

Estimated Savings from ZTC Courses in Fall 2022/Winter 2023

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Prepared for UASU Executive Committee



Overview

This briefing estimates potential savings to students from courses using the BearTracks Zero Textbook Cost (ZTC) course indicator in its second year of implementation. This briefing is a follow-up to the [savings estimate](#) prepared for the pilot year. We estimate that participating courses saved students up to \$7.8 million in 2022/23. This is a moderate decrease from 2021/22 (savings of up to \$9.0 million), but largely stable.

Timeline

- 2018/2019: UASU VP Academic (and later President) Akanksha Bhatnagar begins asking for a ZTC course indicator at the University's Committee on the Learning Environment and the Open Educational Resources (OER) Advocacy Group. The UASU continues to ask for ZTC course indicators in following years.
- Fall 2021: Drawing on work by the OER Advocacy Group, Libraries, Registrar's Office, and UASU VP Academic David Draper, a ZTC course indicator is implemented in BearTracks.
- 2021/22: Over 2100 participating class sections save students up to \$9 million in textbooks and course materials they did not need to buy.
- 2022/23: ZTC course indicator remains active on BearTracks. Although Fall 2022 saw a shaky launch, usage stabilized in Winter 2023, and we believe it should be stable next year based on our conversations with the RO.

Methodology and Assumptions

As with the previous estimate, we note that some unknown proportion of these courses were already effectively ZTC (e.g. using free materials instead of textbooks for purchase). This briefing's calculations do not imply that the pilot project caused all the savings (i.e. that all participating courses made a shift from average-cost textbooks to ZTC because of the pilot program). These numbers should be considered students' maximum potential savings in 2022/23 because of participating instructors' choices to run zero-textbook-cost classes or students' savings from participating ZTC courses. This way of measuring potential savings is standard across other ZTC projects that we reviewed.

Our estimate works from numbers provided by the RO (1827 participating class sections, of which 127 were at Augustana and 44 at CSJ). We used the 2021/22 estimate's numbers for average class size (37) and average textbook costs per class (\$115, based on figures used in other projects). While students may (and often do) choose not to buy textbooks for a variety of reasons, including cost, we worked from other ZTC projects' estimates of mean savings rather than the maximum possible cost of textbooks. See the 2021/22 estimate for a more detailed breakdown.