What is PIRG?

• Nationwide student and consumer advocacy organization

• Employ organizers to work full-time on college campuses to train and develop students

• Tackle major social issues (in this case, higher education affordability)
About me

• UConn graduate
• 4 years as a student organizer
• 3 years in DC working on higher ed policy
Background

- Average student debt
- Number of students with debt
- Number of students defaulting
“In the ongoing nationwide debate about the rising cost of college, one of the most basic and direct costs to students is often overlooked: textbooks.”
How expensive?

Annual Percent Changes From 1978 for Educational Books, Medical Care, New Home Prices, and the CPI through 2014

Sources: BLS, Census Bureau

- CPI: Educational Books (College textbooks)
- CPI: Medical Care
- New Home Prices
- Consumer Price Index (CPI)

Carpe Diem AEI

The Student PIRGs
Make Change Happen.
How expensive?

The new era of the $400 college textbook, which is part of the unsustainable higher education bubble

Carpe Diem
How expensive?

A side note on cost vs spending.
Impact on students

- 65% of students report deciding against buying a renting a textbook because it was too expensive.

- 94% felt that doing so would impact their grade in a course.
Students reporting that textbook prices impacted how many/which classes they were able to take:

- No: 52%
- Yes, Somewhat: 32%
- Yes, Significantly: 16%
Student Stories

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Alternatives and their limits

Used textbooks
- Some cost savings for students
- Improve access

Rental textbooks
- Price is ultimately determined by price of new, print edition
Digital & E-Textbooks
(and online content suites, etc)

• Could offer students a ton of benefits!
  – Accessibility
  – Affordability
  – Interactivity/Customization
Digital & E-Textbooks
(and online content suites, etc)

• Could offer students a ton of benefits!
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Digital & E-Textbooks
(and online content suites, etc)

- What they usually end up offering students:
  - Page printing restrictions
  - Device use restrictions
  - Expiring licenses
  - Not that cheap!
or, OER

- Accessibility
- Affordability
- Interactivity/Customization
or, OER

• OER actually delivers on those things:
  – Accessibility
  – Affordability
  – Interactivity/
    Customization

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or, OER

- Accessibility
- Affordability
- Interactivity/
  Customization
or, OER

Kansas State

Spent

Savings for Students

Savings for Students

Tacoma Community College

Spent

In Faculty Grants

Savings for Students

UMass Amherst

Spent

Savings for Students

The Student PIRGs
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or, OER

• OER actually delivers on those things:
  – Accessibility
  – Affordability
  – Interactivity/Customization
A multi-institutional study of the impact of open textbook adoption on the learning outcomes of post-secondary students

Lane Fischer, John Hilton III, T. Jared Robinson, David A. Willey
Our work

BCC President Ellen Kennedy supports open textbooks! @dlemonq @HigherEdPIRG #textbookbroke

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In the Media

Cost of college textbooks out of control

Herb Weisbaum, CNBC  6:01 a.m. EST February 2, 2014

College textbooks cost too much — and something needs to be done about it, according to a report from the advocacy group U.S. PIRG.

The College Board estimates that the average student in this country spends around $1,200 a year on books and supplies. A single book can cost as much as $200.

Between 2002 and 2013, the price of college textbooks rose 82% — nearly three times the rate of inflation, according to a recent study by the Government Accountability Office.

Cost-of-college
College textbook costs more outrageous than ever
Herb Weisbaum
NBC News contributor
Jan. 28, 2014 at 8:47 AM ET

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Grassroots Organizing

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Moving Forward
(a sampling)

The Student PIRGs
Make Change Happen.
Moving Forward

The Student PIRGs
MAKE TEXTBOOKS AFFORDABLE

Faculty Statement of Support

As faculty members, we affirm that it is our prerogative and responsibility to select course materials that are pedagogically most appropriate for our classes. We also affirm that it is consistent with this principle to seek affordable and accessible course materials for our classes whenever possible. This includes "open textbooks," which are offered online to students at no cost.

Therefore, we, the undersigned, join more than 3,000 faculty to declare our intent to:

1. Seek and consider open textbooks and other open educational resources when choosing course materials.
2. Give preference to a low or no cost educational resource such as an open textbook over an expensive, traditional textbook if it best fits the needs of a class.
3. Encourage institutions to develop support for the use of open textbooks and other open educational resources.

The Student PIRGs
Make Change Happen.
Moving Forward

• Up to you!
Questions?

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