



MAR 29

# Push for Open Textbooks gains traction

Cole White



Rob Wall via Flickr

Textbook costs have long been a damaging hit to student wallets. Now, some people wish to change that.

The idea is open textbooks, which are textbooks open to the student body through the library. Under this program, students would be able to check out textbooks for a set amount of hours without having to outright purchase the book.

Mike Kenya, UMD Student Association's Representative to the Board of Regents, has begun talks with the library to move forward with the idea.

Kenya hopes to lessen the burden of textbook costs on students.

"Textbooks are stupid expensive," Kenya said.

The problem with instituting open textbooks on campus, according to Kenya, is funding, not the school.

"There's no systematic barrier to doing this," Kenya said. "This isn't an issue where we need to convince the chancellor it's a good idea. You have to convince independent teachers one at a time."

Kenya points to the fact that it is the teachers that have the academic freedom to design their curriculum and assign readings. For many, Kenya said, the offer isn't too appealing.

"Unfortunately, there is an assumed lower quality in open textbooks."

However, Kenya remains optimistic for the program. Funding would have to come from grants or be built into a student's tuition, a proposal he stressed is not as bad as it sounds.

"If you have a lecture hall of 100 students, in a class that is divided into multiple sections, those costs can be spread out."

Kenya added that under this system, fewer textbooks would be needed as they could be shared through the library, also reducing costs.

The push for this, Kenya points out, would need to start now.

"The beginning of the fall semester would be too late," Kenya said. "Teachers would need to get on board now."

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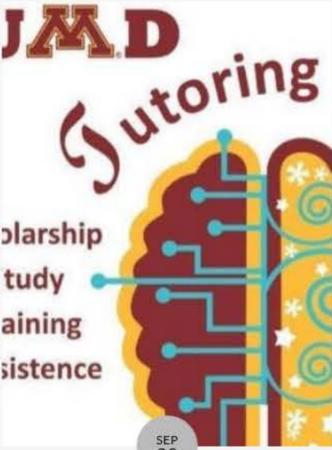
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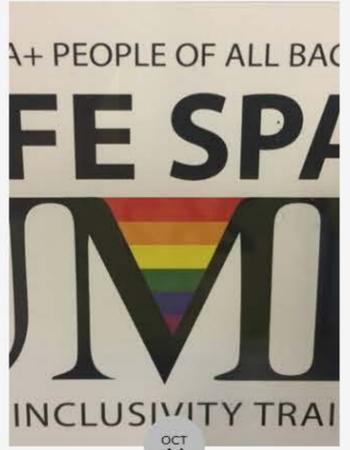


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