

**UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION POLICY COMMITTEE**

***Resolution on the Ad Hoc Textbook Cost Committee  
Recommendations***

**WHEREAS** the rapidly rising cost of textbooks is of growing concern to students and faculty alike, especially when the perceived educational value of these resources is increasingly at risk; and

**WHEREAS** in October 2004 the Faculty Senate authorized the formation of a university-wide Ad Hoc Committee on Textbook Costs to consider what can be done to make textbooks more accessible to students; and

**WHEREAS** the Ad Hoc Textbook Cost Committee has made its recommendations (see attached), no one of which will materially solve the problem of rising textbook costs, but the sum of which should make a significant difference to student and faculty choices in the market; and

**WHEREAS** the Undergraduate Education Policy Committee has reviewed the Committee's recommendations and generally supports them;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that Faculty Senate endorse the Ad Hoc Textbook Cost Committee recommendations and begin a campus-wide conversation about the university's response to the problem; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that Faculty Senate recommend an effort to ensure that students know about the relative cost of textbooks as a feature of their education, the options available in purchasing textbooks, and the value of textbooks in the learning process.

**FS0522**

**[Apologies—The following pages were not initially posted with the page one resolution]**

## **AD HOC TEXTBOOK COST COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS**

DRAFT version January 18, 2005

### **Executive Summary**

The university must address the problem of rapidly rising textbook costs to ensure that undergraduate students have the academic resources they need to succeed. To this end, an Ad Hoc Textbook Cost Committee, convened by the SIUC Faculty Senate, considered several proposals, no one of which is sufficient by itself to reduce textbook costs by much. But all of the Committee's present recommendations together indeed enable students and their instructors to make better informed choices in the textbook market.

The Committee wishes to emphasize the important role of the faculty in choosing appropriate texts, ordering them in a timely fashion, and using them effectively in the classroom. For help in these and related activities a webpage is invaluable. The Committee also urges the Undergraduate Student Government to create a book exchange and a webpage for students. The better informed the students, the better their access to the books they need for success. Ultimately, the real value of textbooks lies in the learning they make possible.

### **Introduction**

Of increasing concern to students and parents are the rising costs of college textbooks. According to Follett Bookstores, the national average textbook costs exceed \$400 (per student each semester), and the prices are increasing at double the rate of inflation as measured by the Producer Price Index. National and local surveys of students indicate a growing resistance to expensive textbooks which are not extensively used in the courses they take. Because of the expense but also because of changes in publishing and marketing, perceptions are increasingly widespread that textbooks are no longer the value they used be. Some students are even foregoing the purchase of books altogether.

The University needs to address these very real concerns. Students and faculty must be provided a wider range of options, and they need to be better informed about them in order to reduce the cost of textbooks and to enhance their perceived value to university-level course work. In this endeavor, much depends on informing instructors and students alike on the choices they have in the textbook market. Armed with better information, faculty can adopt the most appropriate texts in a timely fashion, and students can buy them at the best price they can find, either locally or elsewhere. The more we all know about the textbook market, the wiser our choices will be and the greater the value of the educational enterprise.

To that end, the Ad Hoc Textbook Cost Committee recommends the following proposals to enhance options and to inform the University community about them. Please note that no single recommendation will solve the entire problem of expensive textbooks and student access to them. Many of the proposals are targeted to specific situations that may not be appropriate for everyone. But

collectively these recommendations should make a difference in both the cost and the value of textbooks which are assigned by faculty and which are used by the students in their courses. At least that is our intent.

How these proposals are implemented is a problem we do not address, except in a couple of instances. But we do agree that the principle actors in these proposals, the faculty and the students, should take the leading role. Their interests in education and the market provide the most powerful incentive to make the recommendations work. We also agree, however, that the University administration must provide the effective structures and procedures to improve better student access to the books they need and to enhance the value of their textbook purchases.

### **Specific Proposals:**

1. expanding the reserve system in Morris Library to include more textbooks provided as desk copies to faculty by the publishers;
2. creating a student-to-student book exchange, in place and/or on-line, preferably run by students and supported by the present Student Activity Fee;
3. modifying the University's textbook author policy to include guidelines on book pricing to reduce costs to students;
4. establishing a regularly updated university webpage for faculty that provides specific information on:
  - a. the value of textbooks as learning resources, how best to use them in class, how textbooks are priced and marketed,
  - b. publisher representatives and how to negotiate with them to reduce costs to students,
  - c. how to customize textbooks to reduce costs to students,
  - d. web-based and CD options to reduce costs to students,
  - e. an expanded library reserve system for textbooks,
  - f. the availability of older editions for course adoption,
  - g. the university policy for faculty authors of textbooks which are adopted for those faculty members' course use,
  - h. order forms and instructions, including deadlines, promoting early textbook adoption, and
  - i. links to local and national bookstores' webpages to help with textbook adoption;
5. establishing a regularly updated university webpage for students that provides information on:
  - a. the value of textbooks as learning resources, how and why they matter,
  - b. course textbook adoptions, including editions, for each semester,
  - c. a student-to-student book exchange,
  - d. an expanded library reserve system for textbooks,
  - e. links to on-line information about prices and textbook purchase options, and
  - f. links to University and Carbondale bookstore webpages;

6. notification of these pages by:

- a. visible links from the university's webpages,
- b. regular, well-timed ads in the DE,
- c. flyers and posters on campus,
- d. notices in regular campus mailings (admission packet, SOAR materials, housing contracts, grades, billings, etc.),
- e. bookstore publicity,
- f. Faculty Senate Notice Listserv and Student Message Board System;

7. discouraging faculty from selling second-hand books to dealers on campus.

### **Members of the Ad Hoc Textbook Cost Committee**

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Rick Grabowski, Economics

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