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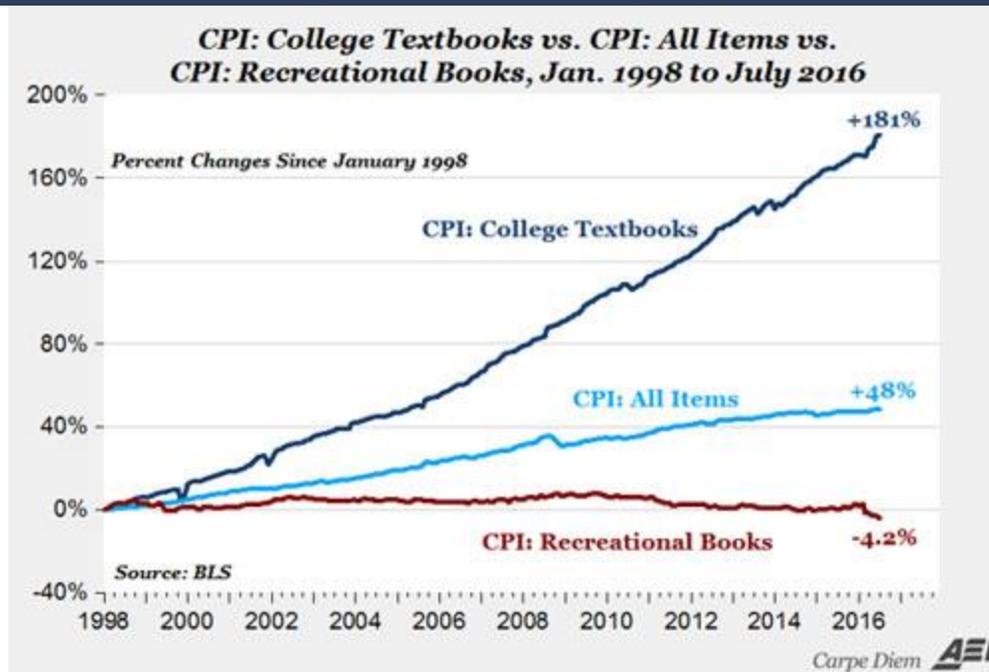
Dear UMSL Faculty Colleagues,

Do you recall when you were a student and wondering why textbooks cost so much? When most of us attended college, a typical chemistry textbook cost \$50. In 2017, that same textbook costs more than \$300. Many of our students incur significant debt purchasing the textbooks and course materials. It is estimated that college students spend an average of ~\$1,200 per year on textbooks and course materials, which can represent up to 15 to 20% of total debt at graduation.

With online publishing and open source sharing, there are meaningful ways to reduce the cost of textbooks and course materials. Educational resources used in our classrooms are becoming more open, timely and affordable, allowing faculty to take steps to control the cost of higher education for students. However, it is important that we ensure faculty academic freedom to choose materials that fit best with the curriculum and learning objectives.

The increasing cost of college textbooks is very notable. An [American Enterprise Institute report](#) compared the Consumer Price Index (CPI) from January 1998 to July 2016 for college textbooks to the CPI for All Items and Recreational Books.

The report highlights that, "In real terms, college textbook prices have increased by 90% while recreational book prices have fallen by more than 35%."



Source: [American Enterprise Institute](#) (September 1, 2016)

For these reasons, the four UM System campuses [announced their collective commitment to adopt open educational resources](#). In the coming weeks, we will also be launching a grant program to enable faculty to incorporate more affordable resources in courses. Providing high-quality, affordable education is central to our mission as the state's public higher education institution.

As a dedicated member of the UMSL faculty, we encourage you to join us in this collaborative effort. As you select materials for the upcoming semesters, we ask that you consider using free or low-cost resources listed on [UMSL's Open Educational Resources site](#). As listed on the library's website, there are a number of other sites that are available to download free open source textbooks including:

- University of Minnesota: [open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/](http://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/)
- Openstax: [www.openstax.org](http://www.openstax.org)

We recognize that these resources might not be available for all courses, but we invite you to explore alternatives.

We know that you care deeply about reducing the cost of attendance and improving access to higher education. We ask you to explore the many options that are available

through Affordable and Open Education Resources by contacting us at [umoer@umsystem.edu](mailto:umoer@umsystem.edu).

The UM System remains committed to be at the forefront of these advances in affordability and we are grateful for your contributions. A [UM System Task Force](#) is working closely with committees on each campus and we look forward to updating you on progress and future opportunities for incentives centered around this exciting collaborative effort that benefits our students.

**Mun Choi**, UM System President

**Tom George**, UMSL Chancellor

**Kristin Sobolik**, UMSL Provost

**Pamela Stuerke**, UMSL Faculty Senate Chair