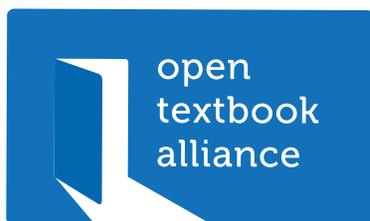


STUDENT GOVERNMENT TOOLKIT



Making Textbooks Affordable



Acknowledgements: Thank you to Ethan Senack of the Student PIRGs and Nicole Allen of the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition for their review and comments.

The Open Textbook Alliance is a nationwide coalition of student government leaders who are working to bring open textbooks to college campuses.

www.OpenTextbookAlliance.org

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Introduction

The high cost of textbooks has become a serious obstacle to the affordability of a college education. The textbook market is rigged so that publishers can generate huge profits and engage in bad practices at students' expense.

Fortunately, we have solutions to this problem, most notably in the form of “open textbooks”—high-quality books that are available online for free or for a very low cost in print. With solutions like these, we can break the publishers' stranglehold on the market and help make higher education more accessible to everyone.

These changes won't happen on their own—students will need to work for them. This toolkit provides the resources that student governments and state student associations need in order to bring open textbooks to their campuses and save students money.

More at [OpenTextbookAlliance.org](https://www.opentextbookalliance.org)

For additional resources or help with specific questions, please contact us at info@opentextbookalliance.org or online at [www.OpenTextbookAlliance.org](https://www.opentextbookalliance.org).

The problem

Any student who has ever paid \$200 for a textbook can vouch that the price of textbooks is out of control.

The price of textbooks has nearly doubled over the past decade, rising at more than three times the rate of inflation, according to the Consumer Price Index.

For the many students and families who are already struggling to afford tuition, this out-of-pocket expense can be a huge burden. Many students end up taking on additional loans or credit card debt or working longer hours just to pay for their books. Others compromise their own educational experience by opting not to buy books at all—one recent survey by the Student PIRGs found that 65 percent of students have decided at some time not to buy or rent an assigned textbook because the price was too high.



BY THE NUMBERS

- The cost of textbooks now equals **13 percent of tuition** at a typical four-year public college and **40 percent of tuition** at a community college.¹
- Textbook prices **rose 88 percent** between 2006 and 2016, about three times the rate of inflation.²
- **Sixty-five percent** of students report having skipped out on buying or renting one or more textbooks because the cost was too high.³
- Fourteen percent of students report they occasionally or frequently **drop a course** because the textbook cost is too high.⁴

“Textbook prices rose 88 percent between 2006 and 2016, about three times the rate of inflation.”

1. “Average Estimated Undergraduate Budgets, 2014-15,” The College Board, 2014, <http://trends.collegeboard.org/college-pricing/figures-tables/average-estimated-undergraduate-budgets-2014-15>.
2. “Students Have Greater Access to Textbook Information,” U.S. Government Accountability Office, June 6, 2013, <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-13-368>.
3. “Fixing the Broken Textbook Market,” Student PIRGs, January 27, 2014, <http://www.uspirg.org/sites/pirg/files/reports/NATIONAL%20Fixing%20Broken%20Textbooks%20Report1.pdf>.
4. “2012 Florida Student Textbook Survey,” Florida Virtual Campus, 2012, http://www.openaccesstextbooks.org/%5Cpdf%5C2012_Florida_Student_Textbook_Survey.pdf.

Publishing tactics drive up prices

It's no accident that textbooks are so expensive. Publishers use a variety of tactics to drive up prices, allowing them to rake in huge profits at the expense of students.

- **New Editions:** Publishers intentionally revise textbooks every 3-4 years, often with only minor changes, to force incoming students to buy brand new books and to make older copies impossible to sell back.
- **Costly Bundles:** Publishers frequently package books with extra (often unnecessary) items like passcodes that inflate costs and expire, making the books impossible to sell back.
- **Restrictive e-Books:** E-textbooks could offer many benefits, but publishers often add needless restrictions on access and printing that make them harder to use. In addition, e-textbooks typically expire after a semester and can't be resold.

“Students are a captive market that must buy the assigned book in order to succeed in the class, no matter how much it costs.”



A broken marketplace

Publishers have been able to keep their prices high for so long because the textbook industry is missing the usual checks and balances that protect consumers—the marketplace is broken.

In a normal free market, consumers use their purchasing power to keep prices in check. In that situation, if one book became too expensive, consumers could seek out a less expensive alternative. Publishers would need to keep their prices low in order to compete.

With textbooks, that market control is broken. The person who chooses the textbook—the faculty member—isn't the one who ends up paying for the product, and so they naturally are not as sensitive to price when choosing books for their classes. Meanwhile, the consumers—the students—don't have the option to seek out a different book—they are a captive market that must buy the assigned book in order to succeed in the class, no matter how much it costs. This system has allowed publishers to raise their prices without fear of marketplace repercussions.

The textbook market is also highly consolidated, with just five huge publishers controlling 80 percent of the market, reducing competition even further.

Saving money on textbooks

College campuses have tried countless ways to lower the cost of textbooks, from used book markets to textbook rental programs to bookswap websites.

These are great programs that have saved students a lot of money, but they are all short-term fixes. The price of a used book or a book rental is ultimately tied to the price of a new book—and those prices continue to rise at several times the rate of inflation. To

really make textbooks affordable, we need to tackle the central problem, which is the high price of new textbooks.

In the next section of this toolkit, we'll discuss long-term solutions to high textbooks prices. However, those solutions might take a little while to achieve. In the meantime, you might decide to implement other programs to help students save money in the short term.

Short-term cost-saving measures

USED BOOKS: Whether you shop in the campus store, shop online, or swap books with other students, buying used books can save you 25-50%. If you sell them back at the end of the semester, the savings can add up to even more. You can promote the used book market by organizing an on-campus book sale or setting up a bookswap website.

RENTAL PROGRAMS: Rental websites offer the option to rent books through the mail, and many campus bookstores offer rentals, too. The average savings amounts to about 60%. You can work with the bookstore to expand their rental program or promote online rentals.

E-TEXTBOOKS: Major publishers offer digital e-textbooks, which can save students 40-50%. However, their e-books usually come with restrictions on access and printing, an end-of-semester expiration date, and zero buyback value. For classes where e-books are an option, you can work with professors to let students know that e-books are available.

LIBRARY RESERVES: Many libraries now stock copies of popular textbooks and allow students to check them out for short periods of time. You can publicize this option to students and also encourage the library to increase the number of reserve copies they stock for popular books.

The solution: open textbooks

A new model for educational materials has emerged called “open educational resources” (OER), which uses today’s technology to make textbooks and other learning materials free and shareable. These materials are called “open” because they are either in the public domain or carry an open copyright license that permits their free use or repurposing by others.

There are many types of OER, including full courses, lesson plans, videos, and exams, but the form of OER that is most important to this campaign is the “open textbook.” This alternative to traditional textbooks has the power to drive down textbook prices for good.

Here’s how open textbooks work:

- Open textbooks are available for free to read online or download.
- Optional print versions can usually be purchased at a low cost, typically \$20-40.
- These books are written and reviewed by experts, and studies have found that students do as well or better in classes that use open textbooks.
- Most open licenses allow any instructor to adapt the textbook and customize it to fit their course.
- Electronic versions of open textbooks never expire so you can keep your copy forever.

Open textbooks are already available for more than a hundred courses and are in use by more than 3,000 professors nationwide. Dozens of new open textbooks are currently in production.

The savings from using open textbooks can be huge. Getting a single math or science class to switch to an open textbook can save students tens of thousands of dollars. (The math is clear: if a class of 100 students saves \$100 each, that’s \$10,000 in savings.)

Open textbooks address the intrinsic flaws in the traditional textbook market, while also promoting a new system where knowledge is shared and free to all.

Obstacles to open textbooks

Open textbooks face three big challenges that so far have prevented them from being used in more classrooms.

- It takes time and money to write open textbooks.
- It takes time and resources to introduce faculty to open textbooks and their benefits.
- It takes time and training to support faculty in using open textbooks.

To overcome these challenges, we need startup investment—from colleges, foundations, organizations, companies, and government—to create and promote open textbooks. It doesn’t take a lot of money to get the ball rolling, but the payoff is tremendous. Money spent to create and promote open textbooks ends up saving students many times the amount of the initial investment.

Open textbook examples

The University of Minnesota maintains a catalog of open textbooks that you can search by subject. Visit it online at <http://open.umn.edu>.

Here are a few of the top open textbooks being used in classrooms across the country:



College Algebra

Carl Stitz, Lakeland Community College
Jeff Zeager, Lorain County Community College



Introductory Statistics

Douglas Shafer, University of North Carolina
Zhiyi Zhang, University of North Carolina



College Physics

Paul Urone, California State University, Sacramento
Roger Hinrichs, SUNY College at Oswego
Kim Dirks, University of Auckland
Manjula Sharma, University of Sydney



Introduction to Sociology

Nathan Keirns, Zane State College; Eric Strayer, Hartnell College;
Heather Griffiths, Fayetteville State University; Susan Cody-
Rydzewski, Georgia Perimeter College; Gail Scaramuzzo, Lackawanna
College; Tommy Sadler, Union University; Sally Vyain,
Ivy Tech Community College

Open textbook resources

Here are some places where you can find additional information about open textbooks.

The Student PIRGs: Research by the Student PIRGs first brought the problem of textbook prices into the public spotlight and they continue to be leaders on this issue.

<http://studentpirgs.org/open-textbooks/>

Right to Research Coalition: This student campaign educates campuses about open educational resources and advocates for policies at the local and national level.

<http://www.righttoresearch.org>

SPARC: This coalition of libraries is on the cutting edge of promoting open educational resources to scholars, educators, and librarians.

<http://www.sparc.arl.org/issues/open-education>

College Board: This group tracks the rising cost of higher education, including the cost of textbooks and classroom supplies.

<http://trends.collegeboard.org/college-pricing>

U.S. Government Accountability Office: The GAO has published two major reports on textbook prices:

<http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-13-368> and

<http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-05-806>

Running the campaign on your campus

In order to help students save money on textbooks, your student government should run a campaign to get your college or university to create an open textbooks program.

Steps to a successful campaign

To make this happen, you will need to build support for open textbooks within key audiences on campus so that your campus administration will feel compelled to support this new program. Here are the steps to running an effective campaign:

› Raising Awareness

The biggest barrier to open textbooks is the lack of awareness among students and faculty about their existence and benefits. You will need to generate visibility and hold educational events in order to get the campus talking about the problem of high textbook prices and the option of using open textbooks.

› Mobilizing the Student Body

Build support for this campaign among students first, since they are the ones most directly affected by textbook prices. Ask students to speak out about their own experiences buying textbooks, then let them know about open textbooks. Once you've built up support with the student body, get the student government to pass an official resolution in support of an open textbooks program.

› Building Faculty Support

Professors choose the books that will be used in their courses, so their involvement is vital to the success of your campaign. In addition, the administration isn't likely to support a new program related to textbooks unless the faculty is on board. You will need to meet individually with key faculty members to ask for their support.

› Winning Administrative Support

Once you've lined up the support of students and faculty, you should sit down with key administrators to propose that the campus create an open textbooks program. Once you win their support, you should take your proposal up the ladder until you get to a president or chancellor who has the power to officially approve and fund your proposal.



	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8	Week 9	Week 10	Week 11	Week 12	GOALS
Raising Awareness	Event: "How much did you pay?" selfie table.	Hang posters to kick off campaign & recruit volunteers.	Event: Used Book Graveyard.	Hang posters for open book fair.	Event: Open Book Fair.	Invite speakers for public forum.	Event: Textbook Taste Test.	Confirm public forum speakers.	Hang posters for public forum.	Event: Public Forum.			Hold 5 major awareness events. Hang 3 rounds of posters.
Student Support	Get 250 Statements of Support.		Get 250 Statements of Support.	Send campaign update to student government members.	Get 250 Statements of Support.	Meet with student government leaders.	Get 250 Statements of Support. Submit SG resolution.	Pass student government resolution.	Send campaign update to student supporters.				1000 Statements of Support. Pass student government resolution.
Faculty Support		Make list of target faculty.	Contact top faculty targets, get 10 endorsements.	Get 30 faculty endorsements.	Get 30 faculty endorsements.	Get 30 faculty endorsements.	Send campaign update to faculty supporters.	Meet with leaders of faculty senate.	Submit faculty senate resolution.	Pass faculty senate resolution.	Send update to faculty supporters.		100 faculty endorsements, including 10 from top targets (department heads, etc.). Pass faculty senate resolution.
Administrative Support			Meet with Dean of Libraries.	Meet with Director of Learning Technology.	Request meetings with senior admin, Chancellor.		Meet with VP of Information Technology.	Meet with Provost of Faculty Affairs.	Meet with VP of Academic Affairs.	Prep for Chancellor meeting.	Meet with Chancellor.	Win campus open textbooks policy.	Pass campus open textbooks policy.
Research	Collect 250 surveys.		Collect 250 surveys.	Tally survey results.	Write research report on survey results.	Edit research report.	Publish report.						Collect 500 student surveys. Publish local report on textbook prices.
Media		Press release about campaign kickoff, 1 media story.			Press release about open book fair, 1 media story.		Press release about research report, 2 media stories.	Press release about SG resolution, 2 media stories.		Press release about faculty senate resolution, 2 media stories.		Press release about victory, 2 media stories.	10 media stories.
Volunteers	Tabling (25 hours).	Databasing (5 hours). Postering (5 hours).	Tabling (25 hours). Faculty outreach (3 hours).	Faculty outreach (10 hours). Databasing (5 hours). Postering (5 hours).	Tabling (25 hours). Faculty outreach (10 hours).	Faculty outreach (10 hours). Databasing (5 hours).	Tabling (25 hours). Databasing (2 hours).	Databasing (5 hours).	Postering (5 hours).				Tabling (100 volunteer hours). Faculty outreach (33 vol hours). Databasing supporters (22 vol hours). Postering (15 vol hours).

Raising awareness for your textbooks campaign

Visibility is one of the most effective ways to educate students, faculty, and other audiences about your textbooks campaign and build awareness about open textbooks. When done well, this visibility can help your campaign succeed while also improving the name recognition and reputation of your student government.

To get your campaign on peoples' radar, you should use every tool at your disposal, ranging from passive visibility tactics like posters and leaflets to big interactive events like book fairs and public forums.



To generate visibility for your campaign, here are a few things to keep in mind:

- ▶ Figure out your campaign slogan. Keep it clear, simple, and memorable—your message should motivate people to action.
- ▶ It will take a lot of visibility to cut through the noise and get your campus's attention. Don't be afraid to go big.
- ▶ Carry out every visibility tactic that you can imagine. You want to have many different types of visibility.
- ▶ Visibility takes a lot of work—it doesn't just happen. Make a plan, then figure out how many volunteers you need, just like every other piece of your campaign.
- ▶ Know the campus rules and make sure to follow them.

During the peak moments of your campaign, you should saturate the campus with your visibility. For students to really notice the campaign and feel compelled to act, they need to see the campaign message many times and in several different forms of visibility. The goal should be that a student can't walk through campus without seeing your campaign multiple times.

Get creative with your visibility. Here are just a few ideas to get you started:

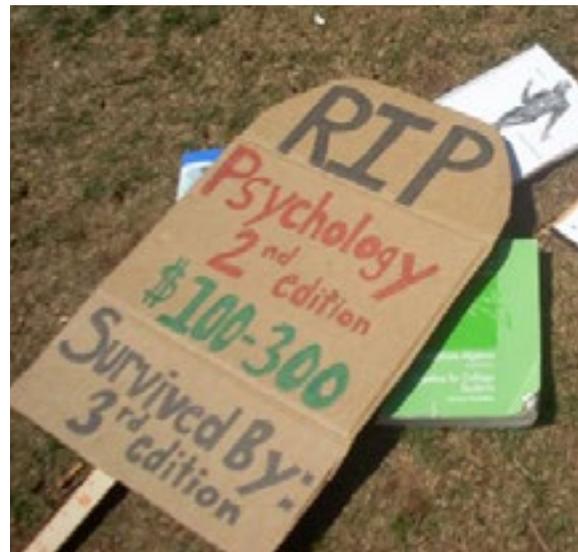
- Hang posters on kiosks and bulletin boards.
- Chalk messages on sidewalks.
- In dining halls and campus restaurants, put out table tents, place signs next to the cashiers, give out custom cups or coffee sleeves, etc.
- Hang banners in the student center and outside dorms and classroom buildings.
- Post campaign ads on campus buses and campus bus stops.
- Get the campus bookstore to insert a textbooks campaign flyer in every bag.
- In the dorms, put up posters in the elevators, in the restrooms, in lounges, etc.

- In every classroom, write a small announcement in the corner of the chalkboard or dry-erase board.
- Post campaign images and messages on Facebook and Twitter and ask people to share them.



Campaign Leaflet

One of the most important visibility tools you should create is a campaign leaflet to hand out at tables, in classrooms, and at campaign events. Giving students a leaflet—especially one that looks nice and includes useful information—raises their awareness about the campaign and about student government. On the following page is an example of an educational leaflet you could use.



It's time to make textbooks affordable

Textbook prices are out of control.

- Individual textbooks now **often cost over \$200**, and sometimes cost as much as \$400.
- Over the past decade, textbook **prices increased 88%**—that's three times the rate of inflation.
- **65% of students** report that they skipped buying or renting an assigned textbook because of cost.
- Without access to books, many students struggle to succeed in their classes. **Nearly half** of all students say that the **cost of course materials** impacts which classes and how many classes they are able to take.



Why are textbook prices so high?

The broken textbook market allows publishers to keep driving up prices without consequences.

Prices are usually kept in check by two things:

The buying power of customers who **shop around** for the best deal.

Competition between companies.

But in the textbook market, those checks don't apply.

The customers – the students – don't choose their textbooks, so **they can't shop around**. Instead, books are assigned by faculty members, who don't buy the books themselves.

Just **five publishers control 80%** of the textbook market, so they rarely compete directly on price.

Meanwhile, publishers keep **inventing creative new ways to increase profits**, like high-priced, single-use access codes or other products that eliminate used alternatives, prevent sharing, and limit consumer choice.



Open textbooks provide a solution.

Open textbooks provide an exciting alternative to traditional books that can save students money and improve the educational experience.

- Open textbooks are just like traditional textbooks except that the authors have decided to publish them under an **open copyright license**.
- Open textbooks are available **free online and for very low cost in print**.
- Recent research has shown that open textbooks are **as effective, if not more effective**, than traditionally-published course materials.
- Individual faculty members can customize open textbooks to make them **better fit their classes**.

How open & traditional textbooks compare

	Traditional Textbooks	Open Textbooks
Written by expert authors	✓	✓
Peer reviewed	✓	✓
High educational quality	✓	✓
Can include problem sets, sample exercises, etc.	✓	✓
Can be sold in campus bookstores	✓	✓
Cost up to \$400	✓	✗
Publish unnecessary new editions	✓	✗
Bundle books with expensive add-ons	✓	✗
Available free and unrestricted online	✗	✓
Available in print for \$20-\$40	✗	✓
Electronic versions never expire	✗	✓
Can be customized by faculty	✗	✓

Open textbooks can save millions for students.

- Open textbooks have the potential to save students nationwide **up to a billion dollars** per year.
- In subjects where traditional textbooks cost \$100-\$300, switching a single classroom of 100 students to an open textbook can save students up to \$30,000.
- At the University of Massachusetts, a small pilot program to help classes switch to open textbooks saved UMass students over **\$1 million** in just four years.
- At Kansas State University, an open textbooks program run by the library, Provost's office, and the Center for Advancement of Teaching and Learning has **saved students over \$1.1 million**.

What you can do:

Join the effort to bring more open textbooks to your campus.

- Help your **student government** take up this issue. They can create a committee to promote open textbooks, pass a resolution in support of open textbooks, and more.
- **Ask your professors** to consider using open textbooks in their classes.



Learn more at [OpenTextbookAlliance.org](https://www.opentextbookalliance.org)

The Open Textbook Alliance is a nationwide coalition of student government leaders who are working to bring open textbooks to college campuses.

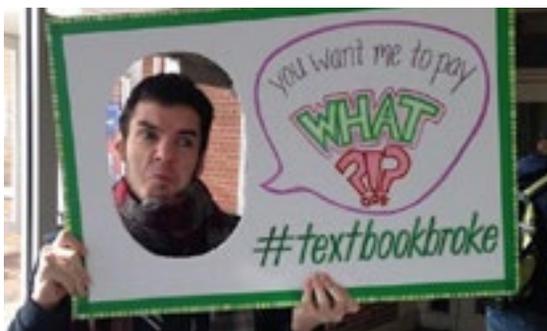
Social Media: #OpenTextbooks

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other social media sites are great ways to spread ideas and recruit your friends to support the campaign.

Add a social media component to every piece of your campaign. Make sure your volunteers are posting about every campaign event and table they attend—especially if they can post photos or videos.

Students around the country have been using the #OpenTextbooks hashtag to draw attention to rising textbook prices and the need to adopt open textbooks. This hashtag has already shown up on social media sites several million times, catching the attention of campus administrators, legislators, and the media.

As you run your campaign, add the #OpenTextbooks hashtag to your posts to add your voice to this national student movement.



Sample Tweets:

@OpenTheTextbook

Looking for textbooks? Check out @Opentextbooks, an online catalog of free open-source textbooks w/ faculty reviews <http://open.umn.edu> #OpenTextbooks

@OpenTheTextbook

Want free textbooks? Tell your profs about @OpenAcademics, an online catalog of free online open-source textbooks: <http://open.umn.edu> #OpenTextbooks

Sample Facebook Posts:

OpenTextbookAlliance

The solution to outrageously expensive textbooks? Open-source textbooks! Tell your professors about the Open Textbook Catalog, which lists free open textbooks for dozens of courses. <http://open.umn.edu> #OpenTextbooks

OpenTextbookAlliance

Dear Professors: Please visit the University of Minnesota's Open Textbook Library to see if there's an open-source textbook that could work for your course. Just a few minutes could end up saving your students thousands of dollars! <http://open.umn.edu> #OpenTextbooks

Holding Awareness Events

One of the easiest ways to raise awareness for an issue is by tabling. Tabling is one of the most tried and true forms of campus outreach. It simply involves setting up a table and talking to students about your campaign as they walk past. By adding fun visuals or interactive activities, you can turn your table into an event that will get students' attention.

Here are some tips on how to make your tabling event successful:

- Don't always table in the same spot. You should set up your table at different locations around campus and at varying times of day, to make sure you reach a wide mix of students.
- Set up in high-traffic areas like dining halls, dorms, the student union, the library, on the quad, or on the way to and from major parking lots.
- Go where and when the people are. Classroom buildings and the student union tend to be better during the day, while dorms and dining halls tend to be better in the evening.
- Make sure to follow the rules. Find out how to get proper permission to table so that you don't get shut down.
- "Tabling" doesn't necessarily require a table. Depending on your event, it might be fine to just have volunteers with clipboards.
- Make your table fun and designed to draw people over. Put a nice campaign banner on the front of the table. Hang some posters nearby directing people to the table. Play music at the table. Cover the table with campaign leaflets, stickers, and other materials you can hand out.
- Use the table as a base, not a wall to hide behind. Don't sit down behind the table. Instead, stand in front of it and talk to people as they go by. More confident tablers should float out into the foot traffic in order to reach more people.
- Never leave the table unattended. It projects the wrong image for your campaign and makes you seem disorganized or inactive.



Event Ideas

Here are a few ideas for tabling events to raise awareness about textbook prices.

“How Much Did You Pay?” Selfie Table This is a great event to hold at the beginning of the term. Have a small dry-erase board and ask students to write down the amount of money they spent that term on textbooks. Then take a picture of them holding the dry-erase board and post their photo on your student government’s social media accounts. Make sure to include the hashtag #TextbookBroke and tag the student in the photo.

Used Book Graveyard You can illustrate the impact that unnecessary new editions have on the used book market by setting up a graveyard on the quad for all of the used books that can’t be sold back. Make gravestone shapes out of cardboard and paint them with the titles of popular used textbooks. You can also add creative epitaphs like, “Here lies the 4th Edition, which died before its time.”

“The Price Is Wrong” Game Ask students to stop and play this variation on “The Price Is Right” game show. Put a bunch of textbooks on display and ask students to guess how much each one costs. Give out prizes and campaign leaflets to the students who play. The sad thing is that everyone loses—even if they guess the right price, the price is still wrong.

Textbook Taste Test This is a great way to show students that open textbooks are just as good as traditional books. Lay out a few pages from an open textbook and pages on the same topic from a traditional textbook, then ask students which one costs \$200. When students see that the quality of the open textbook is up to par, ask them to support your campaign.

Open Book Fair Organize an “Open Book Fair” to showcase open textbooks. As with a normal book fair, set up showcase tables, including sample copies of open books and posters comparing textbook prices between open textbooks and their traditional counterparts. Add live music, food, and other entertainment to draw more visitors.

Giant Textbook Prop A tried-and-true way of getting attention on campus is to build something big. Use cardboard, paper mache, or other materials to build a giant textbook that you can set up around campus. Make the front look like a typical textbook cover, but with an absurdly high price tag and other features that mock publisher practices that drive up the cost of books.

Building student support for open textbooks

Whenever you hold an event or talk to students about open textbooks, you should offer them a chance to show their support for the campaign by signing a Statement of Support for open textbooks.

You can design this Statement of Support as a petition or a small postcard-sized form for students to sign. Every time a student stops at one of your events, you should ask them to sign the statement.

The Statement of Support serves several purposes:

- ▶ It gives students a tangible way to show their support for open textbooks, which helps them feel more invested in your campaign.
- ▶ Collecting a large number of Statements is a powerful way to show faculty and administrators that students care about this issue.
- ▶ By getting students to sign the Statement, you identify students who are supportive of your campaign and you capture their contact information. This allows you to email them campaign updates from time to time or even call them and ask them to attend big events or volunteer to help with the campaign.

Sample statement of support

Make Textbooks Affordable

Textbooks are way too expensive. I support the use of Open Textbooks, which are expert-written textbooks that are offered for free under an open license. The university should encourage the use of open textbooks in our classes.

Name: _____

Cell phone: _____

Email: _____

Year: Fr. So. Jr. Sr. Grad.

I'm interested in volunteering

Sample Tabling Script

Hi, can you help make textbooks more affordable?

My name is _____ and I'm with _____. Nice to meet you!

Textbooks are way too expensive. We're letting the administration and faculty know that book prices are out of control. Can you help us out by showing them how much you spent on textbooks this semester?

[Hand over the dry-erase board.]

Great! Just write on here the amount you spent on books this semester, then we'll shoot a photo of you holding the board. We'll post the photo online and send it to the administration.

[Take the picture.]

Thanks! To make textbooks more affordable, we're urging the school to start using open textbooks. These are just like regular textbooks, except that the authors have decided to give the books away for free. Would you sign a petition in support of open textbooks?

[Hand over the clipboard with the Statement of Support.]

Thanks! Here's a leaflet with tips on how to save money on textbooks!

Tips for tablers:

- Smile, make eye contact, and wave—it makes a huge difference.
- Speak loudly, slowly and clearly.
- Hand over the dry-erase board and clipboard as quickly as possible.

Generating media coverage

Getting the media to cover your campaign is a great way to increase awareness about textbook prices and raise the profile of this issue. It also serves to motivate your team and to showcase your student government and the campus.

There are two primary ways to get media coverage: meeting with individual reporters and editors to pitch them on covering your campaign, and inviting the media to come to campus to cover your events.

You should begin by identifying all of the media outlets in your community, including newspapers, television stations, radio stations, and blogs. Check the website for each outlet and get the names, phone numbers, and email addresses for their reporters and editors.

You should prioritize reaching out to the following people:

- ▶ The editor of your campus paper.
- ▶ The reporter who covers the campus for your local newspaper.
- ▶ The news editors for the network TV affiliates (ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox) in your community.

Meeting with the media

Once your campaign gets rolling, you should meet with local reporters and editors to encourage them to cover the issue. Reporters and editors will be more likely to cover your events throughout the campaign if they have

met you and know who you are.

The best way to get started is to call up and schedule a face-to-face meeting. Even if a particular reporter isn't able to meet with you in person, you can use this phone call to introduce yourself and the textbooks campaign.

Inviting reporters to your events

You should invite reporters to cover major events during your campaign, such as public forums or the release of local research reports.

- ▶ Start by writing a news advisory, an announcement that tells reporters about your event. Email the advisory to all of your media contacts a few days before your event.
- ▶ Once you send out the advisory, start calling through your media list and personally inviting each person to attend. The one exception is the campus newspaper, where it's probably easier and more effective to stop by and talk to them in person. Make sure to come up with a compelling 1-2 sentence pitch in advance that explains what your event will be and why it will be newsworthy.
- ▶ Early in the morning on the day of your event, email out your advisory again to all of your media contacts, then make a round of calls to remind them about your event and ask if they will be able to attend.

- › Write a news release that describes the event as you would want reporters to describe it and print out a few copies.
- › At the event, be on the lookout for reporters. As they arrive, get them to sign in with you so that you get their contact information. Give them a copy of the release and then take them to a place where they can view the event, interview the participants, and ask you questions about the campaign.
- › As soon as the event is over, email the release to any media contacts who didn't attend the event.
- › That afternoon, call through all of your media contacts again to answer questions about the event and ask if they will be doing a story.
- › Have a few volunteers write and submit letters to the editor to your campus and local papers talking about the event.

“Holding a forum builds your credibility as an organization and as a leader on this topic.”

Holding a public forum

There are a lot of different stakeholders in the debate around open textbooks. A campus forum is an effective way to get all of them in a room to discuss the issue. Forums allow everyone to express their opinions in a productive setting. In addition, holding a forum builds your credibility as an organization and as a leader on this topic.

- You can choose from several formats for your forum—a presentation, a panel discussion, a roundtable discussion—depending on what you think will be most effective.
- You should involve as many different stakeholders as possible in the forum, including students, faculty, librarians, administrators, book store owners, and legislators.
- A forum allows these stakeholders to directly communicate with each other. For example, librarians can address faculty concerns about quality, administrators can get feedback on policy proposals, and students can express the importance of addressing textbook prices.
- Make sure to invite the media to cover the forum. Forums give reporters time to engage more deeply with speakers and ask questions in a more interactive setting than a press conference.

Researching textbook prices

Announcing the results of a local research project is another great way to get the media's attention.

National statistics about textbook prices—such as the fact that textbook prices have almost doubled in the past decade—can help people to understand the scale of this problem. However, it's even more powerful if you can show how this issue affects students locally.

To do this, organize a simple research project to determine how textbook prices are impacting students on your campus. Here are some possible research projects:



- Visit the bookstore and get a list of the 10 most expensive textbooks they sell, in order to show just how expensive books have become.
- For those same 10 books, ask the bookstore how much they pay students for used copies.
- Set up a table on campus and ask students to fill out a survey about their own textbook expenses, then tabulate the results. For this research to be taken seriously, you'll need to survey several hundred students, minimum. Some potential questions you could ask include:
 - How much did you spend on textbooks this term?
 - What is the most expensive textbook you purchased? How much did it cost?
 - Have you ever chosen not to buy an assigned textbook because of the price?
 - Did you try to sell any used books this term? Which books? How much did you get for them?

Once you've completed all of your research, assemble it into a report and release it to the media. Also make sure to deliver copies to important people on campus, including administrators, librarians, and prominent faculty.

Winning an open textbooks policy for your campus

Open textbooks are the ultimate solution to high textbook prices—they're free online, free to download, and affordable to purchase in print. In addition, students get to choose which format they prefer. Hundreds of open textbooks already exist, with dozens more in the process of being written.

However, these textbooks are not being used nearly as widely as they could. Most faculty members have never heard about open textbooks or don't know where to find one for their course. Meanwhile, the major textbook publishers spend enormous amounts of money and energy to market their books directly to professors.

Your goal should be to get your college or university to adopt a policy to support and encourage the use of open textbooks on your campus.

To achieve that, you will need to build support with several key audiences: students, faculty, and administrators.

Passing a student government resolution

Once you feel that your awareness events have done a thorough job of educating the student body and building support for open textbooks, you should pass a student government resolution in order to show faculty, the administration, legislators, and the public that students on your campus have officially put their support behind the use of open textbooks.

To pass your resolution, you should meet with key student government officers in advance to line up their support.

- Identify the student government leaders who you need to meet with. Focus on those who are likely to have the most influence on this issue. These likely include the members of your student government's executive board and the chairs of any committees that deal with academic affairs.
- Put together a packet of information about open textbooks to give them. Make sure to include your local research on textbook prices, a description of how open textbooks work, examples of open textbooks and other schools that have passed open textbook policies, and a copy of your proposed resolution.
- Set up individual meetings with these student government leaders.
- Practice the meetings in advance, so that you're prepared to explain the issue clearly and answer questions that are likely to come up. Roleplay your presentation with another student.
- Hold the meetings! After each one, make sure to develop a follow-up plan with the student leader. If they agree to support the resolution, then ask for their advice on how to proceed and ask them how they can help. If they're not willing to commit, then make a specific plan to get them more information and to get their decision.
- Implement your follow-up plans with each member.

Once you've lined up support from key members of the student government, figure out the best way to move forward. For example, determine if you need co-sponsors for your resolution or if you should present before any committees before you go to the full student government. Once you know how to proceed, submit your resolution for a vote.

See following page for a sample Student Government Resolution.

Building faculty support

In most cases, professors are the final decision-makers in choosing which textbooks are used in their classes. As a result, open textbooks will only be used widely on your campus if they are embraced by the faculty.

You should meet individually with professors to introduce them to the campaign. By sitting down with them and talking through the open textbook options that are available, you can greatly increase the likelihood that they will consider adopting an open textbook in the future.

As you set up these meetings, you should prioritize the most influential faculty members:

- Department chairs
- Faculty Senate leaders or committee chairs
- Professors who are known to already use open textbooks
- Deans and provosts
- Librarians (their support is very important!)

You should also prioritize the faculty in the following departments, since these

are departments that tend to have very expensive textbooks and where there are lots of open textbooks available:

- Mathematics
- Statistics
- Economics
- Chemistry
- Physics
- Biology
- Psychology
- Sociology
- Business
- Communications
- Information Systems

As you hold these meetings, the best way to help professors switch to open textbooks is to encourage them to visit the Open Textbook Library, a resource run by the University of Minnesota. The catalog allows professors to search for textbooks in their subject and post reviews of textbooks that they've used. Open textbooks don't have the huge marketing budgets that their traditional counterparts have, so we need to do the hard work ourselves of promoting the catalog.

To hold your faculty meetings:

- Make a list of the professors you need to meet with, based on the departments and positions listed above. Look up their emails, phone numbers, and office addresses.
- Send an email to each professor asking them if you can schedule a 10-15 minute meeting to discuss the textbooks campaign.
- If they don't respond to your email message, follow up by phone.

Sample student government resolution

A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF OPEN TEXTBOOKS

WHEREAS, the price of textbooks rose at three times the rate of inflation between between 2006 and 2016, according to the Consumer Price Index; and

WHEREAS, the cost of college textbooks is often a major affordability issue for students, who take on additional loan debt to pay for textbooks, or undercut their own learning by forgoing the purchase of textbooks; and

WHEREAS, textbook publishers have not responded adequately to the concerns of students, faculty, and other stakeholders; and

WHEREAS, an 'open textbook' is defined as: a textbook written by education professionals and released online under an open license permitting everyone to freely use, print, share and adapt the material; and

WHEREAS, open textbooks offer an affordable, comparable and flexible alternative to expensive, commercial textbooks; and

WHEREAS, it is the prerogative of faculty to select the course materials that are most appropriate for a class; and

WHEREAS, it is appropriate to seek and consider low- and no-cost options, including open textbooks, as long as there is no reduction in educational quality; and

WHEREAS, faculty and students both share a concern about textbook affordability and its impact on student success; and

WHEREAS, the Open Textbook Alliance is a coalition of student governments and student leaders that is working to expand the use of open textbooks on college campuses;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that [Student Government] supports the use of open textbooks; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that [Student Government] encourages faculty to consider open textbooks and other low-cost course materials when selecting textbooks; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that [Student Government] encourages [University] to offer support to faculty to consider and adopt open textbooks, when academically appropriate; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that [Student Government] calls on the [State] legislature and [State] representatives in Congress to support open textbooks as a solution to high textbook costs.

- If that doesn't work, then drop by their office hours.
- Before you do your first meetings, prepare by practicing your presentation until you're comfortable with it.
- Hold your meetings. Make sure to take good notes.
- Ask each professor to support your campaign by signing your Faculty Endorsement Form and to consider switching their next class to an open textbook.
- With professors who are supportive, ask them to email information about the Open Textbook Library to their colleagues.
- Send out email updates to your list of faculty supporters once or twice a month, to keep them invested in the issue.
- Look for new ways for them to get more involved in the campaign. They can be powerful allies in bringing the campaign to their fellow professors and to the administration.

Going to the Faculty Senate

If your college or university has a Faculty Senate or comparable body that represents the faculty, then the final step in this piece of the campaign should be to get their official support for open textbooks.

Working with Faculty Supporters

Once you identify supportive faculty members, you should take advantage of these newfound allies. You should keep in touch with these professors on a regular basis to give them more information about open textbooks, update them on your campaign, and find new ways for them to support your efforts.

- Send your faculty supporters a packet of information on open textbooks—the more information, the better. This will help them learn about open textbooks, and also be helpful when they talk to their colleagues about the issue.

Once you've built a solid coalition of department heads and other key professors in support of your campaign, you should approach the leaders of the Faculty Senate. Make a presentation to them about open textbooks, and make sure to show them the high level of support you've generated from faculty members. Then ask them about the process for getting the Faculty Senate to vote to support an open textbooks program.

You should approach this process in much the same way as your effort to pass a student government resolution. Every Faculty Senate is different, so make sure to ask lots of questions until you understand the process for winning the faculty's support.

Sample talking points for a presentation to a faculty member

Intro: Hi, Professor. I'm [Name] from [Student Government]. Thank you for letting me come talk to you about our campaign to make textbooks affordable.

The Problem Textbook costs are a big issue for students here on campus.

- Textbooks are expensive: individual books can cost \$300, and prices have almost doubled in the past decade.
- Publishers undermine the used book market with new editions and costly bundles.
- Students are even opting not to buy the books—65 percent of students surveyed reported not buying or renting a required book because of the price.
- Cite any local research you've collected on textbook prices.
- If relevant, tell a brief personal story about how textbook costs have affected you.
- Ask: Is this a problem that's come to your attention before?

The Solution The good news is that our campaign to reduce the cost of textbooks is making progress.

- Students have found creative ways to save money by buying used books, renting books, and sharing books with their peers.
- There's a federal law requiring publishers to disclose textbook prices and revision info to professors, which ensures that you have easy access to that information when choosing books for your classes.
- More affordable alternatives are coming onto the market that can save students a lot of money.

Open Textbooks The most important alternatives I want to talk to you about are open-source textbooks. Open textbooks are books that are published under an open license that allows them to be used and shared for free.

- Open textbooks are comparable to traditional textbooks: they are written and reviewed by experts and cover the standard material for a course.
- Open textbooks have benefits that make them preferable to traditional textbooks: they are free to read online or download; students can print pages for free; hard copies are available for just \$10-40; and instructors can adapt the text by adding their own content or problem sets or removing unwanted material.
- More than 160 open textbooks are available, and they are used by more than 3,000 faculty. Dozens of additional open books are currently in production.
- The average savings even when buying hard copies is 80% compared to traditional textbooks, which can save thousands of dollars for students in your classes.
- Ask: Have you come across open textbooks before?

(continued)

Faculty meeting talking points (continued)

Take Action Open textbooks are a great solution, but the challenge is that not enough professors know about them or are using them. I wanted to discuss a couple ways you might be able to help.

- The University of Minnesota hosts an online library of open textbooks that have been reviewed by faculty to ensure the high quality of the books. It's a great resource for faculty who want to search for books in their subject area.
- Ask: Would you be willing to check out the library and consider using open textbooks in your classes?
- Ask: Would you be willing to send information about this open textbooks library to your colleagues?
- Ask: Do you have any questions about open textbooks that I can answer?
- Ask: Would you please fill out this endorsement form for our campaign to expand the use of open textbooks?

Closing Thank you for agreeing to [Action]. I will email you in a couple weeks to follow up and see how it went.



Sample faculty endorsement form



Make Textbooks Affordable

Students can spend more than one thousand dollars a year on textbooks, making this the biggest out-of-pocket educational expense for most students. For many, the high cost of textbooks represents a serious barrier to college affordability.

The most effective solution to high costs is the use of open textbooks—faculty-written, high quality textbooks that are offered under an open license that allows free digital access and low-cost printing.

Open textbooks are available in many subjects and faculty can even customize them for their courses.

As a faculty member who shares students' concerns about high textbook prices, I am willing to:

- Receive and read more information about open textbooks.
- Show my support for an Open Textbook Program that helps introduce open textbooks on campus.
- Meet with an Open Textbook Ambassador to learn more about the open textbook options available for my courses.
- Consider adopting an open textbook in one of my classes.

Name: _____

Title: _____

Department: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

FAQs from Faculty about Open Textbooks

Q: Aren't there easier ways to save students money on textbooks?

A: Used books, book rentals, and other programs can help, but open textbooks are by far the most effective way to save money for your students.

Q: How can I be sure an open textbook is high quality?

A: Ultimately, each professor is the best judge of whether or not a particular book is right for their class. Many high-quality open textbooks are available right now – written by leaders in their fields, peer-reviewed, and professionally designed. In addition, a number of studies have found that OER are as or more effective than traditional books.

Q: Who writes open textbooks? How do they get paid?

A: There are several open textbook companies that follow the typical process of authoring, editing, and publishing books. In other cases, authors or teams of authors are funded by grants from foundations, universities, or the government.

Q: Are open textbooks the same as e-books?

A: No. Both are digital and can be used on laptops, tablets, and smartphones. However, typical e-books are still quite expensive and have many drawbacks, like access that expires and limits on printing. By contrast, open textbooks are free online, never expire, and have no restrictions on printing.

Q: Is it legal to share and adapt open textbooks?

A: Most open licenses allow instructors to legally adapt or edit a book's text, though authors have the option to reserve certain other rights for themselves. In any case, the original author should at least be attributed for the work.

Q: Can I get the book I'm currently using as an open textbook?

A: If the book you are currently using is published by a major publisher, then the answer is probably no. Traditional publishers rely on their ability to sell their books for a healthy profit.

Q: How can I find an open textbook for my class?

A: There are websites that aggregate faculty reviews of open textbooks and can help professors find books for their subjects.

Q: Can I write my own open textbook if I want?

A: Yes! There are many foundations, states, companies, and institutions that will pay professors to write open textbooks. Professors can even self-publish an open textbook by releasing it under an open license.

Getting Administrative Support

Once you've built support for open textbooks with students and faculty, you're ready to go to the campus administration and ask them to create an open textbooks program.

By adopting an open textbooks program, your campus can save students money while also joining the leading edge of an open educational movement.

To win the support of administrators, you will need to:

- Educate them about open textbooks and why they're important.
- Overcome any misconceptions they might have about open textbooks.
- Demonstrate support from the student body and the faculty.
- Provide specific ideas for how the campus could support the use of open textbooks.

You could start by going straight to the top and meeting with your school's president or chancellor. However, you're more likely to get their support if you first win over other key administrators.



Make a list of the key administrators who oversee offices that are related to open textbooks, such as Library Services, Online Learning, and Academic Affairs.

- Set up individual meetings with each of these administrators and present the case for open textbooks, much as you did with faculty members.
- Listen as much as you talk. These are smart people who probably care about this issue, too. Make sure you ask about what they think and listen carefully to their feedback. By finding ways to address their concerns, you'll make your proposal stronger for the next meeting.
- Always go into the meeting with a plan for your "ask" – what you are going to ask the person to do. You should ask everyone to support the creation of an open textbooks program, but also be ready with some smaller steps they could take right away. Come up with ideas in advance based on what resources the person has, what their interests are, and what would be most helpful to the campaign.
- Have a follow-up plan. If the person you're meeting with says "yes" to something, make sure to make a specific plan for how and when to follow up about it.

Here are some potential asks for administrators:

- Can they sponsor a seminar to educate faculty about open textbooks?
- Could they email their colleagues about the Open Textbook Catalog?
- Would their office help fund or facilitate the adoption of open textbooks?
- Would they join us when we meet with other administrators?

Start with lower-level administrators and work your way up through the ranks. Bigger schools will tend to have more levels of administrators, making this process longer. Keep working your way up until you meet with an administrator who has the power to approve your proposal, usually the president or chancellor.

Potential Open Textbook Programs

There are lots of ways that your school can promote the use of open textbooks. Here are a few options to consider including in your proposal.

Open Textbook Workshops ►

The major obstacle to adopting open textbooks is the lack of widespread awareness among faculty about their availability. To address this, your college or university would agree to host introductory seminars or workshops for the faculty and invite an open textbook expert to campus. The campus would also ideally agree to form a working group to further discuss the potential use of open textbooks on campus.

Open Textbook Grants ►

It takes time and resources for a professor to switch their class to an open textbook. Your college or university would establish a competitive grant program to help faculty members convert classes to using open textbooks. Ideally, this program should also incorporate workshops to educate and engage faculty members.



Case study: Workshops

The Board of Regents at the University of Maryland System created the Maryland Open-Source Textbook (MOST) Initiative, which includes three components: a workshop for interested faculty and staff, taught by textbook experts from the University of Minnesota Open Textbook Library; a program to gather and analyze data about textbook use and gauge faculty willingness to switch to open textbooks; and a statewide workgroup to evaluate potential policies around open textbooks.

Case study: Grants

In 2011, the University of Massachusetts Amherst launched the Open Education Initiative (OEI), a competitive grant program to help faculty make the switch to open textbooks in their classrooms. Leading up to the first wave of grants, the university held a series of workshops for faculty and offered individual consulting sessions with library staff. After disbursing 40 grants of approximately \$1,000 each over the course of four years, the OEI projected student savings at almost \$1.5 million. Many experts see the UMass Initiative as the premier example of a successful open textbook program.

Open Textbook Staff Person ▶

In this program, the college or university would commit to assigning a staff person to work directly with faculty and provide the necessary education and training to help them convert to using open textbooks. This person could be housed in the library, the information technology office, or the online learning program.

Textbook-Free Degrees ▶

Colleges and universities that want to take a major step forward on this issue would transition an entire degree program to only using open educational resources. This involves curating content from existing open textbooks and other open resources and developing that content into the full set of instructional materials needed for all of the courses in that department or degree track. To do so, schools typically contract with an outside organization to manage this process.



Case study: Staff person

At Tacoma Community College in Washington State, the college hired a full-time staff person to work directly with faculty to help them implement the use of open textbooks. The cost of the position is split between the student government (from their Student Technology Fee) and the college's E-Learning department. Within the first two years, the program saved students more than \$635,000.

Case study: Textbook-free degree

In fall 2013, Tidewater Community College in Virginia partnered with Lumen Learning, an education nonprofit, to develop a fully textbook-free degree for their business administration program. They used existing open textbooks to create new course materials and replace traditional textbooks. After the first year of implementation, 98% of students said the classes were of equal or better quality than traditional courses, with 58% saying they were better.

Advocacy

In addition to tackling this issue on your campus, there are ways that you can urge state and federal governments to support open textbooks.

For example, in 2010, students helped pass a new federal law requiring publishers to inform professors how much their textbooks cost. This seemingly small change has made faculty members much more aware of the high prices students pay for the books they assign.

Government Funding for Open Textbooks

The most effective way that your state government can promote open textbooks is by helping to fund their creation.

Open textbooks require an initial investment to pay for the writing and editing process. Many existing open textbooks have been funded through grants from foundations or with funding provided by universities.

Now some state governments are considering providing their own funding for the creation of open textbooks. By providing a relatively small amount of money now to pay for professors to write new open books, governments can help future students save millions of dollars.

If you want to take your campaign off campus, start by letting your legislators know that you support the establishment of a state fund for the creation of open textbooks.





Our Partners



Student Government Resource Center

The Student Government Resource Center provides student government and state student association leaders with the training and resources to succeed, from how to run productive meetings to how to win changes in campus policies. For thirty years, we've been giving student governments the skills and know-how to accomplish their goals and be effective advocates for students.

www.StudentGovResources.org



The Student PIRGs

Student PIRGs (Public Interest Research Groups) are independent statewide student organizations that work on issues like environmental protection, consumer protection, and hunger and homelessness. For more than 40 years, students working with their campus PIRG chapters have been making a real difference in people's lives and winning concrete changes to build a better world.

www.StudentPIRGs.org



Right to Research Coalition

Founded by students in 2009, the Right to Research Coalition (R2RC) is an international alliance of more than 75 student organizations, collectively representing nearly 7 million students in over 100 countries, that promote a more open system of scholarly communication through advocacy and education. The Right to Research Coalition is a project of SPARC, the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition.

www.RightToResearch.org