

Textbook Costs Continue to Rise For Students— Now Triple 1986 Prices

Diana McLay
Interrobang (Fanshawe College)

LONDON (CUP) — According to a new study conducted by the United States Government Accountability Office, college textbook prices have nearly tripled in price from December 1986 to December 2004—twice the rate of inflation.

Even going north of the boarder doesn't exempt Canadian college students from gouging textbook prices.

"Textbook prices in Canada and Australia tend to be similar to those in the United States because the instructional styles tend to be similar in that instructors select specific textbooks for their classes," the study says.

The GOA study investigated what factors contributed to the change in price and international differences in textbook costs by interviewing publishing executives, used textbook wholesalers, textbook retail store operators and the National Association of College Stores.

"I feel for kids with limited budgets and grants. In terms of tuition, books have gone up a lot in 20 years," said David Smith, Manager of Retail Service at Fanshawe College, who also said students are initially "stunned" at textbook prices.

"I was expecting [textbooks] to be expensive, but it just seems like one cost after another," said Lucas Shearer, first year Landscape and Design student, who spent about \$800 on books and supplies for his program.

The Ministry of Education recommends students in both college and university set aside \$1,000 for textbooks and supplies each school year. Considering the average college student pays \$1,820 for tuition, the bill for books and supplies equals more than half the amount paid in tuition.

Financial Aid have been issuing emergency bursaries for students who have trouble budgeting for essential supplies and according to Fanshawe Financial Aid Manager Doreen Whitehead, requests for funds to buy books are topping the list of emergencies.

"We have had so many requests I can't even count," Whitehead said about the amount of students who have recently asked for financial help to purchase textbooks. It usually takes 24-48 hours for students to receive up to \$500 for expenses.

"My experience has been if they don't have their books within the first two weeks of school they fall behind," Whitehead said.

"We don't take a high cut on books in comparison to clothing and merchandise," said Smith, who explained the Fanshawe College bookstore has a 22 per cent margin on texts.

Smith, who also teaches economics at Fanshawe, said it is hard for teachers to find relevant resources and most good information comes at a high price.

The GOA study claims the gradual rise in textbook prices can be associated with new features, such as website access and other instructional supplements.

"A lot of my books are new editions. They get you with those," said first year Developmental Services Worker student Heather Archibald, who spent \$500 on her first semester textbooks.

Although those supplements may aid both students and teachers, the GOA study points out those enhancements limit the longevity of texts.

"Wholesalers, retailers and others suggest that while supplements may be of value to students, the increasing practice of packaging them with textbooks effectively limits the students' ability to

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Federal money to help Atlantic Universities move research into the marketplace: \$1.54 million technology transfer announced at UNB

By William Wolfe-Wylie
CUP Atlantic Bureau Chief

SACKVILLE, N.B. (CUP) — Universities in Atlantic Canada are making it easier to commercialize their research through new cooperative initiatives and the federal government is stepping in to help. Springboard Atlantic, which was established by the Atlantic Association of Universities three months ago, was the recipient of a \$1.54 million federal technology transfer on Sept. 20.

This transfer is in addition to previous funding for an intellectual property mobilization intern award.

Organizations such as Springboard fall under the umbrella category of Intellectual Property Mobilization—meaning with an intermediary, information can be analyzed and ideas discussed between researchers.

Andrew Paskauskas, director of research at Mount Allison University in New Brunswick, said that through these technology transfer officers questions such as "Here's my new idea, do you think it has market potential?" become much easier to ask.

Technology transfer officers help to develop research by finding interested parties in industry and research patent possibilities. Through these officers, Springboard seeks to facilitate the move of "Canadian expertise and innovations from the labs and minds of researchers to final products in the marketplace," according to the organization's website.

With the membership of thirteen Atlantic universities, the new federal

transfer will help Springboard facilitate the movement of intellectual property and technology between most Atlantic universities and the wider business world. Springboard also offers proof-of-concept patenting and legal funds for university researchers.

Jack Stewart of Mount Allison University is an example of a researcher currently seeking a US patent for his research in the paralytic compounds found in the saliva of the northern short-tailed shrew (*Blarina brevicauda*).

With the synthesis of the compound he says human applications can include new local anesthetics and treatment for neuromuscular disorders. His research has been supported by Business New Brunswick and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

"Research for educational purposes is good but research that doesn't go anywhere is a dead-end street," said Bill Belanger, a third year student at Mount Allison University in New Brunswick. "Technologies researched won't come from the educational sector to the public sector. They have to go through the business sector first," he said.

Belanger voiced concern, however, the industry would begin to dictate the direction of research, rather than absorbing what is already being produced.

"This is a valid concern," said Paskauskas, but noted that a lot of power has been drawn away from the large corporations in recent years and transferred to the periphery.

Large corporations, he said, are more often paying attention to

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