

May 20, 2020

**To: James Steintrager, Chair, Academic Senate**

**Re: Task Force on Student Supplemental Costs Recommendations**

The Task Force on Student Supplemental Costs was charged with looking into costs for services and products, including textbooks, over and above those educational expenses for which the university bills students directly, and for developing guidelines for oversight of required supplemental costs other than Course Materials and Services Fees, which are vetted by the Student Fee Advisory Committee (SFAC).

The task force was also charged with reviewing recommendations made by the 2018-2019 Academic Senate Learning Management Systems (LMS) Task Force, deciding whether some of those recommendations should be implemented, and if so, developing a plan for their implementation. One such recommendation was that each school be tasked with reviewing and approving all required course expenses other than those vetted by SFAC, and that Faculty Executive Committees may be well-suited for this task. On this front, there was discomfort among task force members with charging a faculty committee with this level of oversight on their colleagues; nevertheless, we reached out to FEC Chairs, who brought the question to their members.

The task force received responses from the Schools of Humanities, Physical Sciences, and Social Sciences. While all were supportive of efforts to address course costs for students, they were not in favor of FECs taking on this task in their schools. They pointed to workload issues, among other concerns, and also suggested that individual departments would be better suited to provide oversight of any campus-wide policies implemented in this area.

While task force members agreed with the LMS report's principle that every reasonable effort should be made to make no-cost alternatives to course materials available when possible, they recognized that there are challenges. Most publishers no longer provide free desk copies to faculty, and our library representative reports that UCI Libraries no longer has a robust reserve section housing physical materials.

As it became clear that systematic oversight of supplemental costs may prove difficult, the task force looked toward programs for reducing the overall cost of course materials such as textbooks and online courseware, specifically at the UC Davis Inclusive Access and Equitable Access models. The Inclusive Access program consolidates purchasing power to achieve lower prices, with the bookstore, rather than individual faculty, negotiating with publishers. The Equitable Access program, launching this fall, will offer students a quarterly flat fee for textbooks and online courseware, charged to their student account.



UCI has an exclusive contract with Barnes & Noble College (BNC) for its bookstore, and BNC representatives were invited to present their inclusive/equitable access programs, First Day and First Day Complete, to the task force. Although there are benefits to both programs, members did not see evidence of significant savings to students, and have asked BNC to provide a more accurate cost per-credit-hour specific to UCI; we are still awaiting this information. Some members liked the idea of the bookstore negotiating directly with publishers and felt these models could be good options if they indeed offer genuine savings to students. We also understand there is interest in exploring these models from the administration side and our colleagues at Davis believe the course materials industry needs to move in this direction in order to remain sustainable. Limitations of UCI's legacy student information and billing systems may hinder implementation of these sorts of programs; this will need to be addressed if the campus wishes to seriously consider moving in this direction.

It should be noted that some of our students may be making choices that do not optimize their chances for academic success. For example, our Office of Financial Aid & Scholarships (OFAS) reports that many students choose not to accept loans because they do not wish to incur debt. Furthermore, OFAS reports that up to 40% of UCI undergraduate students send money home to support their families. As a result of such practices, many students elect to forego purchasing course materials, reducing their opportunities for success. While this issue may be outside the Senate's purview, it does inform the overall discussion.

At present, the task force recommends that the Academic Senate take the following steps to address these issues:

- **Educate faculty about the real financial challenges that students face**, which will only be exacerbated in the current economic climate. Many faculty may incorrectly assume that textbook and related costs are automatically covered by students' financial aid packages. In fact, financial aid is awarded to students as a lump sum, from which they must pay for rent, food and other cost-of-living expenses. Thus, they may have minimal funds remaining to pay for textbooks, let alone any "hidden" supplemental costs like 3<sup>rd</sup> party learning management systems.
- Remind faculty that **there are core components of a class that students should reasonably expect to be covered by their tuition**, and should not be added costs. These include access to all exams and graded assignments as well as the materials needed to take exams (specifically green/blue books and scantrons), grading of coursework, and proctoring of exams.
- Remind faculty that they must verify **compliance with ADA and FERPA mandates** for accessibility and privacy for any digital teaching tools that are necessary for student learning, but which are an additional cost to the student.
- **Stipulate that faculty should not require students to pay for a third-party learning management system outside of Canvas** (which students already pay for via eTech fees), and most certainly should not require students to purchase or subscribe to Canvas-like services in which they or their department have a financial stake or will materially benefit. We are aware of documented cases in which faculty have used an alternative paid delivery system for syllabi and other course materials, from which they take a cut. It is never acceptable to profit off of our students in this way.



- At the same time, faculty should be able to assign instructional materials that they themselves have produced when those materials are the best options for their courses. For example, a professor who has written a textbook on the topic they teach should be able to assign this book to their students. To avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest in doing so, we recommend the Senate **reaffirm its statement on the assignment of faculty-produced instructional materials** of May 13, 2016. We have attached an updated statement to this report for your consideration.
- Strongly encourage that departments **provide an estimate for extra costs per course** (or an estimated range) on the Schedule of Classes (SOC) each quarter. Course Materials and Services Fees are posted on the SOC, so this should be possible. At minimum, faculty must make a good faith effort to inform students, in writing on the syllabus, of textbook and other costs in a given course prior to the end of the registration period and preferably before the start of classes.
- Recommend that faculty **leverage resources offered by UCI Libraries**, including the following:
  - Consult with their subject librarian or other library staff about the possibility of obtaining electronic copies of materials, and about putting course materials on electronic reserve.
  - Create links in Canvas to articles in database subscriptions instead of repackaging articles in course packets that students are expected to purchase.
  - Consider using [Open Educational Resources \(OER\)](#) when possible. OER reduces the cost of course materials, particularly textbooks, so that all students have access.

In closing, the task force believes that it is important that the Senate's recommendation is *not* seen as trying to discourage faculty from assigning what they believe is the best textbook for their course (even if it is expensive), nor should the Senate's recommendation be seen as discouraging the use of tools such as online homework environments that are often bundled with textbooks, should the instructor believe that such tools add significant educational value to their course. That said, some members of the task force felt that it would be appropriate for professors who use expensive textbooks, homework environments, etc. to justify that decision to their departmental teaching committee or similar.

The task force appreciates the opportunity to consider this very important issue.

Sincerely,



Lee Bardwell  
Chair, Task Force on Student Supplemental Costs  
Chair, Council on Research, Computing, and Libraries  
Professor, Developmental and Cell Biology



## **Academic Senate Statement on the Assignment of Faculty-Produced Instructional Materials, Updated May 2020**

The Academic Senate recognizes that faculty-produced instructional materials are sometimes the best materials for use in courses for which the faculty is the instructor. If the faculty member receives financial benefit from these materials, however, then there is an apparent conflict of interest between the faculty who teaches the course and the students enrolled in the course who purchase these materials.

In order to address this apparent conflict of interest, the Academic Senate recommends that faculty donate the personal profits from these materials back to students. This can be accomplished via donation to campus undergraduate scholarship or graduate fellowship programs, to student support efforts within the faculty member's school, or via other programs. For example, faculty might return their estimated profits directly to students via prizes for a department best podcast or best paper contest. Faculty may search for UCI student giving opportunities through University Advancement [here](#).

As a concrete example, if a UCI professor has written a book on a subject they teach, they will likely wish to assign this book to their UCI students. However, any royalties they receive from the purchase of this book by said students should be donated as indicated above. Naturally, any royalties they receive from the sale of their book elsewhere are theirs to keep.

The Senate realizes that it may be challenging for faculty to accurately perform this type of bookkeeping, and only asks for a good-faith approximation.

We hope this statement will help provide faculty and others on campus with a principled basis for action related to the assignment of faculty-produced instructional materials.