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Rep. Haddad, Sen. Flexer Announce Success of UConn Program for Affordable Textbooks

Open-source textbook pilot program to save students thousands

Rep. Gregg Haddad (D-Mansfield) and **Sen. Mae Flexer** (D-Killingly) held a press conference today at the University of Connecticut Bookstore in Storrs to announce the results of UConn's open-source textbook pilot program. They were joined by UConn students, faculty, and administrators from the campus task force on open-source textbooks.

Rep. Haddad led the legislature's passage of Special Act No. 15-18 last year, which charged the Board of Regents for Higher Education and the University of Connecticut to each launch a pilot program to assess and promote the use of digital open-source textbooks. A [report](#) released on August 9 detailed the progress made in educating students and faculty about open-source textbooks and showed significant student savings.

"The cost of textbooks has skyrocketed within the last decade and it has become detrimental to students' educational advancement. When a student has to forgo purchasing a required textbook because of cost, they're at an unfair disadvantage from the moment they step into the classroom," **Rep. Haddad** said. "The results of this program show that the use of open-source textbooks can be expanded, offering an affordable alternative that's convenient for both students and faculty. This is an important step in making higher education accessible to students of all backgrounds."

Since 2006, the cost of textbooks has increased by 73 percent. A 2014 report stated that two-thirds of students chose not to purchase or rent a required course textbook, even though it could affect their grade.

"Textbook costs have dramatically increased in recent years and are a real barrier in keeping college affordable for many students," **Sen. Flexer** said. "Far too many students

don't buy all the books they need for a given semester because the costs are too high. Open-source textbooks are the way to lower these costs for students while providing quality textbooks that are regularly updated by faculty. I'm excited to see open-source textbooks used more and more in the state of Connecticut.”

The UConn task force obtained funding for faculty, led by Dr. Edward Neth, to create an open-source chemistry textbook. The textbook is available to students this semester, and will impact nearly 2,000 students for a savings of approximately \$600,000.

“It has been essential to have UConn students involved in this process - students are dedicated to moving this initiative forward,” said Dan Byrd, president of the Undergraduate Student Government (USG). “I'd like to thank Rep. Haddad and Sen. Flexer for all of their work on the open-source textbook program.”

“The University remains concerned about the rising costs of textbooks and has been exploring many ways to address this issue including the development of low-cost open-source textbooks that are now available to our students. In fact, we are working with several groups across campus, including Barnes and Noble, who have been supportive of this initiative to reduce textbook costs,” said Sally Reiss, Vice Provost of Academic Affairs. “We welcome the leadership of Representative Haddad and Senator Flexer in the creation of a Task Force focused on having all Connecticut public universities and colleges explore, assess, and promote the use and benefits of Open Education Resources. Their initiative has definitely increased awareness of and access to these low or no cost, high quality textbooks.”

In addition to securing funding for an open-source textbook, the task force has held press events, a symposium, presentations, and faculty workshops to increase awareness of open-source textbooks.

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