

Recommendations Consequent to the Connecticut Study of Textbook Costs

CT Department of Higher Education
September 19, 2006

Questions

- What can be done at the State Level?
- What can be done at the institutional level?
- What can be done by bookstores? And,
- What can be done by publishers?

Recommendations from the Connecticut Summit on Textbook Costs are . . .

What can be done at the State Level?

- Increase financial aid for students to cover unmet need
- Explore the feasibility of creating a course material need-based grant
- Consider modifying regulations to include more textbook costs as part of total educational costs
- Modify the timing of financial aid awards to students (if earlier, students can look for used books and on-line)
- Provide pre-tax models for students (and parents) to set aside money for textbooks as well as tuition
- Continue policy of not charging sales tax for textbooks

What can be done at the Institutional Level?

- Each Connecticut college and university campus should form an *ad hoc* textbook committee to investigate textbook pricing on their campus; find ways to contain the escalating prices of textbooks; exhort their faculty peers to take cost into consideration in choosing textbooks; and ensure that annual cost of textbooks is considered in calculating student educational budgets and financial aid awards.
- To assist faculty members, campus bookstores should establish a process by which information about the prices of various textbooks will be provided to faculty members
- Bibliographies of assigned text should be available to students well in advance of the beginning of each term so students might plan their purchases
- Faculty should be encouraged to use textbooks for multiple terms or years, or in multiple courses. Bookstores should work with faculty and publishers to ensure that sufficient textbooks are available for multiple terms
- The practice of purchasing “bundled” course material should stop when materials are not fully used

What can be done at the Institutional Level?

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- College bookstores should consider innovations such as guaranteed buyback and other programs to reduce the initial and net purchasing price for students
- Libraries or departments should keep on reserve at least one copy of each textbook used in each respective course
- The financial aid process should be enhanced so that students automatically receive credits at the bookstore at the beginning of the term
- Bookstores should be encouraged to be more responsive to student concerns, especially in regards to used textbooks

What can be done by bookstores?

- Work with faculty to review timelines and procedures for textbook adoption
- Work with faculty and publishers to create economically sound bundles that deliver real cost savings for students
- Work with faculty and publishers to disclose, more effectively, retail prices on textbooks to faculty during the adoption period
- Disclose ISBNs to students in a timely manner
- Strive to provide as many used textbooks as possible
- Price textbooks differently for each course, based on credit hours
- Indicate to faculty members what the actual price charged to students will be

What can be done by publishers?

- Consider students their true end customers and take into account student perceptions of price and value
- Provide retail price information to the faculty member
- Provide faculty with an accurate description of the changes between editions
- Provide faculty with an accurate and realistic assessment of publication dates for new editions
- Provide faculty with as much lead time as possible for edition changes to books and materials they use
- Offer the textbook and the components of a bundle individually at a fair and reasonable price and disclose the price difference between the bundled package and the unbundled
- End “default (or automatic) bundling” whenever possible, ensuring that faculty receive the package they select and customize for their class

What can be done by publishers?

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- Inform faculty members of lower cost editions of textbooks
- Inform faculty members and the bookstore if a publisher intends to change the product or bundle from what was ordered before books are shipped
- Explore new delivery models for educational content, including digital and custom texts
- Explore increased, hands-on training programs for faculty and students, enabling them to extract the greatest value from their learning materials
- Conduct research about the effectiveness of their learning solutions, especially those that integrate technology into teaching

Summary

Since Connecticut's Textbook Summit in 2005:

- Institutional ad hoc committees from Yale and the University of Connecticut to our smallest community college have made substantial progress against the Board's recommendations including providing student financial aid dollars or credit for book purchase by the first day of class
- While no breakthrough ideas emerged from the publishing and bookstore communities, CT legislators mandated "each publisher of college textbooks shall make available to a prospective purchaser of their products who is a member of the faculty of an institution of higher education, the price at which the publisher would make the products available to the store on the campus of such institution that would offer such products to students, and the history of revisions for such products, if any"