

**Report to Academic Council**  
**From: The PGCC Textbook Committee**  
**February 26, 2009**

Members of the textbook committee: Terry Bridger (Chair), Angie Anderson, Lynda Logan, Scott Sinex, Mimi Bres

We have met and also investigated various ideas which were presented to us from a variety of sources. We are still investigating some items.

**Recommendations from Textbook Committee-DRAFT**

It is our recommendation that PGCC develop a policy concerning textbook practices and usage, similar to the one drafted by UMDCP. We also recommend that the college explore providing additional options for lowering textbook costs. This involves both practices and options for students, as well as options and practices at the faculty/department/college level which would reduce prices before the books reach the bookstore/students.

We have divided our recommendations into related themes:

**I. Information for Faculty and Departments on Choosing/Purchasing Textbooks:**

1. Have departments or groups of related departments look at using one main publisher for many/all of the department texts. This allows the depts. to get better overall prices, and the publishers are oftentimes willing to throw in additional perks-supplements, online or video tools, teacher training sessions, etc. Although these perks do not directly benefit the student, these perks allow the instructors to provide a more up-to-date and effective course, which is an indirect benefit to the student.
2. Faculty/departments should begin to explore negotiating for less expensive books. The US Justice Department asked our college to consider using comparison pricing for our textbooks. This would involve departments choosing multiple acceptable textbooks, and then negotiating with publishers to find the best price. This practice seems to take much time, expertise, and the involvement of more than individual faculty or even departments. It is our recommendation that more be learned about this practice (Mr. Palumbo is assisting with this) to determine if this is a feasible option to explore for our college.

3. However, some of these practices could be undertaken by faculty and/or departments. For example, having instructors and/or departments list particular criteria for appropriate texts, and then have the departments discuss with the various publishers the available options. In other words: have faculty/departments comparison shop for textbooks. In addition, faculty could consciously choose textbooks which come in various, less-expensive choices. This involves the use of e-books, paperback vs. hardback, custom publishing, and/or i-chapters (where individual chapters of a textbook are sold to students online.)
4. Although content is a primary concern of faculty when examining a text for adoption, price should be a concern as well.
5. Textbook adoptions should not change frequently unless there is a sound reason for doing so.
6. Departments should work closely with the bookstore to determine if the newest text needs to be ordered if the department would rather stay with a previous addition.
7. Have faculty only choose required texts which are going to be heavily used in the course. Any recommended textbooks should be placed on reserve in the library and students should be encouraged to not purchase recommended readings until after the first day of class.
8. Faculty should use online resources for course instruction and/or to supplement the textbook when possible, using free or low-cost resources.
9. The more desk copies faculty ask for, the higher book costs are driven. Examine placing in faculty contracts that at the end of the semester, part time instructors must return their textbooks to their depts. or pay for the text. Full time instructors must do the same if not teaching the course the following semester.

## **II. Bundling of Texts**

1. Faculty should only choose a bundle pack if all parts of the bundle are going to be used in the course. Although publisher representatives tell faculty that the extra parts of the bundle are free, in many cases, once the bundle gets to the book store, the price has been raised. Even if the cost has not been raised, having additional pieces in the bundle raises the overall costs of all books, and encourages publishers to continue this practice.
2. If there is a bundle pack, then the bundle ISBN should be listed as well as the individual ISBN's for each part of the bundle pack.

3. “Institutions shall make faculty aware of the option to request unbundled versions of textbook and course materials and of the price differential.” This is from the UMD Systems Textbook Affordability Measures which was adopted this week by the Boards of Regents. We are not sure if “institutions” means the publishers and/or the bookstores, but this is something we should explore as policy.

### **III. Bookstore Issues**

1. Financial aid now gives vouchers which are typically used at the campus bookstore. Dr. Dunnington was informed that there is a way students can use their book vouchers at other bookstores. However, when this committee inquired, we were told that they can only be used at our bookstore and that this is a common practice at colleges. We recommend that this issue be further explored and find out if there is a way to let students with financial aid buy their books elsewhere?
2. Collaborate more closely with bookstore to be sure enough books are in the bookstore.
3. Bookstore markups, the contract the college has with the bookstore, and the process by which the bookstore purchases and charges for books is being explored by Mr. Palumbo who will report his findings to Dr. Dunnington. Once this information is known, then further discussion can take place.
4. We have heard about another type of program from UCLA. The link is [http://www.uclaestore.com/ucla/textbook\\_student.asp?ref=ucla](http://www.uclaestore.com/ucla/textbook_student.asp?ref=ucla) where the campus bookstore is competing with Amazon and other online vendors. They match any online price. The students order their books from the college bookstore online and the bookstore packages them all up for pickup. The students can come to a separate counter (so no waiting in big lines) to pick up the bag with all their books already assembled for them, at the same price as online services charge. This link also shows other ways to obtain textbooks for students.
5. “Institutional bookstores shall provide faculty members who are placing book orders with current information about the retail price of selected course materials.” This is from the UMD Systems Textbook Affordability Measures which was adopted this week by the Boards of Regents. We might want similar wording for policy.

### **IV. Alternative Sources of Textbooks**

1. Have faculty ask publishers about ebooks, i-chapters, online resources, and unbound and/or paperback versions of texts. All these tend to be cheaper than hardback. The availability of these items for a particular textbook may make it more desirable for a department to consider for adoption.

2. Textbook Rentals- CSM is doing this with some success on a pilot basis. Upside- much cheaper. Downside- not wide selection; students must print if they want to highlight etc which could make the printing cost more than if they purchased the book; and questions about books used for more than one course. If students choose to purchase the book during or at the end of the semester, the rental price is deducted from the cost of the book. CSM owns their bookstore which might make this an easier option than for our campus. We have additional info on this process at CSM that we can share.
3. Digital textbooks (also called e-textbooks) are available for some texts and should be explored as an option for students. One place where this is done is Flatworldknowledge.com. They are a privately held company, where the founders are both previous employees of Prentice-Hall. Books are on line for free or can be purchased for flat fee (about \$30) in black and white with a higher flat fee for color. The scope of their offerings is limited, but growing. They will come to campus to present their concept. Flatworldknowledge can be used in with the bookstore or by instructors.  
The link is: <http://www.flatworldknowledge.com/>
4. Some publishers are selling books directly to the students, and in most cases this price is cheaper than in the bookstores. Some publishers are also providing more online resources (so that editions do not need to be done as soon)- these are either free to the students or purchased each semester (with or without the purchase of the textbook) for a price which is usually far less than if the materials were printed or for the price of a textbook. Some publishers are selling textbooks by the chapter (called i-chapters in some cases) so that students only need to purchase parts of the textbook.
5. International bookstores are often cheaper than US bookstores and seem to have the same exact textbooks. There is a caveat written on these books that says, "Not for use in the USA," but it would have to be explored if this is a legal issue (trade agreement or such issue) or just a publisher warning as they want you to buy in the US.

#### **V. New Edition Issues**

1. If faculty do not want to adopt a new edition, then collaboration with the bookstore should be explored to purchase old editions used.
2. If faculty, either as individuals or as a larger group, do not like the frequent change of editions that most publishers engage in, then further steps should be taken: a letter decrying this practice sent to the publisher(s), changing publishers to those that use less frequent edition changes, and/or examining alternative sources of texts/information for course content.

3. If an older textbook edition can be used in the class, it should be noted in the syllabus, with a note saying that the syllabus follows the new edition and it is the student's responsibility to get the needed information for class (change their copy of the syllabus to reflect new chapters or page numbers, if graphs, etc. are missing from an older edition to copy from someone else's or share the information).
4. Before adopting a new edition, faculty should examine it to be sure it has substantial changes to the content and/or readability. If not, then faculty should examine ways to bring new content from the field into the class without adapting a newer edition.

#### **VI. Information for Students**

1. Place a copy of each text used for classes on reserve in the library so students can find the newest edition of the text (if they are using an older edition) or so they do not have to purchase the book. Remind all students at the beginning of the class and in the syllabus that the textbook is on reserve in the library.
2. Have information placed in appropriate places-admissions, on bills, registration, in the catalog and course schedule, advisors, etc.- that textbooks are a necessary cost for being successful in college, and students should budget for textbooks as part of their overall cost of registration.
3. Provide students with alternative places to purchase textbooks-online, international bookstores, etc.

#### **VII. ISBN Number Issues**

1. Information on the ISBN's should be available for students from the date registration opens. This information should be available on Owl Link, on a Quick Link on the college website, and on the campus bookstore web page. (Verna Teasdale is working with the bookstore to ensure their webpage is more accessible.) If used books are not accepted for a course (lab manuals, study guides, etc.) this should also be listed in these places, as well as on the syllabus so students know upfront they need to buy a book new. We recommend that the campus bookstore webpage should be more easily found on the college website than it currently is.
2. There are many faculty produced items, such as lab manuals, study guides, etc. that have no ISBN and cannot be purchased anywhere besides the book store. Most are of low cost and are vital to the course. This committee would want to be sure this benefit is not eroded or eliminated in the quest for low prices or the requirement that only ISBN numbered textbooks can be used in courses.

### **VIII. Other Issues**

1. There is a new state-wide community college committee being formed headed by Mike O'Leary at Frederick Community College for examining alt-textbooks (alternative sources of textbooks other than traditionally printed textbooks). The first meeting is being set up now and Terry Bridger will be attending.
2. The FAC (Faculty Advisory Committee), which is an advisory group to MHEC of which Terry Bridger is our college representative is also actively involved with the textbook issue. Terry will provide information to the textbook committee and other interested parties as it is available.
3. Terry, Dr. Dunnington, and Mr. Palumbo will continue to explore the ideas presented by the US Justice Department and will bring this information to the textbook committee and other interested parties.