Meeting Minutes

Textbook Affordability Committee

Meeting Date: Friday, March 4, 2011, 1:00PM–2:30PM, PC 112

In Attendance:
Valerie Lynn Boulos, Collection Development Officer, Green Library
Meaghan Connolly, General Manager, FIU Bookstore
Elena Montano-Gilley, Account Manager, Business Services
Dacia Simpson, Assistant Director, Office of Class Management
John Stuart, Faculty Fellow, Office of the Provost, chair
Hannibal Travis, Associate Professor, College of Law
Sanjeev Udhnani, Student Government Association

Absent:
Susana Guerra, Assistant Director, Marketing, Business Services
Jeff Krablin, Assistant Vice President, Business Services
Caroline Simpson, Associate Professor, Department of Physics
Alessa Torres, Student Government Association

1. Approval of Meeting Minutes
   Meeting Minutes were approved with corrections (including to Valerie’s, Dacia’s, and Hannibal’s titles).

2. Review 3.8.11 report on textbook affordability to the Faculty Senate
   Committee members discussed the report to the Faculty Senate and corrections and emendations to the report. Dacia discussed the new Panthersoft tool for including textbook information on course lists. Meaghan asked about what happens when the information uploaded by faculty or schedulers is incorrect? She mentioned that the University of Mississippi, which runs a similar textbook information tool to this one, has reported difficulties getting and recording accurate information. [Follow-up: John spoke with Jeff Gonzalez about this and he said he would bring this up in an upcoming meeting with Jeff Krablin and others about this textbook tool.]

   Dacia also pointed out that there were additional funds this summer for courses. Therefore the schedule had been delayed by a few days in order to give schedulers time to add any new courses.

   See revised report at the back of these minutes.

3. Review initial Summer C textbook adoption reminder memo from Provost
   The initial memo was discussed and revised. [The provost also revised the memo, and it was sent out on 3/7/11. See attached.]

4. Review updated faculty survey
Committee members read through and made suggestions to the survey. These recommendations included:

- 3c. Add language to the effect of “please elaborate.”
- 3d. Instead of N/A (go to 10), it should read (go to 6). It seemed to committee members like question 6 was also fairly general and could be answered by someone who hasn’t ordered textbooks in a while.
- 4. This question could include an additional answer, “Other,” maybe as 4f.
- 5. ...your textbook order(s)...
- 5.1 ...submit your order(s)...
- 7. ...Which of the following best summarizes your response
- 7b. You prefer...
- 7g. ...to view your order...
- 7. New option at the end: There are issues with the administrative support
- 8. ...you have recommended that students utilize...
- 8.1 should be changed to 9.1.
- 9.1 should be changed to 10.1
- 10.1 should be changed to 11.1
- 11b. If the answer is no, then provide a pop up with an overview of the regulation. John could help out with this.
- 12. Add e. Don’t know

Similar modifications should be made to the Department Contacts survey.

5. Discussion of upcoming committee meetings over the summer

Committee members looked agreed upon the following dates for summer meetings:

- Friday, May 20, 2011, 11–12:30, PC 112
- Friday, July 15, 2011, 11–12:30, PC 112
- Friday, Sept. 9, 2011, 11–12:30, PC 112

6. New items

Committee members reviewed a brief report on the Textbook Affordability initiative at FIU to the Board of Governors. The report was put together by Elena Montano-Gilly and Jeff Krablin. One of the most interesting questions in the report addressed how to figure out the average savings to students being provided by the Textbook Affordability ruling. Elena recommended that the report be withheld until figures in this report were reviewed for accuracy.

7. Next meeting Friday, May 20, 2011, 11–12:30, PC 112
Overview
The cost of textbooks and other instructional materials have been increasing along with the cost of a college education. High textbook costs decrease the affordability of an education at FIU and negatively impacts student accessibility to higher education. In response to many of these issues, Florida Statute 1004.85 on Textbook Affordability was voted into law in 2008. This statute required that all community colleges and state universities develop and approve specific regulations regarding textbook affordability by March 1, 2009. FIU Board of Trustees (BOT) Regulation 1103 was developed in early 2009. A summary of this regulation and of the Florida Statute may be found at the end of this report.

The first response to the implementation of FIU BOT regulation 1103 by the Office of the Provost was the establishment in the fall of 2009 of the eleven-member Textbook Affordability Committee as an interdepartmental group of FIU students, faculty, staff, and bookstore staff (see below for membership). The committee is chaired by the Faculty Fellow and reports directly to the provost. The committee’s mission is to develop, evaluate, and recommend for implementation initiatives designed to reduce the cost of textbooks to students.

Acquiring textbooks has become more complex than it was when many of us were in school. Students now make decisions about where they acquire their textbooks (online or in person) and about which information delivery systems are available to access their textbooks. Some of these current delivery systems include:

- purchasing used or new printed textbooks
- renting new or used printed textbooks
- purchasing an e-textbook without an expiration date
- renting e-textbooks (publishers determine whether an e-textbook is rented and provide the expiration dates)

It is imperative that students are informed in a timely manner of the textbooks required for their courses. This helps them to identify the best purchase options and prices. Students with need may apply for financial assistance to purchase textbooks. Of course, for this to be effective, students must have the information available on the cost of required textbooks.

For several years, the University Bookstore textbook buy-back program has provided important savings to students. Students may sell books back for up to 50% of the original price they paid originally if the books have been adopted for upcoming classes and are needed by the bookstore. If the textbooks have not been adopted for upcoming classes, the amount students may sell the book back to the bookstore may be considerably reduced. This buy-back price depends upon a number of factors including national demand. In AY 2009–10, for example, $1,292,778 was given back to students through the bookstore buy-back program. This program requires that the bookstore staff know of future textbook adoptions in a timely manner and provides evidence that the timing of adoptions is critical to increasing textbook affordability. Adoption of these policies will aid in the purchasing of more used textbooks by the bookstore and thus a higher availability of said textbooks for students in the upcoming semester. It is also the case that an increase in the
number of books bought back by the bookstore translates directly into an increase in the availability of more affordable used books for students in future semesters.

One of the most significant advances made by the committee has been the encouragement of the development and customization of a Panthersoft tool for disseminating textbook information. This initiative became in the early days of the committee with the inclusion of a link of Panthersoft to the University Bookstore website and increases in information shared between the bookstore and FIU. In the Fall 2011 semester, a new Panthersoft textbook tool will be placed online made available to students. It will allow faculty members and departmental schedulers to attach textbook and instructional information directly to course information located on Panthersoft. This will provide students with direct access to textbook information very soon after it has been uploaded. It will also allow faculty and schedulers a streamlined way to adopt textbooks and instructional materials and offer simpler and more direct communication with the University Bookstore.

Finally, Textbook Affordability initiative at FIU has been involved in discussions concerning an agreement between the provost, the university deans, and the department chairs to develop a system of financial disincentives for faculty members whose courses do not have textbooks assigned in a timely manner. All textbook orders must be made earlier than 45 days before the start of classes. Exempted are courses in which no textbook is required, or those with other special conditions. The provost and deans have discussed reducing or eliminating discretionary funding (for travel, etc.) for full-time faculty members who are tardy in their orders, and docking pay during a future semester of employment for adjunct faculty.

2010–2011 Textbook Affordability Committee Members
- Valerie Lynn Boulos, Collection Development Officer, Green Library
- Meaghan Connolly, General Manager, FIU Bookstore
- Susana Guerra, Assistant Director, Marketing, Business Services
- Jeff Krablin, Assistant Vice President, Business Services
- Elena Montano-Gilley, Account Manager, Business Services
- Caroline Simpson, Associate Professor, Department of Physics
- Dacia Simpson, Assistant Director, Office of Class Management
- John Stuart, Faculty Fellow, Office of the Provost, chair
- Alessa Torres, Student Government Association
- Hannibal Travis, Associate Professor, College of Law
- Sanjeev Udhnani, Student Government Association

Goals of the Committee
Thirty days before the beginning of classes during the Spring 2009 and Spring 2010 semesters, FIU has been at 86% and 85% compliance respectively with textbook orders. Fully 15% of the courses that were supposed to have textbooks ordered did not have them thirty days before the beginning of classes. Anecdotal evidence shared by the University Bookstore indicates that on average at other SUS schools only about 5% of courses that are supposed to have textbooks have not had them ordered at that time. Since the FIU BOT regulation states that textbooks must be ordered forty-five days before the beginning of classes each semester, our primary goal is to bring our average textbook adoption rate to 100% for courses requiring textbooks when measured forty-five days before the beginning of classes.

Finally, an important goal of the committee has been to establish metrics of the effectiveness of the committee’s activities. The most immediately available data come from the University Bookstore, which tracks e-book sales and rental orders each semester. Another immediately available metric is the amount of money returned to the students through the textbook buy-back program at the University Bookstore. In recent years, there has been a noticeable decline in the number of textbooks being offered for buy-back as more students are purchasing e-textbooks or
renting their instructional materials. With this diversity of options and shifts in the purchasing/renting trends, it has become more difficult to measure the actual savings to students from FIU’s textbook affordability initiatives. Committee members have discussed creating surveys to be sent out each semester to collect data on how much students spend on textbooks and compare that data over time.

Committee Activities
The committee has been looking at a series of innovative ways to streamline the textbook ordering process, increase student access to information on textbooks, and enhance the affordability of textbooks. The following are a selection of the committee’s activities since Fall 2009:

◦ Encourage the successful development of a textbook information link that is currently available to students through self-service on Panthersoft.
◦ Facilitate critical interdepartmental communication and collaboration on issues of textbook adoptions.
◦ Advise the University Bookstore on methods to reach faculty and department contacts for textbook ordering.
◦ Review the University Bookstore reports on textbook orders to monitor successes and future needs.
◦ Create a website on Academic Affairs that houses a collection of items related to textbook affordability. These include the texts of the relevant laws and regulations, and meeting agendas and minutes documenting the activities of the committee. See: http://academic.fiu.edu/textbook_affordability.html.
◦ Create and disseminate textbook ordering reminders for the faculty and department chairs each semester.
◦ Urge the inclusion of textbook adoption deadlines to the 2010–11 and 2011–2012 Academic Calendars.
◦ Develop surveys to locate some of the primary obstacles to timely textbook ordering.
◦ Encourage the development of Panthersoft tools that allow textbook and instructional media requirements to be linked directly into the students’ class search detail page.
◦ Review and encourage new and more affordable means of textbook delivery, including potential rentals and e-textbooks.
◦ Advise on a system of fiscal deterrents to late textbook adoption.

Textbook Affordability: Florida Statute 1004.85 and FIU BOT Regulation 1103
The formation of the Textbook Affordability Committee was triggered by Florida Statute 1004.85, which was passed in 2008 and states that:

(3) Community colleges and state universities shall post on their websites, as early as is feasible, but not less than 30 days prior to the first day of class for each term, a list of each textbook required for each course offered at the institution during the upcoming term. The posted list must include the International Standard Book Number (ISBN) for each required textbook or other identifying information, which must include, at a minimum, all of the following: the title, all authors listed, publishers, edition number, copyright date, published date, and other relevant information necessary to identify the specific textbook or textbooks required for each course…

(4) By March 1, 2009, the State Board of Education and the Board of Governors each shall adopt policies, procedures, and guidelines for implementation by community colleges and state universities, respectively, that further efforts to minimize the cost of textbooks for students attending such institutions while maintaining the quality of education and academic freedom. The policies, procedures, and guidelines shall provide for the following:
(a) That textbook adoptions are made with sufficient lead-time to bookstores so as to confirm availability of the requested materials and, where possible, ensure maximum availability of used books.

(b) That, in the textbook adoption process, the intent to use all items ordered, particularly each individual item sold as part of a bundled package, is confirmed by the course instructor or the academic department offering the course before the adoption is finalized.

(c) That a course instructor or the academic department offering the course determines, before a textbook is adopted, the extent to which a new edition differs significantly and substantively from earlier versions and the value of changing to a new edition.

(d) That the establishment of policies shall address the availability of required textbooks to students otherwise unable to afford the cost.

In response to this statute, the FIU Board of Trustees approved regulation 1103, which, in brief, requires that: 1) 60 days before the first day of class, the Provost’s office send a written reminder to the faculty of their obligation to order textbooks by the given university deadlines; 2) all textbooks and instructional materials be ordered 45 days before the first day of class; 3) instructors must distinguish between required and recommended textbooks; 4) textbook adoption orders be posted on the University Bookstore’s website and linked to the student registration system prior to the first day of registration; and 5) financial aid applications consider the eligibility of students to receive funds for textbooks and other instructional materials.

Additional information on the state statute and FIU regulation, and committee meeting agendas and minutes may be found on the Textbook Affordability link on the Academic Affairs website: http://academic.fiu.edu/textbook_affordability.html.
MEMORANDUM

To: University Community
From: Douglas Wartzok, Provost
Date: March 7, 2011
Re: Summer 2011 Critical Deadlines for Textbook Adoptions

At this point in time the FIU Bookstore has textbook orders for approximately 7% of the Summer 2011 courses. Official registration begins on April 4. It is essential that faculty members submit their textbook orders for Summer 2011 courses to the Bookstore as soon as possible or at the latest by March 25, 2011. Your compliance with this regulation helps to provide timely information about textbooks and other instructional materials to our students. In your order, please be sure to distinguish between required and recommended textbooks and note when previous editions are acceptable. If no textbook is required for a course, please provide that information to the bookstore on the attached order form. Timely textbook information allows students to take advantage of available purchase and rental options, and enables them to better predict and manage textbook costs.

As a reminder, in 2009 the FIU Board of Trustees passed Regulation 1103, which established 45 days before the first day of classes as the deadline for the adoption of all required and recommended textbooks for classes taught in all FIU Colleges and Schools. Faculty and students may find additional information at: http://academic.fiu.edu/textbook_affordability.html.

On-time textbook orders also allow the FIU bookstore to pass greater savings on to students by buying back used textbooks for later resale. In the last academic year this added up to $1,292,778 in savings for our students.

If you have not already done so, please place your textbook orders today. Follow the link on the FIU Bookstore or use the attached textbook adoption form.