TOPIC: Maryland Open Source Textbook Initiative

COMMITTEE: Education Policy and Student Life

DATE OF COMMITTEE MEETING: October 15, 2013

SUMMARY: The Student Council of the University System of Maryland (USMSC) has come to USM with a proposal to launch activities related to the adoption of open source textbooks. USM agrees with USMSC's premise that pursuit of these options shows promise to significantly reduce students' cost of attendance. We also recognize, as does USMSC, that text choice for any course is the prerogative of the faculty.

We have agreed to pursue USMSC's suggestion that we begin conversations about the resource infrastructure that would be required to support a repository of open source texts that could be made available to faculty for use in their courses. Among other existing repository programs, we will be assessing the University of Minnesota open textbook catalogue.

USMSC will engage in a pilot project aimed at encouraging volunteer faculty to evaluate some available open source texts and consider using such texts in at least one course in the Spring 2014 semester. Details of this pilot project will be shared.

ALTERNATIVE(S): This is an information item only.

FISCAL IMPACT: This is an information item; there is no fiscal impact associated with this item.

CHANCELLOR'S RECOMMENDATION: This is an information item only.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: DATE:

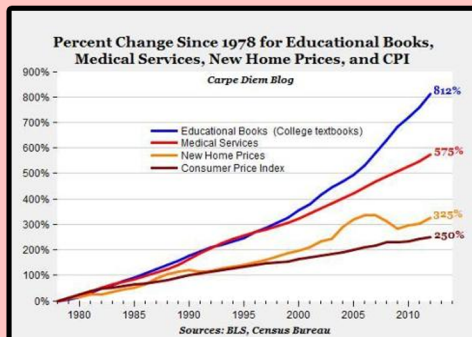BOARD ACTION: DATE:

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USMSC
UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF MARYLAND
STUDENT COUNCIL

MARYLAND OPEN SOURCE TEXTBOOKS

THE PROBLEM

Textbook costs have become an enormous barrier to college affordability. College students in Maryland have enjoyed the smallest increase in tuition over the past seven years compared to any other state, but have not been spared from the increasing financial burden of textbooks.

■ The price of college textbooks has **increased 812% since 1978,** faster than tuition, health care costs and housing prices, all of which have risen faster than inflation.[1]

Percent Change Since 1978 for Educational Books, Medical Services, New Home Prices, and CPI
Carpe Diem Blog

Educational Books (College textbooks) — 812%
Medical Services — 575%
New Home Prices — 325%
Consumer Price Index — 250%

Sources: BLS, Census Bureau

■ *College Board* estimates that the **average student spends $1,200** per year on textbooks and materials.[2]

■ A survey conducted by the *U.S. Public Interest Research Group* found that **high textbook costs prevented 7 out of 10 students from purchasing an assigned book.**[3]

■ *Student Monitor* reports that **students buy only 77 percent of all required textbooks.**[4]

OPEN SOURCE TEXTBOOKS

Open Source Textbooks are published under an open copyright license and made freely available to the public. Open source textbooks not only have the potential to save students millions of dollars per year, but also empower faculty with digital tools that traditional textbooks lack.

■ A Florida Legislative Task Force found *"compelling academic reasons to use open access textbooks such as: improved quality; flexibility and access to resources; interactive and active learning experiences; currency of textbook information; broader professional collaboration; and the use of teaching and learning technology to enhance educational experiences."* [5]

■ Open Source initiatives are underway in states and universities around the country *(Washington, Ohio, California, Texas, Florida)*

THE MOST INITIATIVE

The *Maryland Open Source Textbook (MOST) Initiative* is a student driven effort to promote the adoption and development of open source textbooks within Maryland. With the collaborative effort of faculty, staff, administrators, and experts in open source, USMSC will launch the MOST Initiative in three parts:

1. A Fall 2013 workshop on exploring open source textbooks, tailored for interested faculty of high-enrollment, entry level courses. Faculty will learn more about the features and benefits of open source textbooks, how to engage with the technology, and assess the feasibility of adopting the open source text.

2. A Spring 2014 pilot program that will gather and analyze data in order to evaluate textbook costs, explore how students are using their textbooks, and gauge faculty willingness to move to open source textbooks.

3. A state-wide workgroup to evaluate the feasibility of a state-supported open source program.

1. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/01/04/college-textbook-prices-increase_n_2409153.html
2. https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/pay-for-college/college-costs/quick-guide-college-costs
3. http://www.studentpirgs.org/news/ap/high-prices-prevent-college-students-buying-assigned-textbooks
4. http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2012/08/28/how-your-textbook-dollars-are-divvied-up?page=2
5. http://www.openaccesstextbooks.org/pdf/OATTF_Final_Report_All_sections.pdf

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