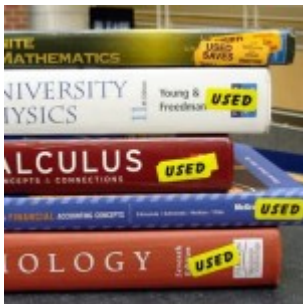


Expense of textbooks has students looking for options

By Laurel Rosenhall, Sacramento Bee

When Elizabeth Walz ran for student government last year, she built her campaign around an issue she knew would resonate with her peers at UC Davis: the cost of textbooks.



For days, she stood in the quad polling students on their textbook-buying habits.

“A lot of the responses were, ‘I don’t even buy my textbooks – they’re too expensive. I only buy the ones I absolutely need. I go to the library, I use the ones on reserve,’ ” Walz said.

Like college tuition itself, the cost of textbooks has been soaring. From 1990 to 2009, textbook prices rose four times faster than inflation, according to the Student Public Interest Research Group. Today, the average college student spends \$900 a year on textbooks.

Students can save some money buying used books or electronic versions, and many campus bookstores have started renting popular texts. But a new option is emerging: open-source textbooks that can be read for free online, or printed at relatively low cost.

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