

Textbook Affordability and Open Educational Resources

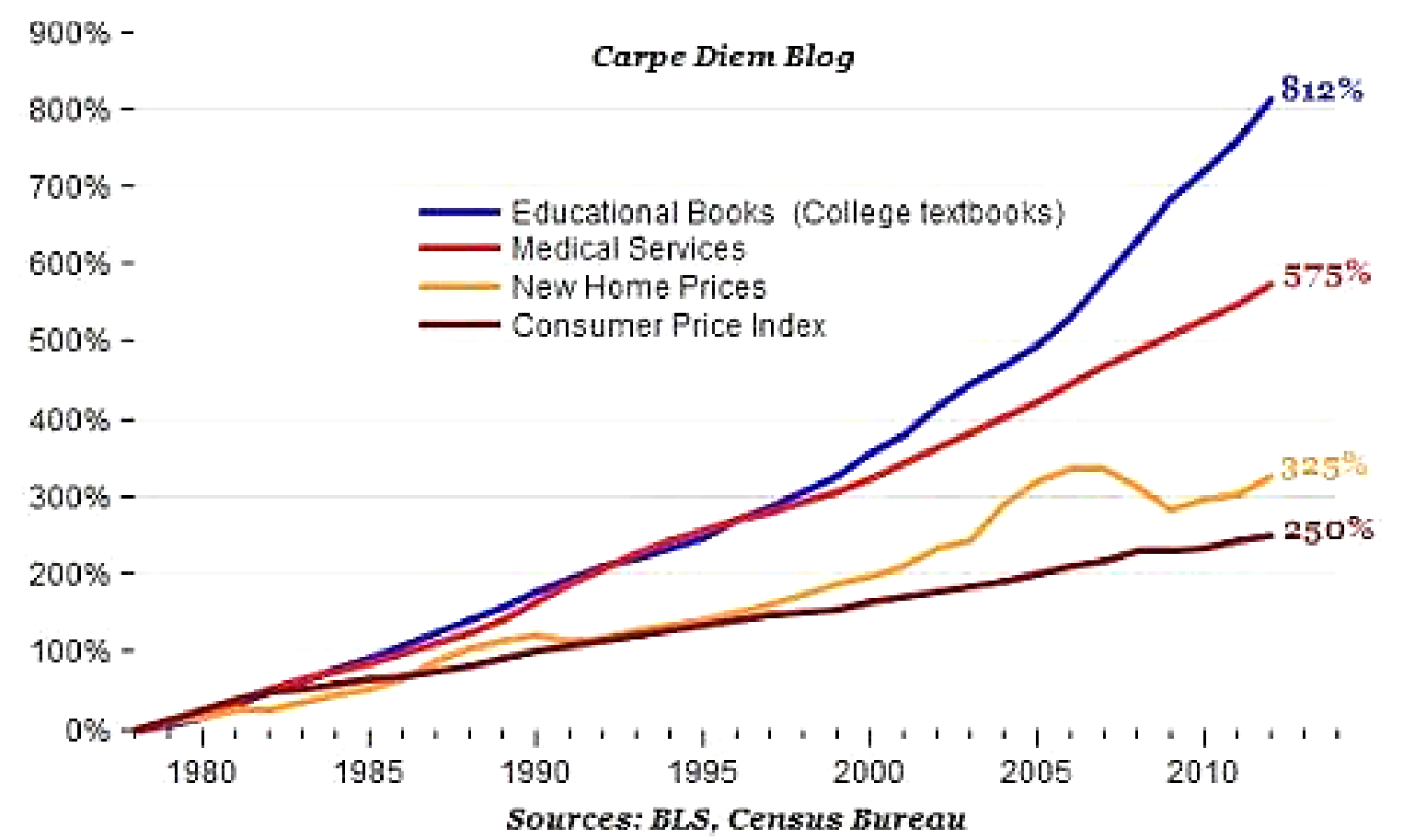
The problem

A college education is becoming increasingly unaffordable and inaccessible for many Idahoans. Over time, the financial burden of paying for higher education has shifted from the state to the student, and although costs are rising, funding is decreasing. Federal and state data show that very few students can finance their education by working part-time as they go to school. In Idaho, students would need to work over 34 hours a week at minimum wage to cover the cost of their education. College is expensive. One of the burdens we can address is the high cost of textbooks. Why textbooks? Because access to course materials has a disproportionate impact on the academic success of students. Textbook prices have been rising steadily since 1978, far over the cost of health care, new homes, or the Consumer Price Index. Although we pride ourselves on our comparative affordability in Idaho, the commercial textbooks students are expected to purchase are just as expensive as everywhere else. According to the College Board, all college students in the United States were expected to budget \$1,240-\$1,460 for books and supplies for the 2020-21 academic year.

In Idaho

State leaders want more high school graduates to continue their education - to prepare young Idahoans for a changing labor market and to help Idaho compete economically. Idaho has a long-term goal of seeing 60% of its 25 to 34-year-olds to complete some education beyond high school, but has been struggling to achieve it since it began in 2010. One big factor that prevents young Idahoans from pursuing a college education is the cost, and course materials may seem an insignificant place to start, but they can have a big impact. As tuition increases, lowering or removing textbook costs can have a powerful effect on the affordability of a college education. It could even improve go-on, retention, and graduation rates.

Percent Change Since 1978 for Educational Books, Medical Services, New Home Prices, and CPI



In their academic careers, the cost of required textbooks has caused college students to:

| | |
|-------|------------------------------------|
| 64.2% | Not purchase the required textbook |
| 42.8% | Take fewer courses |
| 40.5% | Not register for a specific course |
| 35.6% | Earn a poor grade |
| 22.9% | Drop a course |
| 18.1% | Withdraw from a course |
| 17.2% | Fail a course |

These are real quotes from college students in Idaho:

"I rarely can afford all of my books."

"Reducing the cost of textbooks would save my life! I spend way too much on books and school itself. I am a single mom and it is so hard paying for school, paying for my daughter's food, living, and bills."

"The less I have to pay for my tools of learning, the more time I can spend learning, rather than working."

"I can't afford both books and food. I have to choose to either eat or pass my classes right now."



These quotes are comments from University of Idaho students made publicly on a Change.org petition created by the Associated Students of the University of Idaho. [The petition and comments can be viewed here.](#)

Textbook Affordability and Open Educational Resources

What are Open Educational Resources?

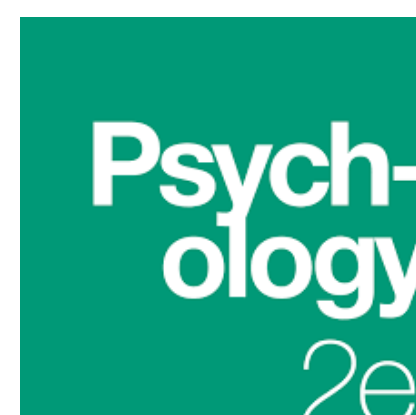
Open Educational Resources (OER) are “teaching, learning and research materials in any medium – digital or otherwise – that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits no-cost access, use, adaptation and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions.”

The term “open” in “open educational resources” describes content licensed in a manner that provides users with free and perpetual permissions to:

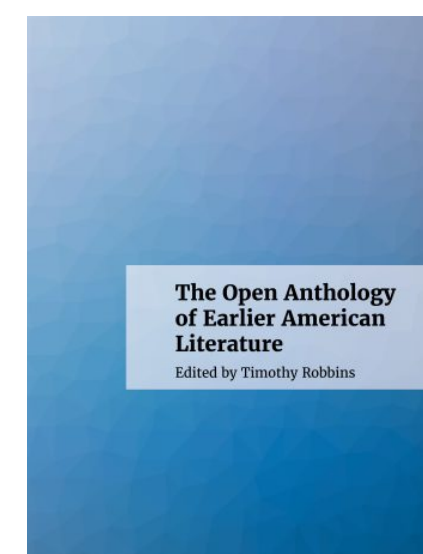
- **Retain** – the right to make, own, and control copies of the content
- **Reuse** – the right to use the content in a variety of ways
- **Revise** – the right to adapt, adjust, modify, or alter the content
- **Remix** – the right to combine the original or revised content with other material to create something new
- **Redistribute** – the right to share copies of the original content, your revisions, or your remixes with others

Examples

An open textbook is a textbook licensed under an open copyright license and made available online to be freely used by students, teachers, and members of the public. Open textbooks are a way to significantly reduce student costs while giving instructors the flexibility to reformat and customize their course material. They are an affordable, flexible alternative to traditionally published textbooks.



OpenStax Psychology, 2e



Open Anthology of Earlier American Literature



OpenIntro Statistics, 4 ed

"Open textbooks save money, which matters deeply to our students. But they can also create a new relationship between learners and course content, and if teachers choose to acknowledge and enable this, it can have a profound effect on the whole fabric of the course."

Robin DeRosa, Director of the Open Learning & Teaching Collaborative at Plymouth State University

Benefits



Educators

Augmenting/enhancing course materials – OER can supplement traditional textbooks with localized content or provide multimedia material to enhance the text.

Continually improved resources – unlike traditional textbooks and other static information sources, OERs can be regularly updated.

Expanded access to learning – without a cost barrier, more students will read the assigned course materials.



Administrators

Showcasing innovation and talent – because OERs are shared and used widely, they can be an opportunity to showcase an organization’s talents. Potential students may be impressed and faculty recruitment could be enhanced.

Ties for alumni – OERs provide an excellent way for alumni to stay connected to the institution and continue with a program of lifelong learning.



Learners

Improved access to learning – students can access OERs at any time, free of cost, with no limits on number of pages that can be printed, and without fear of losing access once the course is over.

OER content to access

- [Open Education Network](#) - Idaho is a state member
- [Idaho Digital Learning Alliance Open Content Catalog](#)

Idaho higher education institutions and OER

- [University of Idaho](#)
- [Boise State University](#)
- [Idaho State University, Textbook Tales](#)
- [College of Southern Idaho](#)
- [College of Western Idaho](#)
- [Open Education Week 2021](#) - a collaborative event with Idaho State University, the Idaho State Board of Education, and Idaho's other public colleges and universities

National resources

- [Data on impacts of implementing OER from Lumen Learning](#)
- [Student PIRGs research reports on textbooks](#)
- [SPARC on Open Education](#)

Sources

- [Trends in College Pricing and Student Aid 2020](#), The College Board
- [Benefits of Using OER](#), PennState
- ["Idaho's 'go-on rate' shows no improvement,"](#) Idaho ED News
- [Petition: Reduce the costs of textbooks](#)
- [How affordable are public colleges in your state?](#)
- [Percentage changes in state spending](#)