

### **Textbook Taskforce Recommendation #1**

*Faculty members should know the price of textbooks they select for their courses in advance of ordering them. Faculty should use that price as a consideration as they plan their textbook use.*

The committee believes more can be done by publishers, bookstores, campus administrators and students to make faculty and students more aware of textbook prices prior to ordering. WCSU's Bookstore has recently taken steps to address this issue by developing a website that will include University-specific information about new and used textbook availability and pricing in a timelier manner. In addition to the existing access by course and section numbers, the committee encourages the Bookstore to develop a more user-friendly interface that provides access by department name, as well as course title. The existing collaboration between the Bookstore and the Registrar's office will continue to provide students with a listing of all course offerings each semester and the current status of faculty textbook orders for each course. The Bookstore has also become more active in reminding faculty of the deadlines for ordering textbooks and the importance of providing used, lower cost textbooks to students through earlier faculty ordering.

Four factors are significant: the persistence of the issue of textbook pricing, the importance of faculty awareness of pricing, the diverse textbook needs of faculty, and the role timing plays in the ordering process. Since it is reasonable to assume the issue of textbook pricing will continue indefinitely, the need to provide faculty and students with more comprehensive, current pricing information in a timely, easily-accessible fashion is not only critical, but the most practical first step to take. Following this report, the systematic monitoring and review of WCSU's distribution of textbook pricing information, faculty ordering patterns, etc. should be considered.

Even with procedures that provide earlier and clearer textbook pricing information, the main concern of faculty will continue to be the academic quality of what they teach and how they teach it. Pedagogical considerations involving the historical aspects of a field, an academic discipline's current practices, the requirements of professional licensing, etc. are appropriate first considerations of faculty. At the same time, it is possible to make faculty and students more aware of textbook costs earlier and to provide students with more options to effectively manage those costs.

### **Textbook Taskforce Recommendation #2**

*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.*

The WCSU Bookstore proposes the implementation of the following services:

1. The Bookstore's official website ([wcsu.bkstore.com](http://wcsu.bkstore.com)) has been upgraded to provide access to textbook information for current and upcoming semesters. This includes pricing information, and will be uploaded to the website on a daily basis.

- The website will reflect information that has been provided to the Bookstore by the faculty member and/or department as of the previous day.
2. After a textbook order has been placed, the Bookstore will send an e-mail to the faculty member listing the approximate price(s) of the textbook(s) ordered. If the faculty member does not currently have a WCSU Lotus Notes e-mail account, they will attempt to provide this information via phone. In situations where the Bookstore is unable to contact a faculty member via e-mail or phone, or when textbook information is provided to the Bookstore in close proximity to the start date of the semester, it should be understood that the Bookstore cannot guarantee direct communication of textbook pricing.
  3. The Bookstore will provide additional materials to assist faculty members in obtaining pricing information for textbook(s) that they are currently reviewing, including but not limited to:
    - Pricing information from Bookstore's current database (upon request)
    - Faculty Center website ([www.facultycenter.net](http://www.facultycenter.net))
    - Instructional Resources for Faculty booklet (including NACS Directory of Publishers)

The pricing information provided will be subject to change due to fluctuations in the publisher's pricing, particularly the typical price increases implemented by the publishers in May and November. These fluctuations are generally no more than a few dollars or a small percentage of the book's price. Prices provided will be for a new copy of the textbook, but mention will be made that they will attempt, whenever possible, to obtain used copies of the textbook as well. Used copies are sold to the students at 25% less than the new price, thus representing a substantial savings for that textbook.

### **Textbook Taskforce Recommendation # 3**

*Bibliographies should be available to students, for all courses, well in advance of the beginning of each term, whenever possible or available, so that students might plan their book purchasing.*

The committee recognizes the importance of making textbook bibliographies available to students as early as possible before the beginning of the new semester. It is further recommended that faculty provide the ISBN numbers to facilitate early access to textbooks and to compare prices of different vendors. This information could be made available to students in a number of locations. Possibilities include, but are not limited to, the book store web site, college or departmental web sites, or in posted individual departments. It is also suggested that the university create a resource to make students aware of multiple vendors that they may wish to access for competitive book prices. Links to this resource could possibly be through the WCSU home page or through the student life site.

It is recommended that the process for educating faculty about the importance of early submission of textbook orders to the bookstore be enhanced. Specifically, faculty should be made aware of the economic benefits to students of such early submission. It is also

suggested that the university develop a universal timeline that remains consistent from year to year regarding the submission of textbook orders. The committee recognizes that early orders are not always possible, such as when faculty are considering adopting new texts, when they are developing new courses, when they are awaiting a new edition of a book or the release of a new book, and the late appointment of adjunct professors.

**Textbook Taskforce Recommendation # 4**

*Faculty should be encouraged to use textbooks for multiple terms or years, or for multiple courses.*

While the committee recognizes the need to consider costs as textbook selections are made, faculty are committed to providing state of the art materials to students for their education. Whether using textbooks for multiple terms, years, or courses is reasonable depends on a number of factors. For instance, the majority of professional disciplines rely on evidence-based practice and integrate current practice and research into the course, and this necessitates the use of the most timely textbooks. In these situations, using older textbooks would generally not be advisable. The WCSU culture encourages collaboration of faculty within disciplines. This facilitates identification of resources which could be used in multiple courses and for discipline specific competency preparation. However, it is recognized that most courses in the university differ significantly in their content, and that therefore in only a few cases is the use of a single text for more than one course feasible.

It is recommended that faculty consider whether a newer edition of a text will offer significant qualitative or quantitative improvements over an older edition that justify requiring the new text. It is recommended that an educational process be implemented to make faculty aware of this consideration as textbooks are selected.

**Textbook Taskforce Recommendation #5**

*The practice of “bundling” should stop.*

The committee opposes this recommendation as written for the reason that in some cases bundling is cost effective for students. Bundling can take several forms, including the packaging of software or Internet access codes with primary textbooks and the packaging of multiple texts. In each case, faculty should consider whether it is in fact cost effective to require students to purchase bundled course materials. Furthermore, faculty should determine whether or not ancillary materials included in bundles are sufficiently important to the learning process to be required purchases.

**Textbook Taskforce Recommendation #6**

*Bookstores should consider innovations such as guaranteed buyback and other programs to reduce the initial and net purchasing price for students.*

The WCSU Bookstore recognizes that reducing the overall textbook price to students is the major concern of this committee. It is our belief that the most effective way to accomplish this is to facilitate the buying and selling of used textbooks on our campus.

Used textbooks are 25% less than the new textbook price, which immediately provides a greater savings than any discount that could possibly be offered on a new copy of the textbook. The key to obtaining used textbooks is *timely ordering*. The Bookstore asks for textbook orders for upcoming semesters several months in advance in order to facilitate their used textbook procurement, the steps of which include:

1. Within a few days of receiving an order from the professor, the Bookstore begins offering 50% of the original purchase price to students who wish to sell that book back. This is their first source for used books, because it provides our students with an optimal buyback price and also ensures that those used books are staying on our campus for next semester's students.
2. The Bookstore begins sourcing books through their textbook wholesaler, and the earlier that they have the textbook order in their hands, the longer amount of time that title will be worked through the wholesaler and the better their chance of obtaining used copies.
3. The Bookstore obtains excess used copies from other Barnes & Noble College Bookstore through an internal program called Textnet.

If the faculty of WCSU would commit to submitting their textbook orders to the Bookstore by the requested due date, it would dramatically affect their ability to obtain used textbooks for our students. Guaranteed buyback is a temporary fix that allows the students to receive 50% back on high-demand textbooks that have not yet been re-ordered, and this program would essentially be rendered irrelevant by the timely submission of textbook orders to the Bookstore.

#### **Textbook Taskforce Recommendation #7**

*The college or university library – or, where appropriate, departmental libraries – should have on reserve at least one copy of each textbook used in each respective course.*

WCSU's ad hoc textbook committee has considered a variety of factors related to this recommendation: the number of WCSU's course offerings each semester, average textbook costs, the typical cycle of textbook publishing, the libraries' current and projected operating budgets, its staffing and its use of space. While acknowledging the benefit textbooks on reserve in the library may have for a limited number of students, after careful consideration of all the factors above, the committee does not find it practically feasible to implement this recommendation. Moreover, it is the committee's concern that underlying the recommendation is a basic misunderstanding of the ongoing, vital role libraries play in providing a broad range of resources that enrich student research and offer opportunities to study, better understand and compare a variety of disciplinary approaches within a rich liberal arts context.

The WCSU libraries will continue to purchase current resources needed for student learning and effective, relevant teaching by its faculty. They will continue to maintain library reserves services that provide individual students with supplementary materials

provided by faculty for enrichment of their teaching. They will also continue to support simultaneous distribution of faculty-selected resources to a greater number of students by encouraging more faculty to use electronic reserves. However, it is not feasible for the libraries to maintain their current level of resources, as well as services and space that support the use of those resources, and also serve as repository for an ever-changing array of classroom textbooks.

### **Textbook Taskforce Recommendation #8**

*Financial aid processes should be enhanced so that students automatically receive credits at the bookstore at the beginning of the term.*

WestConn's existing financial aid process includes providing needy students with \$300.00 within the first four days of their arrival. Experience has shown that providing awards more quickly does not affect student learning. After the add-drop period is completed, students have a better understanding of the books required and their cost.

WCSU will be implementing a One-Card program in the near future. Careful consideration should be given in weighing the benefit of using that technology to automatically credit amounts to the Bookstore versus continuing to give students the prerogative of deciding how their aid funds are best used. WestConn's current practice of issuing relatively large aid checks to students has presented the Bookstore with a cash flow problem when students wish to cash these checks for relatively small purchases. On the other hand, this practice does provide students with maximum flexibility in how aid money is used, and it does not predetermine any amount that will be needed to purchase textbooks.

### **Recommendation #9**

*Bookstores should be encouraged to be more responsive to student concerns, especially in regards to used textbooks.*

As outlined in the response to Recommendation #6, the Bookstore is acutely aware of the positive financial impact that availability of used textbooks have on our students. The continued acquisition of used textbooks is one of their top priorities, and the Bookstore's efforts can be greatly assisted by the timely ordering of textbooks by faculty members.

The Bookstore and the WCSU community should also explore the possibility of forming a Bookstore Advisory Committee on our campus. A forum of this type would allow future concerns to be voiced to all parties, and would provide an excellent resource for continued discussion and planning regarding all of the Taskforce's recommendations.

