

Prince George's Community College
Academic Council Meeting
February 26, 2009
3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.; HTC133

Members Present: Angela Anderson, Robert Barshay, Janet Carlson, Sandra Dunnington, Shannon Fleishman, Mike Gavin, Oliver Hansen, Carolyn Hoffman, Mark Hubley, Lynda Ihekweke, Fatina Lamar-Taylor, Ed McLaughlin, Alan Mickelson, Nick Plants, Barbara Sanders, Scott Sinex, Rhonda Spells, Charles Thomas

Members Absent: Fatina Lamar-Taylor

Others Present: Veronica Alford, Teresa Bridger, Jacqueline Brown, Melinda Kramer, Lindsey Dodson, Tia Roebuck, Mirian Torain, Clifford Collins

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved as circulated.

Approval of Feb. 12 Minutes

The minutes were approved as circulated.

Information/Discussion Items

Provisions of Maryland HB85/SB183 Textbook Affordability and Community Colleges' Response (see attached PDF files) – J. Brown

J. Brown distributed the Senate version of the Textbook Affordability Bill (SB183) that will pass over to the House. The goal of this legislation is to lower the cost of textbooks/textbook expenses for students. This Bill requires specific procedures to be carried out by faculty and colleges describing how textbooks should be selected and sold. While MACC supports the *intent* of the legislation, the issue in question is *how* to meet the end of affordability and whether this bill will be meet that goal.

There has been a hearing on both the House and Senate bills. The Senate has approved the bill with the revisions noted in the handout. It was clarified that the two bills are identical with the exception of the line numbers, strikethroughs which indicate language that was removed, and inserts showing new amendments/wording.

J. Brown explained that an issue of particular concern to Community Colleges is the ISBN number (see page 8, G). Community colleges would like to post the ISBN number at the time the *final* order goes to the bookstore. However, this bill would require that the ISBN number be posted within a certain number of hours after the request is made. As set forth on Page 9 of the bill, ISBN numbers must also be posted on the website [within a certain number of hours after the request is made]. If the ISBNs are posted online, this could be considered advertising. Other bookstores (e.g. Borders, etc.) that want to advertise could do the same thing thus increasing competition. The sponsors of this bill are of the belief that competition will drive prices down.

Students have testified that they'd rather pay taxes to a bookstore supplementing their school.

Another issue is the misconception that, because faculty members recommend the books students buy, they have influence over the price of the books.

S. Dunnington clarified that posting the ISBN number at the time of the order may be too early because a limited supply of books or a change in faculty may lead to a change in the order. If the students purchase the book at that time, the book could be useless to the students. Our bookstore (Nebraska) has indicated that they can publish the ISBN numbers at an appropriate time in the process. Section 1 of both bills also calls for information from faculty members on how they select textbooks, including all books considered; verification that all faculty ordering textbooks have attended sessions regarding issues on textbook ordering; verification from faculty on how they compare prices; faculty documentation comparing old editions to new editions and why they chose one over the other. So, if this bill passes as is, formal verification by faculty on price comparison and explanation of text choices (tracking information) would be required. S. Dunnington expressed concern that the complex processes are so complex that we would have to figure out how to implement them, including who will track and retain all of the verifications required.

Section 2 of the bill requires specific studies with due dates of 2010 and 2011 (which will give evidence of what's behind textbook costs). There will be a textbook committee at the state level with Community Colleges represented (to conduct studies before the legislative period next year).

Council members suggested that the publishing companies are responsible for the high prices, not the college. The markup at our campus bookstore seems to be about 30%. For some reason, international copies of the same book can be found cheaper (as students have found). S. Sinex mentioned that he has questioned a book representative about this.

J. Brown also distributed a priority list for capital funding for FY2010. It is likely that the first five things on the list will be funded this year, including the Center for Health Studies.

PGCC's Task Force on Textbook Affordability (*see attached policy from U of MD System*) – **T. Bridger**

T. Bridger gave an update on the progress of the Council's Textbook Affordability Task Force. She and V. Teasdale will be serving on the Alternate Texts and Textbooks Committee, organized via Frederick Community College, for the Chief Academic Officers.

T. Bridger and S. Dunnington met with two attorneys from the DOJ anti-trust division and PGCC Attorney Mr. Dan Palumbo to discuss competitive pricing, and what we could do to make textbook pricing and purchasing more competitive (essentially requiring

bidding among the publishers). They suggested that faculty members should comparison shop. While this would be useful for high-demand courses using the same book, it wouldn't necessarily be useful for all. D. Palumbo will review the College's contract with Nebraska Bookstore (the campus bookstore) and re-evaluate it in light of this discussion.

Action

S. Dunnington will discuss the contract and pricing recommendations from the DOJ attorneys with D. Palumbo.

It was clarified that our average revenue from the Nebraska bookstore is in the \$300,000 - \$400,000 range per year. Council members were referred to the chart in the Fiscal and Policy note (page 9) illustrating various campus bookstore profits.

T. Bridger informed Council members that the Textbook Affordability Taskforce has met. The group may need to broaden their membership due to the additional responsibility of providing specific recommendations. Their recommendation is that we develop a procedure concerning textbook practices and usage.

The committee is also recommending that the college explore additional options for lowering textbook costs (including options and practices for both students and the faculty) to reduce prices of books before they reach the bookstore.

The committee is currently working on options to lower textbook costs. To that end, the task force explored information from a variety of sources and divided it into categories (*see handout*):

- 1) Choosing and purchasing textbooks (applies to faculty and departments)
 - Have departments look at a main textbook publisher for most or all of their textbooks.
 - Develop criteria for how books are chosen.
 - Have dept. chairs and deans communicate with publishers about textbook costs; negotiating textbook costs
 - o S. Dunnington questioned how would this be communicated with the bookstore since they are ultimately the purchaser?
 - o S. Sinex added that this is the first year the publisher has responded to his pricing questions even though he has been asking them for a while. It was clarified that part of the issue is that faculty do negotiate to lower the price but that's not the price the publisher charges the bookstore.
 - o It was clarified that these issues are the reason D. Palumbo is looking over the contract (terms, etc.). T. Bridger will provide comparative price information to D. Palumbo (on some of the same books we sell here) from Barnes & Noble and Borders. T. Bridger also pointed out that Maryland Book Exchange always comes in at a lower price than our bookstore despite the fact that they are also owned by Nebraska bookstore as well (there are only

3 place in Maryland that have Nebraska). How they determine prices should be determined.

- Look at bundling of texts. (Faculty members do not always have knowledge of bundled materials when they order, etc.) S. Sinex pointed out that we must receive the ISBN numbers separately because bundles have their own ISBN altogether.
- 2) Bookstore Issues to be further addressed
 - Financial Aid vouchers – using them in other bookstores
 - Collaborate with the bookstore to be sure there are enough books
 - Addressing bookstore markups
 - o Model: UCLA owns its bookstore and offers price matching (will match lowest price of the text students can find.)
 - o eBooks
 - o iChapters (offer particular chapters of a book so students can purchase only what they need).
 - Exploring alternative sources (i.e. paperback vs. hardback, digital books, textbook rentals, etc.)
 - o The bookstore does not like purchasing paperbacks due to the amount of damage that then prevents buying and reselling them as used books
 - Some publishers have been direct marketing to students
 - New editions (stick with the old book?): this must be negotiated with the bookstore (*see handout for all of this information*)
 - Information for students (placing books on reserve; alternative places to buy books, etc.)
 - ISBN Numbers and faculty produced items (guides, manuals, etc.) What about handouts that are made by faculty and produced via the copy center? (they have no ISBN and are not sold elsewhere) The bills currently in the legislature would require that they have an ISBN number and can be purchased somewhere else. Such materials may have to be put on line for students.
 - o M. Hubley pointed out that a few years ago, an attempt to post manuals online resulted in students printing these out on campus computers.

T. Bridger is also a faculty representative to the Faculty Advisory Group to MHEC. They are actively involved in the textbook issue. Members testified this year and last year on the textbook affordability issue. One of the DOJ attorneys will present to this group as well.

Three things must happen:

- Community Colleges must band together to do some of the pre-work should this bill not pass this year
- PGCC needs to explore alternative sources
- Make recommendations and changes to procedures and practices

Action

T. Bridger will ask for additional members to join the group, including someone from Student Services and other interested faculty.

J. Brown has prepared a letter for Dr. Dukes to go to Senators regarding the ISBN issue specifically.

It was reported that, according to one of the DOJ attorneys, between 1986 and 2005, textbook costs have increased over 300%. In addition, up to 72% of a student's expenses at community colleges and small 4-year colleges can be textbook costs (compared to 24% of the overall costs of education at a larger university.) M. Hubley suggested that there is no basis for comparison because books have improved dramatically during that timeframe.

Follow-ups (S. Dunnington)

Book vouchers (page 3 of T. Bridger's handout) – III.1:

Students on Financial Aid cannot use vouchers in another bookstore. However, a student on financial aid can be reimbursed if they use their own money to purchase the book elsewhere (at a lower cost) and take the receipt to the financial affairs office.

Council members agreed that faculty members are largely unaware of textbook issues.

Action

Therefore a textbook forum will be offered in March via the Teaching and Learning Center to bring make faculty members aware of these issues. J. Brown will give status of the legislation and T. Bridger will present on the current work of the Council's taskforce. Handouts on the issue will be distributed.

It was also determined that a representative from every division should serve on the textbook taskforce. ***T. Bridger will contact each of the division deans for additional members and get back to the Council by March 26th with at least tentative recommendations.***

General Education Issues at Prince George's Community College – S. Dunnington, N. Plants, V. Alford and/or C. Collins

S. Dunnington drew the Council's attention to discrepancies between MHEC and PGCC's general education minimum course requirements. In particular, our General Studies Program currently requires 37-38 credits; that state maximum is 36 credits for an AA or AS degree. It was suggested that 31-32 minimum required credits would be preferable because, in most programs, there are specific departmental requirements that must be included.

Council members were also asked to consider the issue of flexibility in gen ed requirements in general, keeping in mind that any change made to the number of required credits in the General Studies Program must align with our AA and AS General Education requirements as such. We should not be asking students to take an excessive

number of gen. ed. credits on top of those required to successfully complete their specific area of study. In many cases excess gen ed credits may transfer as elective credits that the students do not need. C. Collins and V. Alford noted that this practice also creates an advising problem and affects our graduation rate.

V. Alford pointed out that in order to transfer to a 4-year school, if that is the student's goal, they will likely wind up taking extra courses that are not transferable in their program in order to obtain a degree. Further, they may wind up missing what they should have had while they were taking non-transferable courses required by PGCC. It was pointed out that students have left to attend colleges with fewer or less stringent/prescriptive gen ed requirements. Additionally, if a student transfers with an excess of gen ed credits the institution can only take a certain maximum number of those credits. Excess credits will not transfer as gen ed credits, but as electives, and the student will graduate with credits they did not need.

S. Dunnington stated that these problems must be fixed. She said she has spoken with Dr. Dukes regarding exploring a quick fix if possible, but the larger issue is the catalog. We don't want to put departments in a position of scrambling to adjust their total required credits, so, within the next 1-2 months, Council must determine how we are going to correct this problem, and give all departments a chance to adjust as needed by next year.

S. Dunnington distributed a handout with sample gen ed requirements for the general studies degree at Hagerstown Community College. The major difference is that their students can choose what they want to take within the parameters of the required categories. At PGCC, students have little to no choice about what areas of humanities or social science they are going to take. Most community colleges are not nearly as prescriptive. They allow gen ed to do what it's supposed to do: allow students to explore, broaden their horizons, and decide whether they're really interested in one subject or another. V. Alford reiterated that PGCC must decide whether we subscribe to intrusive advising or allowing students the freedom to make their own choices.

R. Barshay pointed out that some students don't choose these courses to explore other subjects. Rather, they choose them based on the perceived difficulty level so that they may get them out of the way and move on to their major area of study. Thus, there are still some [humanities] courses that should still be required in order to prepare students for the real world who would otherwise choose not to take such courses.

It was suggested that PGCC lean towards flexibility – even with humanities – because, while there are survival skills that we may deem necessary for students, the school and/or program to which a student may transfer or plan to transfer may require something else. We should be flexible enough to meet the needs of students as the impact on them is the primary concern.

Action

The gen ed committee will develop their recommendation(s) on how to address these issues by the end of the Spring 2009 semester. The committee should consider potential

changes to the A.A./A.S. gen ed requirements in general, as well as to General Studies in particular.

Action Items

Developmental Courses and Letter Grades – B. Sanders, S. Dunnington

B. Sanders updated the Council on developmental courses and letter grades. Letter grades have been given starting fall, 2008.

Background:

The proposal went through the Curriculum Committee at the end of 2006 for each developmental course to receive letter grades. The curriculum committee was in favor of switching from the “P/F” system to regular letter grades as it’s more motivating for students to work for a grade and would also give advisors and instructors a better idea of how to advise the student.

In 2006, B. Reed and V. Bates (the Developmental Math chair at that time) put through proposals that were passed. P. Battaglia (Vice President for Academic Affairs at that time) signed off on the proposal but implementation was delayed due to the process of switching to Colleague. Therefore, the letter grade proposal was approved with the understanding that it wouldn’t be implemented for a year (or until Colleague was up). In researching the Academic Standing policy, however, B. Sanders realized that a critical step was never completed – addressing “P/F” grades in the college code.

It was determined that the Council should ratify this decision before S. Dunnington drafts it as an information item for the next Board of Trustees meeting.

A motion was made to ratify giving letter grades to all developmental courses. Council concurred unanimously

The goal is to have this issue resolved by the end of the semester so that current practice will be accurately reflected in the college code.

Reports

NONE

Questions & Answers

Open Discussion – Q&A

Due to errors in Table 11 of the 2008 Factbook draft, S. Fleishman will send an updated version of the Factbook to T. Roebuck for distribution to Council members.

**Setting Next Meeting Agenda – March 12th –
Academic Affairs Reorganization (S. Dunnington)
Protocol for Securing Classrooms (O. Hansen)**

Course Mapping in Light of GenEd Changes (M. Gavin)

Future Agenda Items:

Recommendations on textbook issues – March 26th (T. Bridger)

Demonstration of Web Portal – March 26th (O. Hansen)

GenEd Recommendations – April 23rd (N. Plants)

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Tia Roebuck, Recorder