

Budget and Administrative Procedures Subcommittee Report on Textbook Affordability¹

February 2009

- 1) State law regulates that textbook information (title, author[s], year/edition, publisher, and ISBN number) be made available to students at least 30 days (Note: actual deadline to be established to insure compliance) prior to commencement of the semester in which the book(s) will be used. Instructors of courses must provide such information to the bookstore, which, in turn, will make the information available to students so they may shop for books to obtain the best price.
- 2) When practical, in Departments where multiple sections of the same course are routinely taught, the bookstore should be advised of this with the idea that the same book could be used across course sections and semesters. It is acknowledged that not all disciplines are amenable to using the same textbook for multiple sections because in some disciplines, the breadth of the course content is too extensive (which means, instructors have discretionary power to emphasize [i.e., teach] some topics while ignoring other topics). Also, in some disciplines, the subject matter for a course can be approached and studied from diverse orientations or perspectives. Instructors would retain the freedom to select books approached from an orientation consistent with their own preference.
- 3) Instructors should be cognizant of book costs when adopting books by proactively doing the following:
 - a. Inquiring from book publishers (prior to adopting a book) the expected retail cost of the book(s) to students (retail price includes bookstore add-on costs).
 - b. Considering ways to reduce the cost of the book(s) under consideration (e.g., ordering paperback instead of hardbound, de-bundling materials, using “loose-leaf” editions, black and white books, etc.).
 - c. Only adopting books or materials that will be used or needed by the students.
 - d. Considering the feasibility of assigning previous editions of books. It is acknowledged that the issue of adopting a new edition can be complicated by various pedagogical and market factors (e.g., some instructors may want books that contain the latest information for their course. Also, the bookstore must be able to obtain enough previous-edition books for all students if the instructor wishes to continue using an “out-dated” edition of the book).
 - e. Consider using “customized” textbooks, if feasible, to lower costs of books. It is noted that customized textbooks often are “consumable”

¹ Some of these practices are based on recommendations from other sources, such as the Minnesota Office of Higher Education, the Office of Program Policy Analysis & Government Accountability Report (OPPAGA; Florida Legislature), and the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges (NASULGC).

products and often will not be bought back by the bookstore due to a lack of a national market for custom books.

- 4) If permitted by law or publishing company policies, instructors may consider placing one or more copies (e.g., their “complimentary” copies) of the assigned book on reserve in the university library.
- 5) Students should be informed by instructors that books may be less expensive from private bookstores and from on-line bookstores compared to the university-affiliated bookstore. It is noted that a consequence of less books sold at the university-affiliated bookstore is less revenue to the university.
- 6) Establish a university-wide textbook advisory committee whose function will be to monitor the implementation of textbook affordability best practices and recommend modifications to the university’s collective efforts at lowering textbook costs. The committee should meet at least once per academic year or semester to address on-going concerns.