Textbook Cost Summary

- The Academic Affairs Committee collected data on textbook costs from a variety of colleges and academic departments, as well as the TAMU Bookstore.
- Textbook costs vary greatly among departments and colleges, but on average textbook costs (not counting other associated course costs) can be several hundred dollars a semester for the typical student.
- TAMU Bookstore does offer many pricing options for students, including new, used, and rental new or used, but the price for most options is still arguably high, although the rental used option usually runs about half the cost of a new textbook and faculty could check with the bookstore whether rental copies are available for respective textbooks.
- Several viable options currently exist that can alleviate high textbook costs, such as using ebooks or placing materials in learning management systems (LMS) or library electronic course reserves, and faculty awareness of these options can be increased.
- Open Access (OA) textbooks and Open Educational Resources (OER) are also viable alternative options for addressing high textbook cost (for more information refer to OA Textbook handout).
- Federal and state governments advocate for OA textbooks and provide various levels of funding.
- The Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC) is a coalition of over 200 academic and research libraries that advocate for OA and OER resources.
- Several classes at Texas A&M University have already successfully implemented OA textbooks.
- TAMU Libraries has submitted an OA Textbook and OER Initiatives Proposal for a three-year pilot program to the Provost advocating funding for the potential adoption of OA resources and assessment of their use at Texas A&M University. Lower-level core courses have first consideration for the program of OA adoption, but participation by faculty will be voluntary.

Additional Links of Interest

LEGISLATION:
Texas SB 810 (effective June 2017):
https://legiscan.com/TX/bill/SB810/2017
OER Legislation in Other States:

More on SPARC legislative wins in relation to open access textbook funding:

https://sparcopen.org/our-work/open-textbooks-fy18/
https://twitter.com/SPARC_NA/status/976632184080666634
Textbook Cost Resolution

In the last few months, the Academic Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate has investigated policies and practices related to the high cost of textbooks and the impact of these costs on Texas A&M University students. The Academic Affairs Committee has also reviewed OA textbook initiatives and their potential support from university administration. As a result of this review and subsequent discussions, the Academic Affairs Committee recommends the Faculty Senate adopt the following resolution.

Be it resolved that the Faculty Senate of Texas A&M University is cognizant of the rising cost of textbooks in higher education and the financial burden placed on students. In response to this concern, the Faculty Senate encourages all faculty to make a good faith effort to practice methods of limiting textbook costs to students and encourages Texas A&M University to directly support textbook initiatives on campus. Such practices and support may include, but are not limited to:

- Recommend that the President and Provost provide funding for Open Access (OA) textbooks and Open Educational Resources (OER) initiatives.
- Encourage the President and Provost to consider the time and effort involved in OA adoption or creation and offer faculty incentives.
- Make early textbook selections (within the timeline presented by the MSC Bookstore) so that students can sell back books that will be used again and the Bookstore can purchase appropriate quantities of used books.
- Consider the cost of the book when making a textbook selection, including checking with the bookstore if the text has a rental option, and be aware of the total cost of books required for a course.
- Assess the cost of publisher courseware associated with textbook selections, and if courseware costs are exorbitant consider an OA resource or alternative text.
- Review holdings of TAMU Libraries for the availability of electronic books when making selections for classes or consult with e-resource librarians for applicable ebook licensing options.
- Upload book chapters and/or relevant class readings (while abiding by copyright law) to learning management systems (LMS) or post onto TAMU Libraries Electronic Reserves.
- Post self-published textbooks and resource packets of personal articles used for classes in OAKTrust repository (Scholarly Communications staff can assist with this).
Access to Higher Education and the Costs of Textbooks

Colleges and universities seek to address costs associated with commercial textbooks for college students, a significant barrier to college access for many students\(^1\). Open access (OA) textbooks or other alternatives to commercial textbooks provide a low- to no-cost alternative for college students. Open access textbooks and other types of open educational resource (OER)\(^2\) are openly licensed, digital instructional resources that allow students to read online, download, or print the book at no cost or compensation to the author(s).

In addition to reducing costs for students, OA textbooks may positively impact educational outcomes by allowing faculty instructors to customize textbooks or instructional material. Open access textbooks frequently include the right to add, remove or alter content, generally on the condition that derivative works must have the same license. Therefore, OA textbooks support faculty instructors’ efforts to design innovative, effective instructional materials, and explicitly align these materials to the course goals and objectives\(^3\).

Identifying innovative ways of reducing costs associated with the use of high priced, commercial textbooks can help address strategic educational goals at Texas A&M and has the interest and support of Texas A&M’s administration. In addition, Texas A&M OER programs would be eligible to take advantage of new resources made available from the Texas State Senate through the passage of SB 810 in 2017. SB 810, which was authored by Sen. Lois Kolkhorst, R-Brenham, and sponsored by Rep. Donna Howard, D-Austin, creates a new grant program that supports professors that adopt, adapt or create OERs for use in their classrooms.

The Texas A&M University Libraries is piloting programs that advance faculty awareness of open access textbooks and OERs, support the adoption of alternatives to high costs commercial textbooks, and lead to the development of new OERs. We are interested in partnering with the Faculty Senate to support Texas A&M faculty and instructors.

What are some Benefits of Open Access Textbooks?

- Reduce student costs associated with textbooks thereby improving access to Texas A&M.
- Improve educational outcomes of our students through textbook access for all students on the first day of class, including student learning, retention rates, and graduation rates.
- Allow faculty to customize instructional materials so they are more aligned with teaching strategies, course goals, or current disciplinary knowledge.
- Positively affect course enrollments.

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\(^2\) http://www.sparc.arl.org/issues/open-education

• Support new grant funding opportunities or contribute to broader impact programs associated with other research.

What are Examples of Open Access Textbooks Currently Available?
The following two online resources provide examples of existing open access textbooks:
• Openstax: https://openstax.org/
• Open Textbook Library: https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/

Common Questions Raised About OA Textbooks and OERs

What is Open Education? Open Education encompasses resources, tools and practices that are free of legal, financial and technical barriers and can be fully used, shared and adapted in the digital environment. Open Education maximizes the power of the Internet to make education more affordable, accessible and effective (taken from SPARC4).

What does it mean for a textbook to be open? In the case of OER, the term "open" usually means that an author has chosen to give others permissions to retain, reuse, revise, remix, and redistribute copies of the content, which David Wiley calls the 5Rs of openness5. OA textbooks with these permissions give TAMU instructors the right to adapt or edit the book so it is aligned with the course goals and instructional practices.

What is the typical quality of OA textbooks? The quality of open access textbooks varies just like the quality of commercial textbooks varies. Many OA textbooks, like those from Openstax, go through rigorous editorial review just like commercial textbooks. The University Library can help faculty identify quality resources.

Do OA textbooks have supplemental materials or homework systems? Some OA textbooks come with supplemental materials such as slides, homework questions, and instructor manuals, particularly those books available from Openstax. Commercial homework systems can be used with OA textbooks.

Is there research on the educational impacts of OA textbook adoption? There is quite a bit of rigorous research on the educational impact of open educational resources. For an example of this research, take a look at the bibliography available from the Open Education Group6.

Is support available for departments that are interested in exploring alternatives to commercial textbooks in their degree programs? Yes! The University Libraries is interested in partnering with faculty and departments in identifying quality instructional materials for their classes that will improve student access to Texas A&M. We can help identify OA textbooks or library resources that might serve as instructional readings for your courses. We can also help make those resources available to your students in eCampus.

4 https://sparcopen.org/open-education/
5 https://opencontent.org/blog/archives/3221
6 http://openedgroup.org/publications
What if an OA textbook is not available for my course? OA textbooks are available for many large-enrollment, introductory courses at Texas A&M. In some cases, it may be appropriate to create custom reading lists for a course using library resources or author new materials.

Is financial support available to write an OA textbook? Two new grant programs are being organized to support the creation of new OERs. Both the State of Texas and the Department of Education has appropriate funding. If I create an OA textbook or OER, can I copyright my work? Yes, as author, you retain the rights to your work. Authors generally place a Creative Commons license\(^7\) on their work, which describes how others may use the work.

\(^7\) https://creativecommons.org/
Recommendaons based on a revew of the service providd by Disability Services to Faculty of Texas A&M University

Provided by the Academic Affairs Subcommittee of the Faculty Senate.

Prepared by Catharina Laporte, Faculty Senator, College of Liberal Arts

April 2018

In Fall 2017, the Academic Affairs Subcommittee (AAS) of the Faculty Senate was charged with reviewing the assistance and support provided to faculty by Texas A&M Disability Services. Following review of the data and facts presented in this review, this committee provides recommendations.

Background

Texas A&M Disability Services (DS) provides “accommodations coordination, evaluation referral, disability-related information, assistive technology services, sign language interpreting and transcription services for academically related purposes”. The mission of DS is to “interact and collaborate with students, faculty and staff, and provide appropriate referrals to achieve equal access for students with disabilities”.

A disability is defined as “a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. Major life activities include but are not limited to: caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, and working”. The vast majority of students registered with disability services do not have ‘traditional’ physically visible disabilities, but rather ‘invisible’ disabilities like ADHD, learning, mental and health related disabilities.

The AAS met with the director of DS, Ms. Kristi Orr, on 10/16/17. Support for disabled students is mandatory as decree by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and ADA (2008). TAMU students affiliated with DS have increased by more than 47% over the last 4 years (#=1425 in Fall 2013, #=2107 in Fall 2017). Those figures do not include students who do not self-disclose their disability (this figure is unknown but believed to be significant. Students often do not utilize DS because of the stigma attached to disabilities and belief that it will go ‘on record’ or their transcript. Other than adding an ADA statement to the syllabus, many faculty are unaware of the role of DS and how to help or accommodate students with disabilities.

Ms. Orr outlined the faculty (instructor) responsibilities as:

- Implement approved accommodations in a timely manner.
- Contact DS if additional guidance is needed
- Respect student’s desire for confidentiality
• Provide course content in an accessible format (videos, handouts)
• Include the current ADA Syllabus Statement on all syllabi
• Refer students to DS when necessary

After discussions, it was apparent the DS resources and staffing are extremely limited and their location off campus is less than optimal. Currently DS provides:

• a letter or email to the faculty member advising of a student requiring accommodations (normally at the beginning of the semester).
• provide advice and some help if there are Scantron (or equivalent) problems
• provide testing accommodations such as: extended time, reduced distraction testing environment, readers and scribes, and use of a computer and/or specialized hardware/software
• and/or provide logistics support (e.g. sign language interpreters or assistive technology).

However, the AAS determined that faculty and university needs are greater than these rudimentary provisions and directives. These needs basically fall into two categories: procedural and practical issues. Based on these we have made recommendations.

1. Procedural Issues
Currently an instructor is informed when a student requiring accommodations is enrolled in the class; often this is a blanket statement e.g. “there is a deaf student enrolled in your class... please make provisions”. Unless the student has a need for specific accommodations and/or a signed modified attendance agreement (as is the case with the majority of non-visible disability types), the instructor is not given the student’s name (because of respect for confidentiality and privacy issues), nor informed when or if the student drops the class.

Sometimes accommodating a disabled student adds significant work for the instructor: e.g. captioning videos or working through and adhering to a modified attendance agreement. Other times there are concerns about information leaving the confines of the classroom: e.g. PowerPoint slides, recording or videoing lectures and classroom activities, or class notes. Other times there are concerns that class activities (e.g. use of clickers, or team discussions) could be problematic for the student. Given limited information on their actual disability and the identities of students impacted, the faculty member may feel anxious about ‘doing the right thing, and/or make assumptions with a lack of information. We question why these initial interactions between DS and faculty, and faculty and student, cannot be more informative while still respecting privacy.

2. Practical Issues
Currently DS support is modelled almost entirely on old pedagogical methodology: namely lectures and scantron tests. As the university promotes dynamic, active, high impact and transformational pedagogical models with changing methods of assessment, DS’s old methods of support and advice are becoming obsolete. For example, how does a hearing-impaired student read the lips of an instructor teaching ‘in the round’ and moving around in the active classroom, or hear another student speaking in class who does not have a microphone on? Not all communications can be captioned. Or, how does an instructor accommodate modified attendance when participation is a major part of the learning experience?
Furthermore, there are numerous snippets of advice circulating, however no central location that brings this knowledge of disability, teaching and technology together: e.g. ITS now suggests and promotes a video cost-effective captioning company (Rev.com @ $1 per minute); or that the use of pop quizzes, or RATs (Readiness Assessment Tests) can cause problems for some students with mental disabilities.

Another practical concern is the physical location of DS. It is not on main campus and difficult for students and faculty to travel to when requiring assistance.

Lastly, if the university is truly espousing equality for all through universal design, more and better support and advertising of DS’s mission, while dispelling the stigma of disability, is needed. The students who do not contact DS for accommodations support, could be contributing to our ‘D-F-W’ numbers and affecting student success and retention.

3. Recommendations:

Be it resolved that the Faculty Senate of Texas A&M University is aware of growing demands on Disability Services because of increased need and changing pedagogical methods. As such, we are concerned that the current practical and procedural support provided to both faculty and students by Texas A&M Disability Services is less than satisfactory. In response to this concern, the Faculty Senate makes the following recommendations:

1. We recommend a more honest, yet confidential, dialogue between Faculty, DS and Students.
2. Further, some existing processes should be reviewed in effort to improve communications and better inform the instructor of the student’s real needs: for example, a slight hearing impairment is very different from total deafness, and what does a modified attendance agreement look like, and how does it work in actuality (practice)?
3. Much like DS now communicates when a student joins the class, we recommend that DS should report to faculty when the student drops the class; this is in effort to reduce the unnecessary workload and stress/anxiety of the instructor.
4. We recommend that the CTE and ITS work together with DS to assess, recommend and publish strategies that promote different modes of pedagogy and learning in an inclusive, transformational and active learning environment.
5. We recommend that the University review staffing levels and physical location of DS. Currently DS appears to be under-staffed and located off campus in White Creek, and unable to help faculty practically achieve ADA compliance.
6. We recommend that TAMU embark on a campaign to dispel the stigma of disability, and better inform students and faculty --- e.g. the truth is that interactions with DS do not go on your transcript; most disabilities are invisible; and working with faculty and DS will help students navigate and succeed in college.
Melanie,

Vanita Mahajan and I met with you last semester about online Q-drops. At the time your office was working through some other things and thought you would get to it perhaps this semester.

We surveyed many advisors, and the near universal feedback is that they wanted a workflow where they could choose to require students to come in for advising before the Q-drop was approved. The advisors wanted something like this:

Students are required to receive advising before they can Q-drop a course, to ensure they understand all the implications. In an online system, this could be supported by a page where students list the classes they wish to Q-drop, and the reason, and then a workflow where the advisor approves or disapproves the Q-drop after meeting with the student. This might have a flavor of grade changes, or could be like OGSDPSS where it first goes to staff to check specific issues for the student (e.g. they cannot Q-drop all their courses) before it goes to an advisor for approval.

Is now the time to pursue this? The Academic Affairs Committee wants a status report from us.

Hank

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