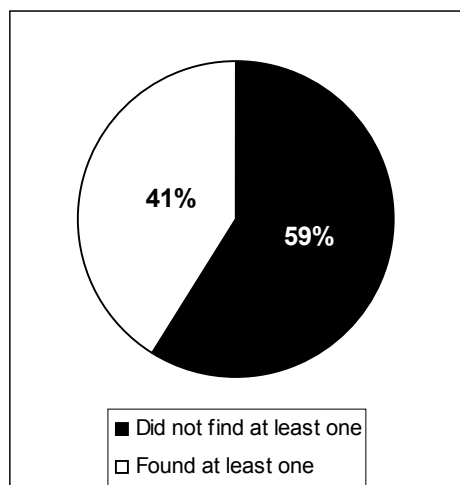
**Figure 3B. Example of Price Differences Between Consecutive Editions of Textbooks**

| Campus              | Title   | Publisher        | Old Year/<br>Edition | Cost<br>New     | Cost<br>Used    | New Year/<br>Edition | Cost<br>New     | Cost<br>Used    | Buyback<br>Value |
|---------------------|---|------------------|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| UC-Davis            | General Chemistry: Principles and Modern Applications | Prentice Hall    | 1996/<br>7th         | \$120.00        | \$78.00         | 2001/<br>8th         | \$130.00        | \$84.50         | \$40.00          |
| U of Oregon         | College Algebra                                       | Thomson Learning | 1997/<br>1st         | \$76.00         | \$42.00         | 2000/<br>2nd         | \$107.00        | \$80.00         | \$53.00          |
| <b>Total</b>        |   |                  |                      | <b>\$196.00</b> | <b>\$120.00</b> |                      | <b>\$237.00</b> | <b>\$164.50</b> | <b>\$93.00</b>   |
| <b>Average Cost</b> |   |                  |                      | <b>\$98.00</b>  | <b>\$60.00</b>  |                      | <b>\$118.50</b> | <b>\$82.25</b>  | <b>\$46.50</b>   |

**Majority of Students are Unable to Find Used Books**

Of the students surveyed, 59 percent were unable to find even one used book while buying their textbooks (Figure 3C). This could be because the used books were already purchased by other students or because the textbook was replaced with a newer edition that made the used edition obsolete.

**3C. Percentage of Students Looking for Used Books Who Found at Least One**



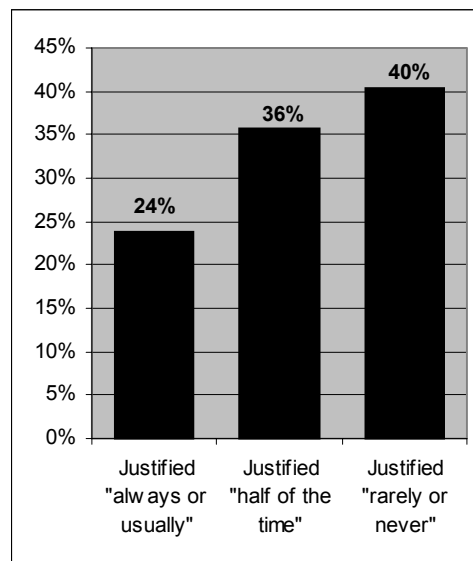
**New Textbook Editions are Often Published With Little or No New Information**

*“Chemistry updates usually fix errors and add some materials, nothing is new. Added material is usually ancillary.”*

*- Berkeley Chemistry Professor*

More than three-quarters (76 percent) of all faculty surveyed estimated the new editions were justified half of the time or less. More than 40 percent of faculty surveyed said that new textbooks were “rarely” or “never” justified (Figure 3D).

**Figure 3D. Professorial Response to Justification of New Textbook Editions**



Faculty opinion varied significantly depending on which subject they taught. For example, only 1 percent of math professors estimated that a new math edition is “usually” or “always” justified, compared with 34 percent of science professors who thought the same of new science editions. Twenty-eight (28) percent of liberal arts professors estimated their textbooks were justified “usually” or “always,” and none of the other faculty estimated the new editions were “usually” or “always” justified.

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*“Probably you will not be surprised to find out that most of the mathematics faculty are as much frustrated by constant production of “new editions” of calculus textbooks as are the students. The subject of calculus did not change much in the last 100 years! And there are no reasons why the textbooks have to be updated every five years or even more frequently. New illustrations are sometimes added, exercises are shuffled and so on, but these do not substantially affect teaching/learning. Textbook publishers produce new editions solely as a means to sell more books and make more profit.”*

*- UCLA Calculus Professor*

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## ④ Faculty and Students Support Changes that Lower Students' Costs, Maintain Quality

### Faculty Support Teaching with a Supplement or Reordering Older Edition

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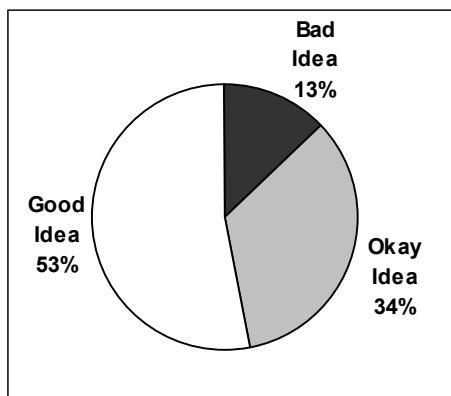
*"I use law textbooks. Instead of giving a new textbook, they should just provide a supplement to deal with new cases every few years."*

- UCSD Sociology Professor

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Eighty-seven (87) percent of faculty surveyed supported including new information in a supplement instead of producing a new textbook edition, with half (53 percent) saying it is a "good" idea and a third (34 percent) saying that it is an "okay" idea. Thirteen (13) percent were opposed to the idea mostly because they were concerned it would be logistically difficult for students to go back and forth between the textbook and the supplement (Figure 4A).

**Figure 4A. Faculty Opinion on Issuing Supplements Instead of New Textbook Editions**



## Students Are Buying and Selling Books Online, and Even More Are Considering the Option

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*"I strongly recommend that my students obtain previous editions of our text online. Amazon.com and ebay are great sources for used books."*

- Lane Community College Biology Professor

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Fourteen (14) percent of students surveyed have bought one or more of their books online. Seventy-eight (78) percent were satisfied with the online book-swap where they buy and sell their books to each other and can negotiate the price. More than two-thirds (86 percent) of the students surveyed reported they would consider buying and selling books online in the future.

## ⑤ Online Textbooks Hold Promise for Lowering the Cost of Textbooks

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*"I would encourage faculty to write their own textbooks and put them on line so they would be free to students. This mechanism is also better than paper textbooks because it doesn't add to the demand for paper, the book can be constantly updated, and it can be linked to other useful sources on the web. That's what I did."*

*- UCI Biology Professor*

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Several authors and publishers are currently experimenting with online textbooks, a new industry trend that holds great promise. According to the National Association of College Stores, paper, printing and editorial costs account for an average of 32.3 cents of every dollar a textbook costs – the largest share of the total. Moving to online textbooks could significantly lower the retail cost of textbooks.<sup>13</sup>

*New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman, who is also an economics professor at

Princeton University, has teamed up with fellow Princeton economist Robin Wells and Paul Romer, an economics professor at Stanford University and owner of Aplia Inc., a three-year-old company that develops educational software and materials. Together these three academics are developing online versions of their upcoming economics textbooks at half the price of the paper version. "This is an attempt to get ahead of the curve," says Professor Krugman. "Over decades if not years, traditional textbook publishing will be a less and less viable model."<sup>14</sup>

Elizabeth Widdicombe, president of Worth Publishers and publisher of the forthcoming economics textbook authored by Professors Krugman and Wells, told the *Washington Post* she is not worried that the online version of the economics textbook will eat into bound-textbook sales. "I think the market will be larger with the two products (paper and online) than one alone," she says. "We want students to buy our product in whatever format they want to buy it."<sup>15</sup>

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The production and pricing of college textbooks merits scrutiny from educators and lawmakers because they affect the quality and affordability of higher education. As this report shows, the cost of textbooks is a growing expense for students. The high cost is primarily due to publishers producing new editions like clockwork, regardless of how much new educational content exists, and including expensive bells and whistles, such as CD-ROMs, that professors rarely find useful. The more expensive new editions force the older, less-expensive editions off the market.

Based on our findings, we recommend the following policy changes. These changes would make higher education more affordable by lowering the cost of textbooks without sacrificing educational quality.

### **Textbooks Should Be Priced and Sold at a Reasonable Cost to Students**

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*"Faculty do not often know the cost of textbooks they require students to buy. It may help to reduce costs if there was a way to get this information routinely to the faculty – if the options are not simply book A versus book B, but book Q at \$130 versus book B at \$90."*

- UCSC Math Professor

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- Publishers should work to keep the cost of producing their books as low as possible without sacrificing educational content.

- When publishers sell their textbooks bundled with other items, they also should sell the same textbook separately. Senator Schumer (NY) has advised the Department

of Education to encourage schools to sell materials separately and has similarly urged publishers to sell books unbundled, so students need not buy extraneous materials.<sup>16</sup>

- Publishers should pass on cost-savings from online textbooks to students.

- Faculty should have the right to know how their textbook choices will financially affect students.

- Publishers should disclose all of the different products they sell - including both bundled and unbundled options - and list how much each of those products costs. This information should be made available to faculty and departments when they are considering which textbooks to order.
- Publishers should disclose how the newest edition is different from the previous edition. This information should be made available inside the books and posted where textbooks are sold.

### **Publishers, Faculty and Universities Should Build a Vibrant Used Textbook Market**

- Each textbook edition should be kept on the market as long as possible without sacrificing the educational content.

- Publishers should give preference to paper or online supplements to current editions over producing entirely new editions.

- Publishers should disclose the length of time they intend to produce the current edition so that professors know how long they can use the same book.
  - Faculty should give preference to the cheapest textbook when the educational content is equal.
- There should be many forums for students to purchase used books.
- Colleges and universities should consider implementing rental programs similar to those at several universities in Wisconsin and Illinois. Students would rent books similar to the way they are shared in

K-12 but the students would pay a fee that covers the cost of the books.

- Colleges and universities should encourage students to consider using online bookswaps so that students can buy and sell used books and set their own prices. CALPIRG has set up a non-profit, student-run, online bookswap, [www.campusbookswap.com](http://www.campusbookswap.com).

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*"We should even consider standardizing to the extent that the university commits to using a certain edition of Stewart [the widely used math textbook] for the next five years."*

*- Berkeley Math Professor*

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## METHODOLOGY

The author, along with students at the ten different colleges and universities, conducted three different areas of research for this report: a survey of students, a survey of faculty, and a comparison of consecutive editions of the same textbook.

First, 521 students at seven of the University of California campuses were randomly surveyed: University of California (UC) San Diego (UCSD), UC Irvine (UCI), UC Los Angeles (UCLA), UC Santa Barbara (UCSB), UC Santa Cruz (UCSC), UC Berkeley (UCB) and UC Davis (UCD). A CALPIRG staff person or student volunteer asked students to fill out a survey after they finished buying their books at the campus bookstore. A total of 521 students answered the survey: 169 at UCSD, 48 UCSB, 69 at UCD, 135 at UCLA, 23 at UCB, 21 at UCI and 56 at UCSC. The student surveys were conducted during September and October 2003.

The student survey included the following questions:

- Year in school?
- Approximately how much you spent/will spend on textbooks this quarter/semester?
- List your most expensive textbooks including cost.
- Did you look for a used version?
- If you looked, did you find a used version?
- Have you used an online book-swap?
- If no, would you consider using one?
- If yes, were you satisfied? Why?

Second, we interviewed a total of 156 faculty at nine public universities and one community college: University of California (UC) San Diego, UC Irvine, UC Los Angeles, UC Santa Barbara, UC Santa Cruz, UC Berkeley, UC Davis, Southern Oregon University (SOU), Lane Community College (LCC) and the University of Oregon (UO).

We chose the list of faculty to interview based on what books they used in their classes. The goal was to interview faculty who teach large classes and therefore assign books for a large student population. The bookstore at each of the ten campuses surveyed provided a list of the five most assigned textbooks for the fall quarter/semester and the professors who teach with at least one of those textbooks. Each campus had a different list of books. From this list, we surveyed 156 faculty: 22 at UCSD, 20 UCSB, 19 at UCD, 18 at UCLA, 8 at UCB, 6 at UCI, 15 at UCSC, 10 at SOU, 29 at LCC, and 9 at UO. We surveyed the faculty during October and November 2003.

Of the 156 faculty surveyed:

- 151 answered the question about whether the content differences between new and older textbook editions are educationally significant enough to justify the new edition. (97% response rate); answers were classified as “always”, “usually”, “half the time”, “rarely”, or “never”.

- 153 answered the question about how often they include these materials in their syllabi. (98% response rate); answers were classified as “always”, “usually”, “half the time”, “rarely”, or “never”.
- 153 answered the question about whether they plan to incorporate these additional materials into future syllabi. (98% response rate); answers were classified as “yes”, “maybe”, or “no”.
- 151 answered the question about whether they support providing new educational material in the form of a supplement. (97% response rate); answers were classified as “good idea”, “OK idea”, or “bad idea”.
- 152 answered the question about if they support ordering the existing textbook version instead of ordering the new version (in the same way that readers are currently produced). (97% response rate); answers were classified as “yes”, “maybe”, or “no”.

Third, we compared different editions of the five most assigned textbooks at each of the campuses surveyed. Of the 50 books recommended by the bookstore managers, we were able to compare 33 pairs of editions with the following breakdown: 5 at UCSD, 5 at UCSB, 5 at UCD, 5 at UCLA, 5 at UCB, 2 at UCI, 5 at UCSC, 3 at SOU, 5 at LCC, and 1 at UO.

We surveyed the 33 textbooks with two consecutive editions for the following parameters:

- Year published
- Edition
- Number of chapters or sections
- Number of pages
- Number of visuals
- Cost new
- Cost used
- Buyback value
- Available as soft-cover, hard-cover or both
- Bundled with other items
- How many items in the bundle

## **Detailed Account of How Each Finding Was Determined**

### **1. Students’ Textbook Costs Are on the Rise**

We calculated the average amount that UC students will spend on textbooks in 2003-04 by multiplying the average amount reported for the Fall by three for quarter schools and two for semester schools. Then we added the annual totals together and divided that total by the number of schools.

### **2. Half of All Textbooks Now Come “Bundled” – Shrink-Wrapped with Additional Instructional Materials, Such as CD-ROMs and Workbooks**

Of the 33 books the students surveyed, the students reported whether 31 pairs of editions (both the old and new edition of the same book) were bundled or unbundled; of those, the students

reported the book's subject for 26. Twenty textbooks were for science classes, 5 for math, one for "other" and zero for liberal arts. Twelve of the 26 old books (46 percent) were bundled and 14 of the 26 (53 percent) new books were bundled, a seven percent increase of bundling among the newest editions.

### **3. Certain Subjects Have More Non-Required Materials Bundled than Others**

The percentage of books bundled and the number of items bundled varied by textbook subject. Science classes were bundled the most, 66 percent (12/18) of the time, with an average 1.75 items. Fifty-eight (58) percent of the bundled science books come with two or more items added to the textbook.

### **4. Books that Are Sold Bundled Are Rarely Offered Separately; Indications Are That Bundled Books Are More Expensive**

Of 33 textbooks surveyed, one indicated the option of buying the book bundled or unbundled. The bundled version was \$130, compared with \$60 unbundled. If this sample is any indication of a larger trend, it is likely that students are rarely given the option to purchase unbundled versions of the same textbook.

### **5. Professors Rarely Include Non-Required Bundled Materials in Curriculum**

Of the 153 faculty who responded, 18 (11 percent) reported they always use the bundled materials in their syllabi, 19 (12 percent) reported "usually", 16 (10 percent) reported "half the time", 43 (28 percent) reported "rarely" and 57 (37 percent) reported "never".

### **6. New Textbook Editions Are Published Routinely**

To determine the average time period between editions being published, we added the total number of years between each book and divided the years by the number of books. The average publishing frequency of all 33 books was 3.8 years, with 75 percent of the books surveyed (25/33) in the 3-4 year range. The breakdown of the publishing frequency of the textbooks surveyed is:

- a. 1 year- 1 book
  - b. 2 years- 2 books
  - c. 3 years- 11 books
  - d. 4 years- 14 books
  - e. 5 years- 0 books
  - f. 6 years- 3 books
  - g. 7 years- 2 books
- Total: 33 books

### **7. New Editions Replace Used Editions -- Costing Students More and Increasing Faculty Workload**

Of the 33 books surveyed, we had information on the used price for the previous edition compared to the new price of the new edition for nine textbooks. The nine used books sold for a total of \$582.25, an average of \$64.80. The new edition of these books sold for a total of \$921.93, or an average of \$102.44 per book, which is 58 percent more expensive than the cost for the average used edition.

### **8. Students are Unable to Find Used Textbooks**

Of the 521 students surveyed, 281 reported whether they looked for used textbooks and if they were successful in finding at least one (53 percent response rate). Of the 281 students that reported, 166 (59 percent) reported they were unable to find at least one used book to buy and 115 (41 percent) reported that they were successful.

### 9. New Textbook Editions Are Often Published With Little or No New Information

Faculty Survey Questions/Results: 156 faculty surveyed, 151 answered

- Percentage of Professors that thought new textbook editions were

- Never justified: **(5/151) 3.3%**
- Rarely justified: **(56/151) 37.1%**
- Half the time: **(54/151) 35.8%**
- Usually justified: **(32/151) 21.2%**
- Always justified: **(4/151) 2.6%**

The following is a breakdown of each category of professors by general subject area (i.e. math, science, social science). Of the professors responding, 134 answered and reported the subject taught: 49 science, 47 math, 32 social science, 6 other.

- Science (51 science surveyed, 49 answered): Including Chemistry, Sociology, Physics, Anthropology, Biology, Astronomy, Psychology, Economics

- rarely - **12 (28% rarely or never)**
- never - **2**
- half - **18 (36% half)**
- usually - **15**
- always - **2 (34% usually or always)**

- Math (49 surveyed, 47 answered): Including Calculus, Statistics

- rarely - **21 (51% rarely or never)**
- never - **3**
- half - **18 (38% half)**
- usually - **5**
- always - **0 (1% usually or always)**

- Liberal Arts (32 surveyed, 32 answered): Including Writing, English, Philosophy, History, Romance Languages, Spanish, Politics

- rarely - **12 (37% rarely or never)**
- never - **0**
- half - **11 (43% half)**
- usually - **8**
- always - **1 (28% usually or always)**

- Other (7 surveyed, 6 answered): Including Honors Colloquium, Business and Business Administration

- rarely - **3(50% rarely or never)**
- never - **0**
- half - **3 (50% usually or always)**

usually - 0  
always - 0

**10. Faculty Support Teaching with a Supplement, Reordering Older Edition**

Of the 156 faculty surveyed, 151 responded to this question (97 percent response rate). Of the 151 who responded, 80 said a supplement was a “good” idea (53 percent), 51 said it was an “okay” idea (34 percent) and 20 said it was a “bad” idea (13 percent).

**11. Students Are Buying and Selling Books On-line, Even More Considering Option**

Of the 521 students surveyed, 191 students responded to this question (36 percent response rate). Of the 191 who responded, 27 reported they had used an online bookswap (14 percent) and 164 reported that they would consider using one (86 percent). Of the 27 who reported using an online bookswap, 21 were satisfied with their experience (78 percent).

## END NOTES

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- <sup>2</sup> The College Board, *Trends in College Pricing 2003*. Available at [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), pg. 4.
- <sup>3</sup> The State PIRGs, *The Burden of Borrowing*, March 2002. Available at <http://www.pirg.org/highered/highered.asp?id2=7972>.
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- <sup>5</sup> The State PIRGs, *The Burden of Borrowing*, March 2002. Available at <http://www.pirg.org/highered/highered.asp?id2=7972>.
- <sup>6</sup> The State PIRGs, *At What Cost?*, April 2002. Available at <http://www.pirg.org/highered/highered.asp?id2=7971>.
- <sup>7</sup> Tamar Lewin, "Students Find \$100 Textbook Cost \$50, Purchased Overseas." *New York Times*. October 21, 2003.
- <sup>8</sup> Erwin V. Cohen, Editorial, "Same Look, New Book." *New York Times*. December 2, 2003.
- <sup>9</sup> Office of Senator Charles E. Schumer, press release, October 10, 2003. Available at [http://www.senate.gov/~schumer/SchumerWebsite/pressroom/press\\_releases/PR02101.html](http://www.senate.gov/~schumer/SchumerWebsite/pressroom/press_releases/PR02101.html).
- <sup>10</sup> Office of Senator Charles E. Schumer, press release, October 10, 2003. Available at [http://www.senate.gov/~schumer/SchumerWebsite/pressroom/press\\_releases/PR02101.html](http://www.senate.gov/~schumer/SchumerWebsite/pressroom/press_releases/PR02101.html).
- <sup>11</sup> Priyanka Pathak, "Congress to explore textbook pricing." *Daily Stanford*. November 25, 2003. Available at [http://daily.stanford.edu/tempo?page=printable&repository=0001\\_article&id=12544](http://daily.stanford.edu/tempo?page=printable&repository=0001_article&id=12544). To view a summary of the proposed legislation (H.R. 3567), visit <http://thomas.loc.gov/>.
- <sup>12</sup> Provided by Student Financial Support unit of the University of California Office of the President. The figures are based upon the UC Cost of Attendance Survey, a survey of approximately 10,000 undergraduate UC students conducted every three years.
- <sup>13</sup> National Association of College Stores, fact sheet, "Where the New Textbook Dollar Goes." Available at [http://www.nacs.org/common/research/textbook\\$.pdf](http://www.nacs.org/common/research/textbook$.pdf).
- <sup>14</sup> Charles Goldsmith, "Two Economists Have New Publishing Model For College Textbooks." *The Wall Street Journal*. November 12, 2003.
- <sup>15</sup> Charles Goldsmith, "Two Economists Have New Publishing Model For College Textbooks." *The Wall Street Journal*. November 12, 2003.
- <sup>16</sup> Office of Senator Charles E. Schumer, press release, October 10, 2003. Available at [http://www.senate.gov/~schumer/SchumerWebsite/pressroom/press\\_releases/PR02101.html](http://www.senate.gov/~schumer/SchumerWebsite/pressroom/press_releases/PR02101.html).