

UMass Dartmouth Students campaign to add college textbooks to Massachusetts budget

"My name is Elliott Pawlak and I am currently a senior at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth.

I am a student intern with Masspirg and one mission we are working towards is making textbooks more affordable! We recently had an event where volunteers expressed their concerns with textbooks. Our goal is to inspire the community to add open textbooks and 1.5 million dollar textbook budget to the statewide budget at the end of the month!

Attached are the statements from students and we would greatly appreciate any support or publicity to aid our campaign!"

To Whom It May Concern,

Affording textbooks always has caused me a burden since attending college. Several times close family members had to bail me out during my college semesters so I can be prepared for the classes I'm already going in debt to attend. During my off time from school, I work to make some extra cash for textbooks, fees, and extra odds and ends during the semester.

As a college student who works in available time slots in between semesters, I am not breaking the bank. So when emergencies come up that take a big chunk out of your funds, it doesn't leave much left for textbooks which cost no less than 400\$ a semester, if the bookstores being generous. Luckily, there are alternate ways to get your required

textbooks without leaving your pockets empty. Some professors allow open textbooks for class, not only are they free but it allows every student to begin right away with their peers. Sometimes not every student can buy the textbook during the required time and it leaves them out unless they can have a friend in class to let them borrow the material to complete assignments.

Unfortunately, online classes and textbooks with access codes require every student to buy the material or they cannot complete homework assignments. The solution to this issue exists, we just need to implement it.

Very Respectfully,

Jack Corley

University of Massachusetts Dartmouth 22'

College is a great opportunity for anyone and can be extremely beneficial for careers, networking, and social skills. That being said, it comes at a great price. Since 1980, the cost of college tuition has increased at 260% the rate of inflation causing many prospective students to be hesitant to attend the school they desire and sometimes college at all. Aside from the rapidly increasing price of tuition, the price of textbooks has skyrocketed. Prices of textbooks have increased 812% the rate of inflation since 1980 and are vital to a student's success.

The average price of textbooks is between \$200-\$400; and with most students taking 5 classes, this price adds up in the blink of an eye. As a college student, coming across this type of money to afford these books every semester can be stressful, extremely difficult, and ridiculous. Being a full-time student, it is hard to balance schoolwork and a job; which leaves many students unable to afford these books. As a senior, I have had to drop many classes due to textbook prices

and have struggled for 4 years in attempts to afford textbooks, bills, and life in general. We need to grant more Universities support systems to help professors make the switch away from traditional expensive textbooks. Students are losing opportunities for success by dropping classes that they cannot afford. Students need our state to help us achieve academic, social, and personal greatness.

Very Respectfully,

Andrew CaraDonna

University of Massachusetts Dartmouth 20'

I am a Junior in college and one of my biggest financial troubles each semester is how much books and access codes cost. Each semester it ranges anywhere from \$300-\$800 just so I can study and do homework. Half the time Professors say books are required for the course and then by week two and everyone has a book, the get buried and never needed again. And just like that, \$100 dollars, down the drain. But then other times we actually do use the textbook, and if you don't dish out the \$100 plus for it then you fail the course. For some majors, it's even worse. Several of my Nursing student friends spend \$200-\$300 per book!

For college students living on a budget, this causes many problems throughout the semester, especially if you need to pay tuition too. For some, they choose between being able to afford food and necessities vs. book costs. I myself had to do this last semester and my grades noticeably went down close to a full letter grade. But it was either that or as the professors said "if you can't afford the book/access code, drop the class". And that wouldn't do any good because I still need to take the classes anyway and I already spent a lot of money to attend anyway.

I'm not one to ask for free anything, that's just not how the

world works, but for new and very poor college students to have these unnecessary expenses that can be eliminated by utilizing open textbooks. These would be free for both faculty and students; making college economically easier and help bring stability to college student lives.

Very Respectfully,

Carl Hyatt

University of Massachusetts Dartmouth 21'

MASSPIRG

Do you remember the cost of college? Since 1980 the cost of college tuition has increased at 260% the rate of inflation causing many prospective students to be hesitant to attend the school they desire and sometimes college at all. However, there is another fee which is rising even faster. The price of textbooks has increased 812% the rate of inflation since 1980 and is vital to a student's success. The average price of textbooks is between \$200-\$400; combining to generate an average cost of \$1000-\$1200 a semester for a full course load.

Personally, I have spent about \$8,000 on textbooks to achieve graduating with a bachelor's degree. So how can we fix this? We need to grant more Universities support systems to help professors make the switch away from traditional expensive textbooks. Students are losing opportunities for success by dropping classes that they cannot afford. The solution exists, we just need to apply it.

Very Respectfully,

Elliott Pawlak

University of Massachusetts Dartmouth 20'

MASSPIRG

We all know that the average cost of college is currently at a

very high amount with most being in the tens of thousands for most states. However, one of the hidden costs that is less well known to incoming students is the cost of textbooks.

Coming from a low-income family I had to rely on financial aid and scholarships to pay for most of my college bills but during my first semester, it didn't cover the price of books which was around 700\$, a price that I didn't know I would have to pay until the first day of the semester. I almost couldn't afford these books and without them, I would have failed my first semester.

If textbooks were priced cheaper or have been distributed in an open source way my first interaction with college would have been more focused on my studies and education rather than worrying about how I am going to pay for books that without I would have no way of succeeding. Students shouldn't have all these costs when there are methods and ways of providing the same resources without the insane costs.

Very Respectfully,

Nathan Silveira

University of Massachusetts Dartmouth 20'

MASSPIRG

Do you know that some students only rely on their financial aid to pay for their college expenses and they have minimal to no money in their pockets to pay for other stuff in college? By other stuff I mean textbooks.

According to NBC's review of Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data, textbook prices have risen over three times the rate of inflation from January 1977 to June 2015, a 1,041 percent increase. When I first came to college, I didn't expect to pay around 350 dollars for textbooks.

All my classes needed me to have textbooks and they all cost

me a ridiculous amount of money. One of the solutions I think that might help faculty and students is that to provide them with a source of free textbooks or to provide them a way of getting free textbooks to the university they go to. I think that providing students with free textbooks will encourage students to go to the university they want to without thinking about the burden of spending money out of their pockets.

Muhammad J Shaikh
Computer Science Major
University of Massachusetts

I am drowning in thousands of dollars in debt, and I'm only 21 years old. I cannot continue to pay for my textbooks on top of my college tuition, even with financial aid and a part-time job, I struggle to afford my education. After we pay our university, we should not have to pay out of pocket for resources to our education which we are already financing. Students are forced to drop classes, take fewer classes and as a result, stay in school longer, and use money intended for personal necessities on textbooks.

The solution to this situation that we were forced into is open textbooks, which would be free and easy to access. Students would have more academic and financial freedoms with this system in place. Not only would we be able to access information and knowledge with ease, but our anxieties could rest knowing we are in a comfortable place financially.

Professors should be put in a position to use these programs, or at least be given the choice. Students should be able to gather information from textbooks without worrying about the financial burden it is causing. We need policies that make these goals possible, and with that we would see an improvement in students academically, financially and mentally. The college students of today are burdened with the

rising cost of textbooks, we know the solution and will demand it be implemented.

Very Respectfully,

Lexi Angus

University of Massachusetts Dartmouth 20'

MASSPIRG

When I first came to UMASS Dartmouth as a freshman, I was not worried about being financially unstable, but that changed when I realized how expensive textbooks are.

My first semester here I spent over 200 dollars on textbooks required for my class. I was uneducated on the cost of textbooks and how much of an impact it would have on me. I became unable to pay for things that I needed because I had purchased books for my classes. I no longer had the option to buy items outside of necessities because my spending money went into my academics.

I very clearly saw the impact that expensive textbooks had on me and my fellow classmates. Some students had to pick only a few classes instead of being a fulltime student because they couldn't afford the books. Some students purposely took classes that had cheap or no textbook requirements even if the class did not benefit their passions and goals. Students were then separated into classes where you could either afford textbooks or you couldn't, and unfortunately, a lot of students are forced to change their schedule and their career goals in order to afford the resources needed.

Students are suffering academically and financially and missing opportunities within their university. Education shouldn't make students unable to afford to go to school, which is what's happening. If we had open textbooks we would have more access to knowledge and students would be able to focus on their studies rather than focusing on their financial

situation.

Education should be expression and free of a financial burden. Textbooks should be little to no money, if not free for students. Classes that use open textbooks have better student participation because the students are comfortable knowing they can afford their books. We have the solution to our problem, we need to continue fighting the rising cost of textbooks to make education manageable for college students.

Very Respectfully,

Mason Baacke

University of Massachusetts Dartmouth 20'

Free or reduced-priced textbooks would take immense stress off of students and faculty. As a student myself, I often find myself strapped to pay for books, even with a part-time job. E

very semester I end up paying hundreds of dollars for books that I only use for a few months. This is after paying my own tuition, tens of thousands of dollars. The amount of money that is expected from students is nearly impossible. Not only do we not just magically have it, loans are often denied without a co-signer. When they are approved, they have ridiculous interest rates that have to start being paid back just six months after graduating, when most people are still searching for a well-paying first job.

Taking the heavy price of textbooks off of students shoulders would leave well-deserved money in their pockets, and take stress off of those who don't have any extra money at all. Working a part-time job as a student barely gives you enough money to pay for gas and groceries, and defiantly does not give you enough money to dump on books. I have often found that people will even drop a class if the professor is making students buy multiple expensive books.

Students can't take classes that they need for their major or that they are interested because they can't afford the books. It is just not possible for students to produce this kind of money. Not only do students have to pay for books, they have to pay for pens, pencils, paper, folders, notebooks, calculators, binders, erasers, pencil sharpeners, and even more. By supplying students with textbooks, students would be happier and relieved. It is a necessity and an issue that needs to be addressed.

Very Respectfully,
Sara Russo
Umass Dartmouth '21

While the textbook dilemma does not seem like an extremely relevant issue and often becomes subject to oversight within the political arena: today I am writing to you with the hopes you read my testimonial and come to understand the importance of being able to access the very tool I need to gain the abundance of knowledge I am expected to obtain no matter if my financial situation interferes.

Frankly, this issue has reached new heights – as the price of a college education rises the growing need for students to buy books that coordinate with their classes rises. This competitive environment aids the wealthy or well off and completely ostracizes those that are money conscious or within a level of poverty and do not have the opportunity to spend money on such luxuries.

This is leading to a potential complete educational divide and for the future success of our nation and the present students who will become and run this nation it is imperative for the educational system to not silence or exclude individuals that have the potential to change the world due to the flimsy and unequal qualification – access to money.

By you helping us, college students, fight this issue you will be decreasing a feeling of anxiety and fear almost all students feel when professors send out textbook needs. Your presence matters and we greatly appreciate anything and everything you can do to help us.

Very Respectfully,

Lauren Talbot

University of Massachusetts Dartmouth 22'

As a third-year college student from a single-parent home, affording my education has been a feat to say the least. I currently have a past due balance of over \$11,000 at my school, but I'm still going to classes and trying to keep a positive mindset until they send me home next week, as we approach the final deadline of many.

This \$2.5M textbook fund- and frankly, any fund- would benefit me tremendously. There are so many internal and external costs of this tertiary education- not to mention my student loans- that add extra stress to a process that is supposed to be encouraging and full of hope for creating a better future for myself.

I am currently a junior who is re-taking my sophomore year subjects because the fear of not being able to afford my education moving forward riddled me with anxiety and exhausting- leading to failure. Still, I manage to rise above and put my best foot forward. I was so happy to hear about the possibility of a fund dedicated to making college for affordable for an engineering student like me who purchases online subscriptions, lab-books, and textbooks every semester.

I know that my peers and I would benefit greatly from this and I hope you can pass this bill so that I can continue on my path to becoming a productive member of society, equipped to solve the myriad of problems that our government and

corporations have caused and burned us with. As a woman and person of color, the obstacles I face on a daily basis in basic and complex everyday matters is saddening.

The issues in our society trickling down from decisions made in the legislative, judiciary and executive branches of our government are beyond me. And education is the only vehicle through which my generation can fix our dying earth, society, morals and country. I hope you are touched by my story, my words and my plight. Thank you for your time and your efforts so far.

Sincerely,

A young impressionable college Junior, looking for leaders to represent me

Kiersten Kerr

University of Massachusetts Dartmouth 21'

MASSPIRG STUDENTS

Education has become an integral part of our society and is arguably the greatest steppingstone towards success and contribution back into our community, but at what cost?

College students are sacrificing both their physical and mental health to simply be able to afford their course materials. Global education company Cengage, which many students are all too familiar with (I've paid upwards of \$500 to them for my textbooks), conducted a survey and found 43% of college students have skipped meals just to pay for required materials for their classes, and 31% are taking less courses to lessen the burden.

This also has an effect on which classes we take, which in turn affects our futures. Students that aren't able to afford textbooks at all end up failing their classes, no matter their capability or work ethic. It is simply unfair that students from lower to middle-income backgrounds are limited from

reaching their fullest potential because overpriced textbooks are holding them back.

I'd like the state of Massachusetts to view this \$1.5-million-dollar bill towards the funding of freely accessible learning materials as not just a benefit for the students of today, but rather as an investment into the leaders of tomorrow. A study done by Georgetown University found that 35% of jobs in the market require at least a bachelor's degree, and another 30% require at least an associate's (citation), making the majority of jobs available right now unobtainable for students who are failing out due to the lack of affordability of textbooks and materials.

Essentially we're missing out on witnessing some of the great minds of this young generation over a few thousand dollars, which is minuscule in comparison to the budget of our government. \$1.5 million spread across the state and across majors would literally change lives, allowing for students to graduate from college healthier, happier, and able to achieve their dreams.

As a sophomore at UMass Dartmouth, I've faced many of the similar issues college students across the nation have gone through for decades. The price of textbooks for my classes have only increased stress, as I need to take more hours at my part-time job to be able to afford them, which limits the amount of time I have to study and holding me back from my full capability. I know I'm not the only one, as nearly all of my friends face the same exact issue. This raises a final question: are the legislators of this great state of Massachusetts willing to invest in and lay the foundation for the future of the United States, or let our potential go to waste?

-Anonymous