Textbook costs rising

By Cara Latham
and Randy Townsend

Textbook prices charged by publishers have jumped 62 percent since 1994, more than four times the inflation rate, according to a new study released by the State Public Interest Research Groups (PIRG) and the NJPIRG Student Chapters, consisting of students from Rutgers University.

Ripoff 101: Second Edition, which surveyed the most widely purchased textbooks at 59 colleges and universities across the country, illustrated several gimmicks that publishers use to drive prices up.

Gregory Wolownik, a student from Rutgers University and a member of the Rutgers College Government Association (RCGA) and a student body senator, announced the results of the study last week at the State House Annex in Trenton.

“We’re concerned about textbook costs because they are now a significant part of college education,” said Wolownik. “Students may average $500 a year on textbooks and that’s a fifth of what it costs for tuition at a four-year college. This also limits access for many students, particularly low-income students.”

Junior Vanessa Flores reinforced the idea, saying that this year her first semester’s textbooks alone cost $550.

“I could be using that money for something else,” she said. “Since most college students have part-time jobs, that puts a dent in their wallets.”

The study found that the most widely-purchased college textbooks have new editions published about every three years, which cost nearly 50 percent more than used copies of previous editions. Once a new edition is on the market, typically a college bookstore will no longer buy back the older edition, causing students to lose out on earning money to sell back their books and forcing future students to buy the new editions.

“The prices of the average new editions have increased twice the rate of inflation compared to the previous editions,” said the study.

See ‘Rip-Off’ page 4

Students snubbed at polls

Forced to cast provisional vote

By Charlie Olsen

When Sen. John Kerry conceded Ohio to President Bush on Nov. 3, many who voted for him were disappointed because the provisional ballots hadn’t been counted.

At Rider University some students were disappointed for another reason: they had been told they needed to fill out provisional ballots. Here and across the nation the validity of students’ registration was challenged and they were saddled with the burden of proof.

On Election Day, Rider student and mailroom employee Hector Rosa went with two other students to the Lawrence Senior Center on Darrah Lane. He brought both the sample ballot addressed to him and his registration confirmation postcard.

When Rosa approached the desk with the other students and gave the board worker their names, she denied that they were on the list, he said.

“They were saying they can’t find our names,” he said. “I actually went through [the list] with this woman to see if my name was there, and she denied my name being there.”

One of those students was Shareef Hardin. Even though Hardin said that he had registered on campus, his name was not on the list.

The woman at the table instructed Rosa to fill out a provisional ballot—a ballot for voters who appear at the polling location, but whose registration cannot be verified on site.

Rosa brandished his two confirmation documents, which told him where to vote and what district he was in, but again the woman denied him.

See ‘Ballots’ page 2

Cameras catch vandals breaking gate arm in lot

By Jeff Frankel

Security cameras caught three Rider University students vandalizing the mechanical parking gate arm in the Fine Arts parking lot.

On Wednesday, Feb. 2, at 10:32 a.m., Rider security cameras observed three male students in the Fine Arts parking lot.

Security cameras were able to get them right then and there,” said Weaver.

“We went over to the Fine Arts lot and we were able to identify the vehicle through the tape,” said Vickie Weaver, the director of safety and security.

“We then identified the owner of the car that broke the gate.”

While campus security was writing the report and preparing to have the cars towed, they were also able to identify the three students because they were leaving class and had returned to their cars.

“We were there at the vehicles, those three students came out because it was the end of class so we were able to get them right then and there,” said Weaver.

Lawrenceville Police Department was called in due to vandalism and a report was written up for criminal mischief. Rider security also fined the students involved.

“We’ve charged the two students in the first vehicle with attempted or actual unauthorized entry,” said Weaver. “The second student was charged with unauthorized entry and vandalism.”

The cost of replacing the gate again the woman denied him.

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On Wednesday, Feb. 2, at 10:32 a.m., Rider security cameras observed three male students in the first vehicle and one commuter in another car, park in the faculty lot after one student broke off the mechanical arm to the gate guarding that lot. Security was immediately dispatched to the scene.

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“We then identified the owner of the car that broke the gate.”

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“We’ve charged the two students in the first vehicle with attempted or actual unauthorized entry,” said Weaver. “The second student was charged with unauthorized entry and vandalism.”

The cost of replacing the gate arm was considerably less.

See ‘Caught’ page 4