

How Much Are UConn Students Spending on Textbooks?

Student Survey Results of Textbook Prices

Erin McConnell

Affordable Textbooks Campaign

Connecticut Public Interest Research Group Students

University of Connecticut, Storrs

Table of Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	3
<i>Key Findings</i>	
<i>Money Spent on Textbooks</i>	6
<i>Textbooks Purchased but Never Used</i>	7
<i>Textbook Costs Covered by Financial Aid</i>	8
<i>Student Comments</i>	9
<i>History of OER</i>	10
<i>Call to Action</i>	11
<i>Thank You's</i>	11
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	12

Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to report the findings from UConnPIRG's Affordable Textbooks Campaign Survey from Spring 2017. UConnPIRG's Affordable Textbooks Campaign conducted a UConn-wide student survey asking students how textbook prices affect them.

Methodology

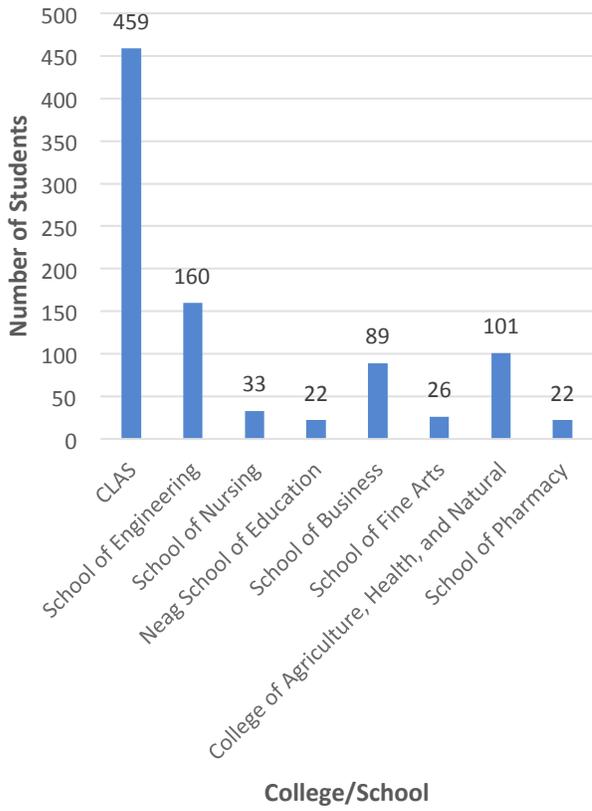
The survey was assessed on a Google form accessible by any UConn email with access to the link. We posted the survey on the UConn Buy or Sell Tickets page on Facebook and the UConn Daily Digest. We tabled at several dining halls throughout the semester asking students to fill out our quick survey. By completing the survey, students were automatically entered to win a door-prize of one of two \$25 Amazon gift cards. Questions were created by the Affordable Textbooks Campaign team in partnership with the Open Educational Resources Librarian from the UConn Library, Kathy Labadorf.

Who took the survey

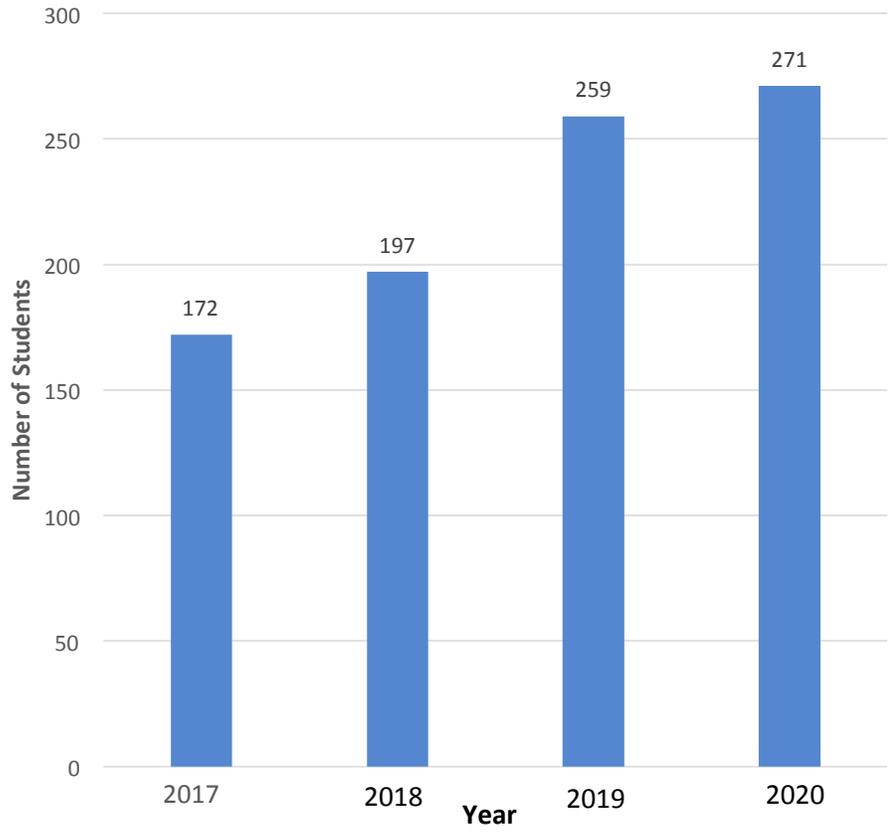
The data collected comes from 912 surveys. About 60% of students who took the survey were freshman and sophomores at the time of the survey.

College/School	Enrollment Percentage at UConn
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS)	43%
School of Engineering	19.7%
School of Nursing	2.5%
Neag School of Education	1.6%
School of Business	13.1%
School of Fine Arts	10.4%
College of Agriculture, Health, and Natural Resources	9.6%
School of Pharmacy	0.1%

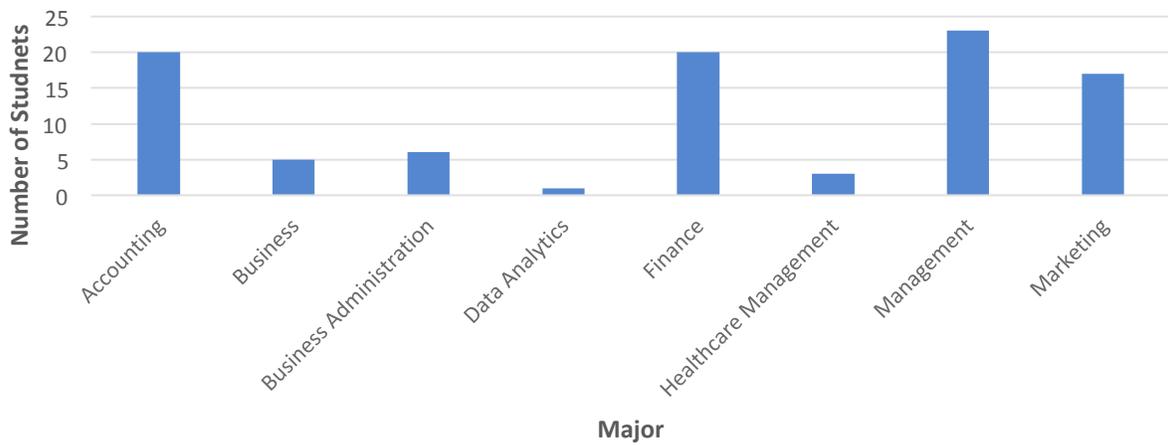
Breakdown by College/School



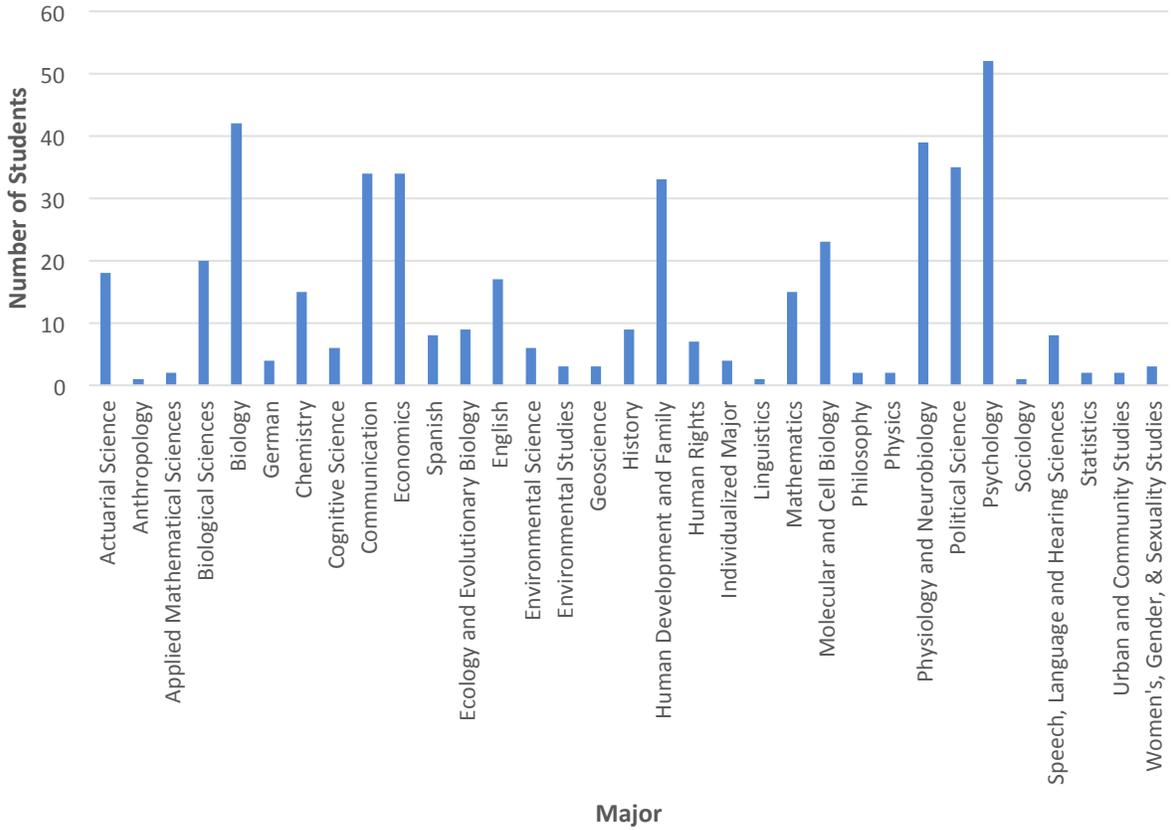
Breakdown by Graduation Year



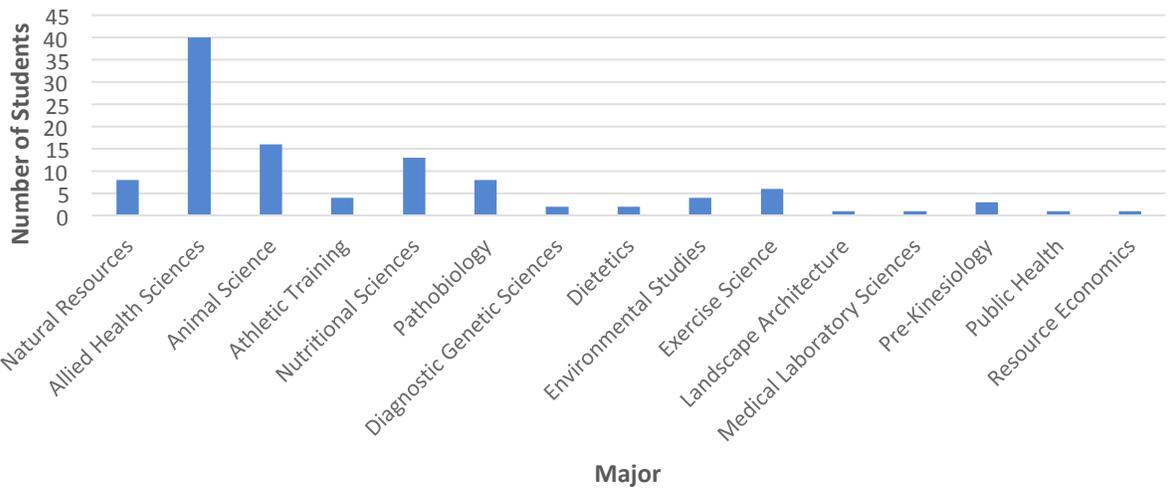
School of Business Breakdown



CLAS Breakdown



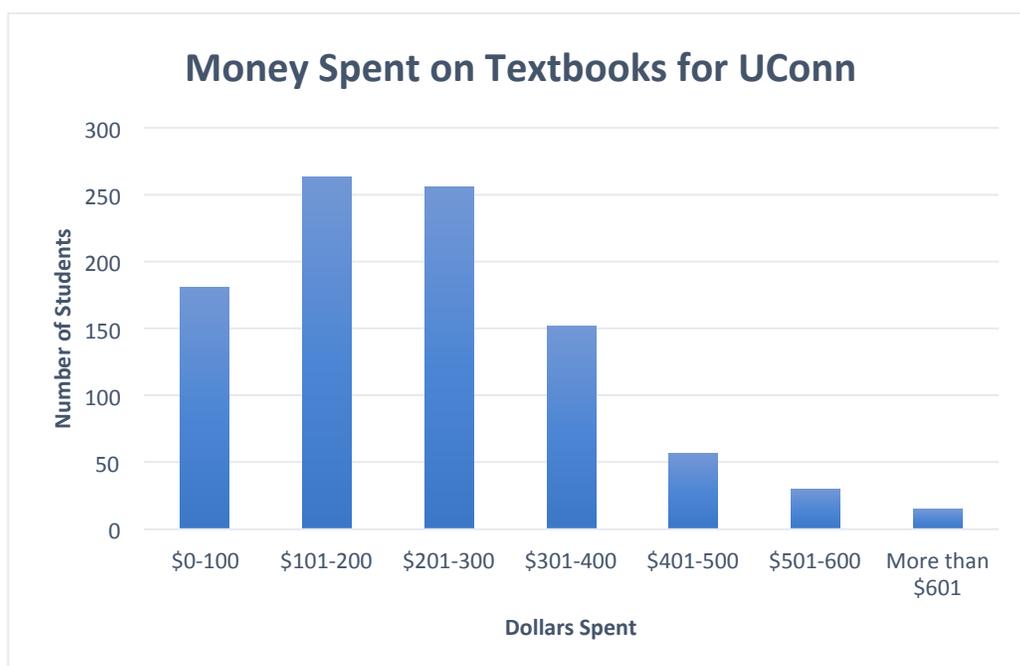
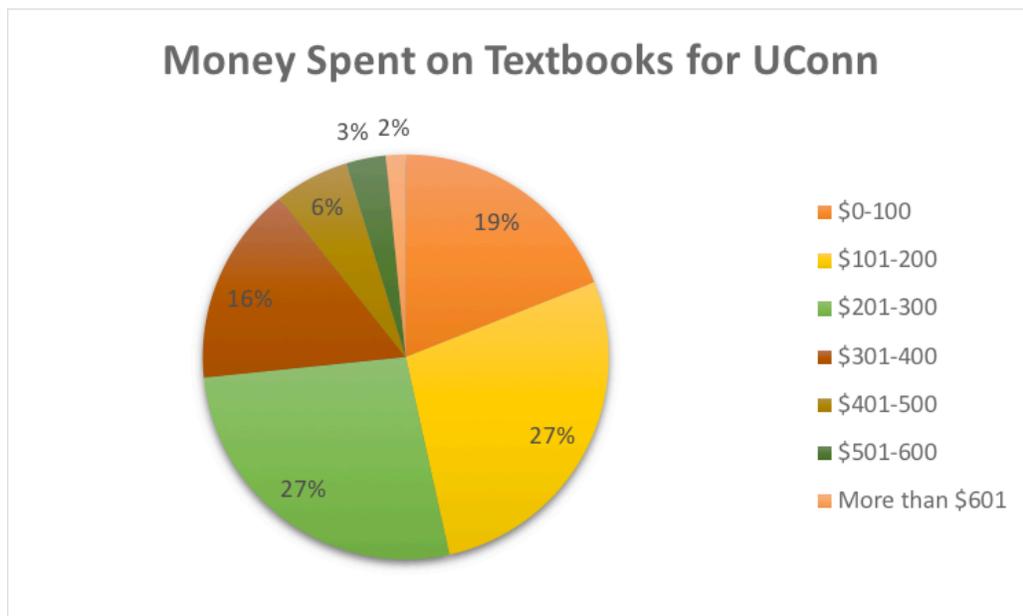
College of Agriculture, Health, and Natural Resources Breakdown



Key Findings

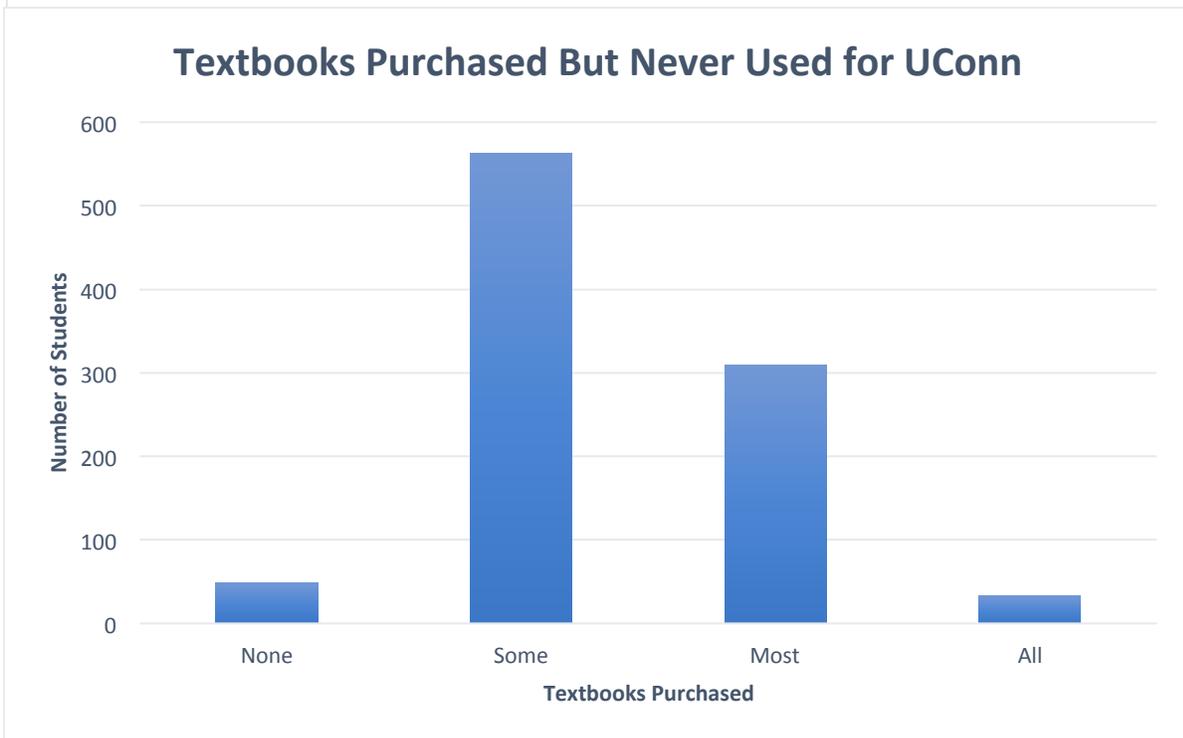
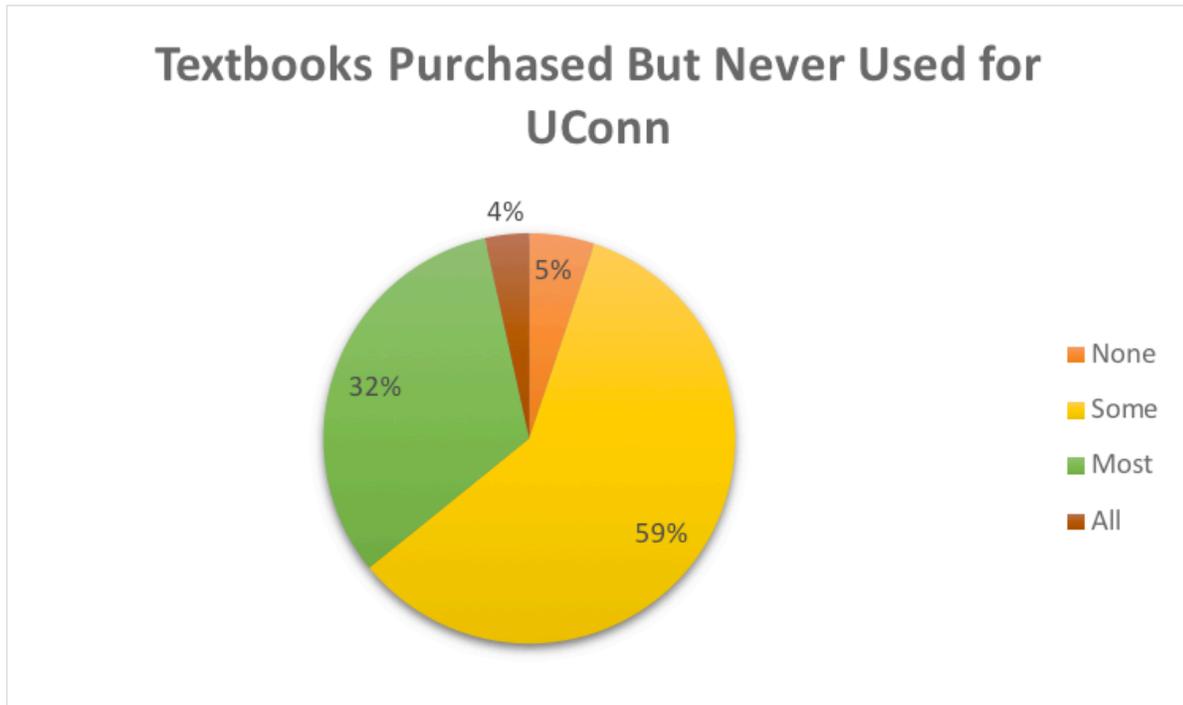
Money Spent on Textbooks

Just over 50% of students reported that they have spent between \$101 and \$300 on textbooks here at UConn during the Spring 2017 semester while 25% have spent between \$301 and \$600. The lowest spending on textbooks was from the School of Business, while the College of Agriculture, Health, and Natural Resources usually spent between \$201 and \$400.



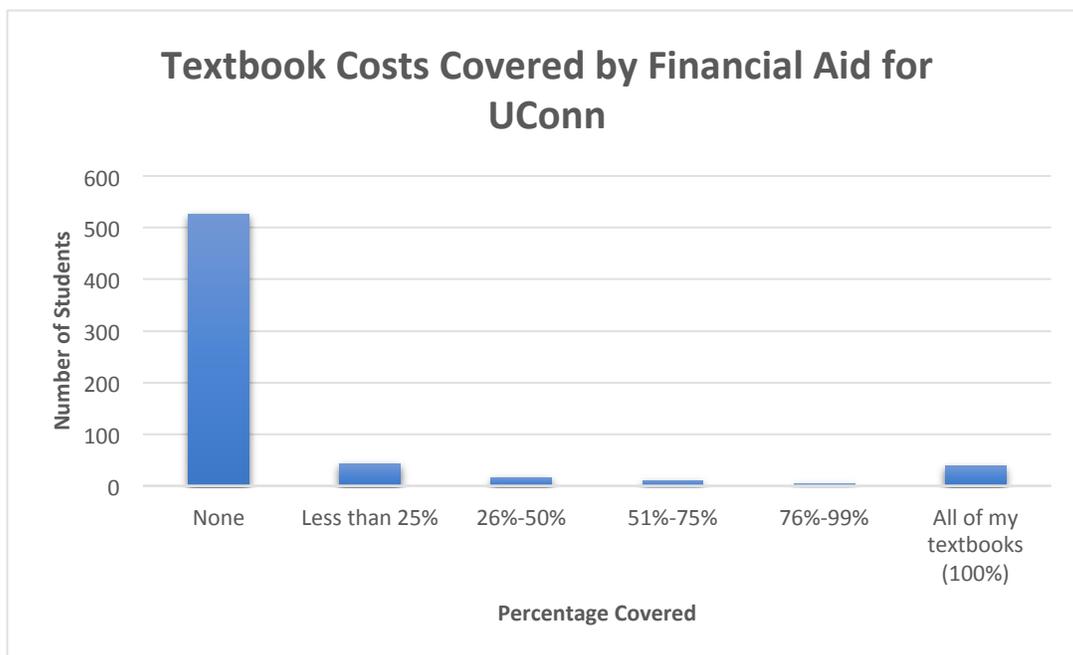
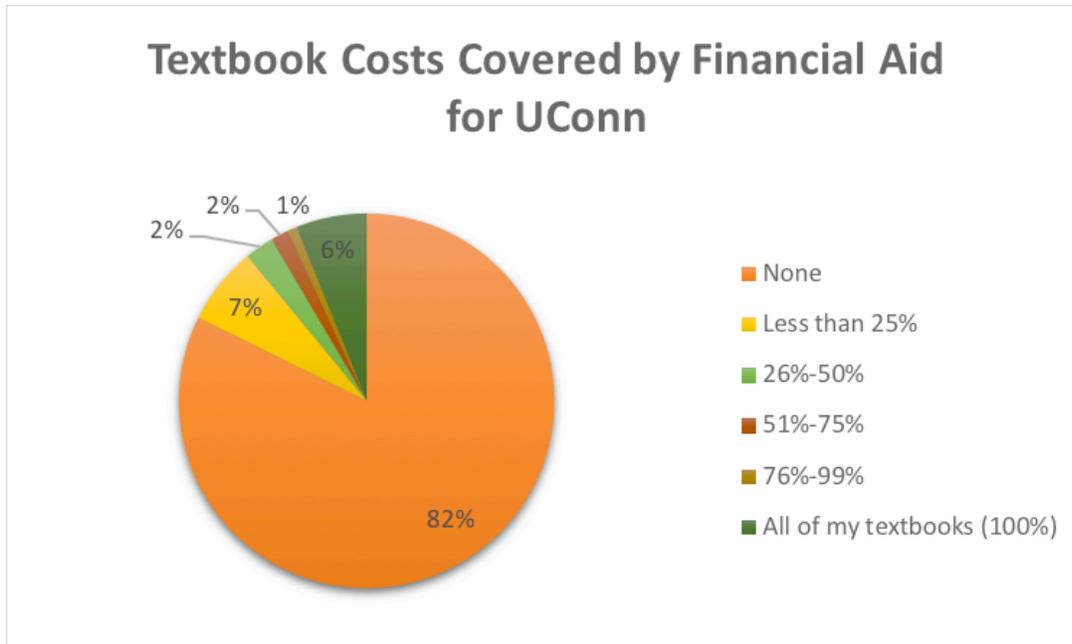
Textbooks Purchased but Never Used

Just over 90% of students reported that they have bought textbooks here at UConn and never used some or most of them.



Textbook Costs Covered by Financial Aid

82% of students reported that none of their textbook costs are covered by financial aid here at UConn: the full burden of the cost of textbooks is falling entirely on the student. With Open Educational Resources, this burden will go down immensely, and students won't feel as though they're spending half their bank account on textbooks.



While many students choose to not buy textbooks at all and/or drop courses that require to purchase a textbook, about 55% of students find textbooks to be the most beneficial study aid. The cost of textbooks has caused about 55% of students to not purchase a book at all even though it was reported to be one of the best study aids. Even if students find the textbook to be the most beneficial resource, the cost still drives many students not to buy the book. This could have a negative impact on their grades. **About 25% of students either drop, withdraw, or choose not to enroll in certain classes due to textbook costs.**

Student Comments

“We definitely need more open source textbooks – the cost of textbooks is ridiculous and the open source books I’ve used are just as good.” – Annie R., Biology ‘19

“Would love to see teachers use this Open Education Resource because it would save me so much, help me learn, and earn a higher grade.” – Tori M., Allied Health Sciences ‘19

“Expensive textbooks make it very difficult for students to succeed. Often times, I am worried that I will not be able to afford my books, and if it weren’t for financial aid, I wouldn’t be able to buy any at all.” – Kaitlin G., Communications ‘18

“Professors need to at least make clear how valuable a textbook is, because many classes, I’ve done fine with only reading maybe two chapters in a \$200 textbook (which is frustrating).” – Emily G., PNB & Anthropology ‘18

“The cost of textbooks inhibits a student’s ability to learn. A true educational institution would do everything in their power to make learning affordable and a reasonable cost.” – Chrissy L., Nursing ‘17

“It would be very helpful to get more professors on board with this, because many of them are republishing their textbooks for a new edition, so it’s difficult to get cheaper versions of the books.” - Konatsu S., ‘18

History of OER at UConn

In 2015, UConnPIRG partnered with the Undergraduate Student Government (USG) in an effort to promote the use of Open Textbooks at UConn. A task force of students, administrators, academic staff, faculty, and librarians formed to explore Affordable Textbooks. Because of this strong advocacy, state legislation supporting open textbooks passed and the University Senate passed a resolution in support of the Open Textbook Initiative. Additionally, this task force received an 18-month grant of nearly \$100,000 to introduce open textbooks to UConn. The library at the university led an effort to survey faculty about open textbook use, created online workshops for faculty development, and adapted an existing general chemistry textbook. Since then, the OER initiative has impacted several thousand students to increase affordability of textbooks. The OpenStax Chemistry textbook, revised by Dr. Edward Neth from UConn's Chemistry department, has been used by more than 2,000 students and has saved them over \$200,000. Many faculty members have redesigned their courses to make materials either no cost or more affordable. In September 2016, the UConn Co-op gifted the library at UConn \$300,000 for the future development of OER on campus. Grants have been awarded to 15 faculty members thus far.

History of OER Nationally

As for national OER work, the Student PIRGs around the country, for more than a decade, have exposed publishing giants who jack up textbook prices year after year, recommended cost-saving textbook options to students like used books and rentals, and advocated for open textbooks as the answer to the problem of ever-rising textbook costs. Over 3,000 professors across the country have signed a statement in support for open textbook adoption. Many colleges and universities have launched their own campus programs for encouraging open textbook use, such as UMass Amherst and Rutgers University. The Student PIRGs have also published more than 14 reports discussing the problems with traditional textbooks and how open textbooks are the solution. Over 38,000 students and 137 colleges use OER, with savings to students adding up to \$3.8 million.

Call to Action

Our survey shows that UConn students are being forced to make hard choices in their pursuit of an A. If more than a quarter of our peers are dropping courses due to textbooks costs, it becomes even harder for them to succeed in class. We found that students in the College of Agriculture, Health, and Natural Resources and the CLAS are shouldering a huge cost. Given that a huge number of students say that they are not actually using their entire textbook, it is clear that existing materials are not meeting student needs. We are calling on all faculty – but particularly these expensive schools – to turn to open textbooks as an alternative.

Thank You's

UConnPIRG's Affordable Textbooks Campaign wants to thank all professors who are already on the OER Initiative. These professors are:

- Dr. Alexia Smith, Anthropology
- Emma Bojinova, Agriculture and Resource Economics
- Astronomers Kate Whitaker, Jonathan Trump, and Cara Battersby, Physics
- Lois Lake Church, English (UConn Waterbury)
- Shane Peterson, German Film Studies
- Owen Svalestad and Derek Johnson, Economics
- Drew Jaramillo and Amit Savkar, Pre-Calculus
- Dr. Kimberli Treadwell, Psychology (UConn Waterbury)
- Dr. Edward Neth, Chemistry
- Joseph DePasquale, Chemistry
- Dr. Ellen Carillo, English (UConn Waterbury)
- Doctoral candidate Caner Hazar, Sociology
- Ambar Sengupta and Alexander Teplyaev, Mathematics
- Adam Giambone and Erin Rizzie, Mathematics
- Jamie Vaudrey, Marine Sciences (UConn Avery Point)
- Dr. Challa Kumar, Chemistry
- Dr. David Miller, retired
- Dr. Nina Stein, Chemistry (UConn Waterbury)
- Dr. Jason Oliver Change, History and Asian American Studies

Lastly, we want to thank the UConn Library and the Open Textbook Initiative Team, both of which have been big advocates for and a big help with the work UConnPIRG is doing on its Affordable Textbooks Campaign.

Acknowledgements

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

To cite, you may attribute authorship to ConnPIRG Students (2018).

The Connecticut Student Public Interest Research Group (ConnPIRG) is an independent statewide student organization that works on issues like environmental protection, consumer protection, and hunger and homelessness. We have three fee-funded chapters in Connecticut, UConn Storrs, UConn Hartford, and Trinity College. For more than 40 years, our students and staff have been making a real difference in people's lives and winning concrete changes to build a better world. One of our campaigns continues to be the Affordable Textbooks campaign where we have had success both at the local level and the national level.

The team involved in writing this report and collecting surveys are:

- The Affordable Textbooks Campaign 2018
 - Kharl Reynado, campaign coordinator
 - Casey Tortal, campaign member
 - Erin McConnell, report coordinator
 - Deevena Annavarjula, presentation coordinator
 - Morgan Rhinehart, visual aids coordinator
- The Affordable Textbooks Campaign 2017
 - Samantha Rojas
 - Vasilika Papas
 - Arif Prabawa
 - Saman Azimi
- Kathy Labadorf, the Open Educational Resources Librarian from the UConn Library
- Kaitlyn Vitez, the Higher Education Advocate for U.S. PIRG
- Arielle Mizrahi, the campus organizer at UConn Storrs