



Report submitted by Robert Fischer September 2005

NATIONAL

HEA ACT

This fall, Congress will reauthorize the Higher Education Act. For complete details, please refer to the Special Report entitled, The Higher Education Act.

TEXTBOOKS

At the request of Congressman David Wu, (D-OR), the United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) conducted an audit of the textbook manufacturers providing textbooks to higher education students.

The GAO report found that textbook prices have risen 186 percent in two decades. In reference, textbook prices have risen at twice the rate of annual inflation over the last two decades. The report also found that the cost for tuition and fees has risen 240 percent in the same time period.

Student associations have criticized the textbook manufacturers for publishing new editions more often than necessary, increasing the costs for students and decreasing the used book market timeframe. The G.A.O. report also said the typical text was now replaced every three to four years, as opposed to four to five years two decades ago. Student advocacy groups are especially critical of the turnover for subjects like Latin and calculus, saying that there are few fresh developments to justify frequent editions.

The GAO report also criticized the textbook industry practice of "bundling" CD-ROMS and workbooks with textbooks.