

TEXTBOOK AFFORDABILITY INITIATIVES

Whereas, The Governor’s Task Force on Affordability and Efficiency in Higher Education¹ has recommended that all institutions of higher education in Ohio explore means of reducing the cost of textbooks and report annually on their progress in that area;

Whereas, The Wright State University Student Government (USG) adopted a resolution in the spring semester of 2017 that specifically “urges the Wright State University faculty to consider less-expensive course materials without compromising the quality of instruction”;

Whereas, The Wright State Faculty Senate Executive Committee charged the Senate’s Undergraduate Student Success Committee with the task of developing additional strategies to reduce the cost of textbooks so that a report can be made to the Faculty Senate at its first meeting of the 2017-18 academic year;

Whereas, Consistent with Wright Way Policy 2030.1.1², no policy or administrative action should in any way impinge upon an individual instructor’s ability to choose whatever textbooks and other teaching materials (e.g. software, course notes, etc.) they have determined to be most appropriate for the classes that they are assigned to teach;

Whereas, Institutions that negotiate reduced prices for instructional materials with publishers and collect that money through their Bursar’s Office using an “Inclusive Access” approach routinely provide course materials at dramatically less than list (and, by Department of Education Regulations, “below competitive market rates”) prices while providing convenience to their students and an assurance to faculty that students will have all required course materials at or before the time of the first meeting of their classes without affecting in any way a faculty member’s ability to choose an appropriate textbook;

Whereas under Federal financial aid rules, an institution may include the costs of books and supplies as part of tuition and fees, and use Title IV funds to cover those costs without obtaining authorization, if the institution: (a) has an arrangement with a book publisher or other entity that enables it to make those books or supplies available to students at below competitive market rates; (b) provides a way for a student to obtain those books and supplies by the seventh day of a payment period; and (c) has a policy under which the student may opt out of the way the institution provides for the student to obtain books and supplies under this provision;

¹ <https://www.ohiohighered.org/affordability-efficiency/task-force>

² <http://policy.wright.edu/policy/2030-faculty-rights-and-responsibilities>

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Whereas, Title I, Section 133 of the federally enacted Higher Education Opportunity Act (2008)³ requires institutions receiving federal financial aid to disclose required and recommended textbooks as soon as practicable upon the request of a contractually affiliated college bookstore and not later than the time at which students can first begin to register for a course (November 2, 2017 for Spring 2018 semester courses);

Whereas, The timely adoption of textbooks, can allow students to purchase textbooks at a significantly lower cost (e.g. by affecting the supply of used textbooks through the purchase of used books from Wright State University students) without reducing revenue to the University or compromising quality of instruction;

Whereas, Wright State University students paid approximately \$313,000 in sales tax on textbook purchases at the campus bookstore and many states support higher education and reduce costs to students by exempting textbook purchases for secondary education from state sales tax (as proposed in the 131st Ohio General Assembly's HB 308⁴ and in the 132nd General Assembly's HB 337⁵);

Whereas, Miami University has instituted a low-cost three-tiered grant program that incentivizes instructional faculty to adopt and/or adapt Open Educational Resources, particularly for high-enrollment courses and in a way that prioritizes: lowering costs to students, maintaining or improving student learning outcomes and satisfaction with course materials, and contributes to the growing body of resources available to the global higher education community;

Whereas, A better understanding within the Wright State community of the process by which textbooks are selected and procured would complement other efforts by faculty and department chairs to reduce textbook costs (e.g. the adoption of open source/digital textbooks, the use of earlier editions of textbooks, making textbooks on course reserve through the University Library more accessible, maximizing the possibility that a student could use the same textbook for multiple courses); now, therefore, be it

Resolved, The Wright State University's Registrar, Bursar, AVP of Enrollment Management/Director of Financial Aid, Chief Information Officer and campus bookstore should work to initiate a pilot of the Inclusive Access model that involves at least five courses in the spring semester of 2018 and plan to be able to support at least twenty high-enrollment Wright State courses in the fall semester of 2018 while exploring the possibility of negotiating in concert with other public institutions of higher education in Ohio; and let it further be

³ <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-110publ315/pdf/PLAW-110publ315.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA131-HB-308>

⁵ <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA132-HB-337>

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Resolved, The Wright State Faculty Senate Undergraduate Academic Policies Committee should create and have in place by December 31, 2017 a “textbook auto adopt” Wright Way Policy that allows the campus bookstore to assume that if an instructor: 1) has taught a course within the past two academic years, and 2) has not identified a textbook prior to the time that students can first enroll for the same course in an upcoming semester, that the instructor will use the same textbook (including edition and format) they had used the last time they taught the course; and let it further be

Resolved, Wright State University should work in concert with the Inter University Council and the Ohio Faculty Council to encourage and support the adoption of legislation such as the 131st Ohio General Assembly’s HB 308 and the 132nd General Assembly’s HB 337 that would exempt post-secondary textbooks from state sales tax; and let it further be

Resolved, The Faculty Senate Executive Committee create an ad hoc Open Educational Resources Committee modeled after the committee by that name at Miami University and that the Wright State University Provost’s Office explore ways to make available funds of up to \$10,000 for the ad hoc committee to use in the 2017-2018 academic year to incentivize instructional faculty to adopt and/or adapt Open Educational Resources for high enrollment courses; and let it further be

Resolved, The Wright State Faculty Senate Executive Committee shall create and support a working group tasked with assisting the campus bookstore in educating students, faculty and department chairs, and informing them about additional ways that they can effectively reduce the cost of textbooks.