The Valley

TEXTS for LESS

MSU students can borrow some textbooks

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It started as a fledgling effort a few years ago, a quiet voice battling the raging scream of rising textbook prices.

But eventually, word of the Maverick Textbook Reserve Program spread, and more and more people began using it.

Today the program boasts 7,000 annual checkouts of books in its growing title list, and it only figures to grow more.

“The program has doubled every semester,” says Brett Anderson, vice president of the Minnesota State Student Association.

The program works by having books available at the library. Students check the books out for two-hour stretches and can recheck them out if no one else wants to use them. Unlike a regular library book, books from this program cannot leave the building.

Initial funding for the program came from a $5,000 grant and another $2,000 from the Student Senate. But the real financial boost came when Barnes and Noble renegotiated its contract to be the exclusive bookseller in MSU’s Centennial Student Union. Barnes and Noble agreed to contribute $15,000 annually to the program, provided all books be purchased from the on-campus store.

That allowed the program to add titles, demand for which has been growing.

Also growing is the number of colleges offering textbooks for rent.

According to OnCampus Research, which is owned by the National Association of College Stores, 2,200 colleges last fall were offering a textbook rental program. A year earlier, only 300 colleges were doing so. Barnes and Noble has started a rental program at MSU as well.

Anderson said there have been some other smaller efforts at a book exchange at MSU, but nothing that has seen the kind of success the Maverick Textbook Reserve Program has seen.

“This is one of the most successful things, at least in recent memory, that the student association has done,” he said.

In the three years the program has been in operation, the Maverick Textbook Reserve Program has grown immensely. More than 7,000 books were checked last year. Said student senate vice president Brett Anderson, “This is one of the most successful things, at least in recent memory, that the student association has done.”

There are about 30 subject areas covered thus far, which covers about 60 courses. The program has roughly 300 copies of books.

Student Lyndsay Sadler, who helps facilitate study groups in a learning community for nursing students, said she’s used the program to grab the books she needs to help students study.

She said she likes the two-hour limit on book check-out.

“You don’t want to spend five hours a day studying one subject,” she said.

She said the program is also good for people who can’t afford to purchase textbooks, which can often cost more than $150, or for classes where a book is required but seldom used.

Anderson said faculty members have been good about pointing out when a book is required but is slated for limited use. In those situations, even if a class isn’t necessarily going to be taken by a lot of students, they’ll try to get at least one copy of that book.

Most of the books in the reserve, however, are from popular classes. Most popular, he said, is math.

Seems students aren’t interested in purchasing those books.

“Everyone has to take math,” he said, “but it’s not really a book you’re going to keep.”