



UO Bookstore explains prices

The bookstore has hung informative posters and asks students to consider the worth of their books' content

By Jenny Moore
Oregon Daily Emerald

The lines at the University Bookstore are waning, but complaints about the high cost of textbooks are still running high.

Thousands of students spent the first week of the spring term looking for the lowest prices by scouring Web sites and used bookstores in the hopes of finding a good deal. Staff members of the bookstore, aware that students are both savvy and critical consumers, are trying to lessen the sticker shock by explaining the rising cost of textbooks.

In an effort to reveal the costs of production, staff members hung a poster called "Where Does Your Textbook Dollar Go?" Students may have also noticed a 15-minute video called "Straight Talk About Text-

books" that was produced by The College Stores Research & Educational Foundation. The video is an appeal for students to consider the worth of a textbook not in dollar amounts, but in the value of the information presented within its pages.

Naturally, as textbook prices have risen, students are in the habit of determining value by balancing the cost against the return they make at the end of the term.

"In reality, the value of the book should be the learning opportunity from its content, not its resale value," said Chris Standish, book division manager at the bookstore.

For some students, the relationship between value and content raises complex questions. Students might ask if science textbooks, for instance, are more expensive because of the value of the information.

"Value and worth are two different things," said Eyon Smith of Smith Family Bookstore. "I think the University of Oregon Bookstore is trying to justify the cost of text-

books by saying there is an inherent value of the information inside the book. There are a lot of assumptions built into that viewpoint."

According to a study by Monument Information Resources, a market information source for the college textbook publishing industry, the average cost of a new textbook in spring 2000 was \$68.15. Accordingly, students spent an average of \$619 in "the college store" during the 1999-2000 academic year. Depending on whether campus bookstores are institutional, private or contracted, profits earned from textbook sales are allocated differently.

Because the University bookstore is owned by students, faculty and staff, profits "are frequently funneled back to the campus for other projects and uses," Standish said.

While students agree that textbooks are expensive, there is some solace in the fact that there are increasing opportunities to shop around. As consumers, students are learning the tools to make their own value judgments.

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