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Campaign tries to fight overpriced textbooks

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Posted: Monday, September 10, 2012 12:00 am

Jess Savarese

It's no secret that college students everywhere find themselves spending a lot of money on textbooks every semester.

To help reduce incidents of being overcharged, a Textbooks Suck campaign wants to promote alternative buying methods.

The campaign is a project of the University Park Undergraduate Association Academic Affairs Committee aimed to inform students about how they can save money when buying books.

"It's a campaign that's the start of a bigger project that has to do a lot with the policies at Penn State that end up making textbooks more expensive," UPUA Chairman of the Assembly Spencer Malloy (senior-philosophy and agroecology) said. "We can best decide what the students are concerned about by reaching out to them with nontraditional methods of communication."

These "nontraditional methods" include the Textbooks Suck Twitter account, "@TEXTBOOKS_SUCK." Through this account, they can directly communicate with Penn State students about their main concerns regarding textbook prices.

A table was also set up at Wednesday's FreshFest event where students could fill out their name, major and how much they spent on their books.

"Once we figure out the main issue that concerns students, we're going to do our best to take as much action on it as we can, whether that's through Faculty Senate or talking to the book store or something like that," UPUA Secretary Julia Schrank (junior-French and Spanish) said.

Student input is necessary to give this campaign an idea of what issues need to be addressed first, UPUA Academic Affairs Chairman Ricky Pooler said.

"We're just gathering information that we will later use to kind of create a consultative report for Faculty Senate on how to reduce textbook costs," Pooler (junior-electrical engineering) said.

Freshmen spent an average of \$469 on textbooks, based on data collected at FreshFest, Schrank said.

To spread knowledge of the campaign's goals, students are encouraged to buy textbooks from places besides the school directly.



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Rather than buying pricey textbooks that are possibly profiting professors or simply taking students' money that could instead be saved, students can follow plenty of tips to avoid this overspending, Schrank said.

"Some of our advice is don't get rental books because then you can't sell it back, so you're effectively cheating yourself out of money. As for E-books, the ones that disappear are kind of useless so you should probably actually buy a hard copy book so you can once again sell it back," Schrank said.

Another issue that the campaign wants brought to attention is the unnecessary use of textbooks that include pre-made tests. ANGEL is made for the exact purpose of offering tests online. Many professors, however, will require students to buy premium textbook packages for the sake of having these tests included.

Rather than have students pay extra for this, it would be more affordable to utilize ANGEL's option to administer online tests, Schrank said.

The goal is to have a form of action to improve these textbook costs by January, Schrank said.

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