

Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Committee Meeting

Meeting Date: 03/12/18

Meeting Time: 9:00-10:00

Location: Ed Center Room 2

Agenda

Members Present: Dan Williams, Sal Peralta, John Morris, Rod McRae, Jennifer Edelman

Item 1: Cost Designators for Required Materials in USG Course Schedules (a.k.a. low-cost/no-cost course materials)

Notes: Faculty were asked to report if their classes met the requirements for “low-cost” or “no-cost” designations in banner. This is an initiative that comes to the USG from Affordable Learning Georgia. More information about the initiative can be found at https://www.affordablelearninggeorgia.org/about/course_catalog_designators. This information will be available for students in Fall 2018 for use as they select their courses.

Discussion points included:

- The feedback we have received from faculty regarding this new policy has been generally negative. Faculty concerns include
 - Bookstore issues: not ordering sufficient quantities, errors in orders
 - Availability of used or earlier editions of textbooks that are much less expensive
 - Students must use the university bookstore if they are using financial aid to purchase the textbooks in a timely manner.
- Faculty do not control the cost of textbooks; we choose books and materials using our professional evaluation of the material against the course learning objectives.
- This designation may impact core classes more than upper levels. For example, if a freshman is deciding between two sections of a course offered at the same day/time, but one is designated “no-cost” and the other is not, they may choose to take the “no-cost” course.
 - But, we also recognize that core classes tend to fill anyway so the impact of this policy may not be great, especially in fall semesters.
- The \$40 limit for “low-cost” designation seems arbitrary. It is very difficult to find a textbook in many disciplines that can be purchased for less than \$40.

- Faculty can look up the publisher's suggested retail price, but there is no guarantee that the bookstore will charge that amount. Bookstore pricing depends on many factors including demand for the book, the time when the order was placed, etc.
 - Faculty who are interested in minimizing costs can help the bookstore by submitting their book orders on time each semester.
- The suggestion was made that the bookstore should be the ones to award the designation because they set the prices for the textbooks.
 - This would rely on faculty submitting orders in a timely manner
 - What about faculty who do not require materials or do not submit a request via the bookstore? Students who take those courses could find that they are actually required to have a number of materials that were not included in the designation.
- This policy really feels like a push towards OER but such resources may not exist or are not as thorough as published textbooks in some disciplines.
- If the book is the best material you can find for the course, then you should feel free to use it. Students come to us knowing that there are costs associated with taking a class.
- How often will this designation be revisited? Will the "low-cost" threshold be adjusted for inflation?
- Faculty should consider this requirement not as a push to limit text selection or toward OERs per se but as an informational measure for students to signal how much a course's text(s) might cost.

The committee members present at the meeting decided to craft a statement from the committee to faculty senate to be presented as an information item at the March or April meeting. The statement will reaffirm our commitment to quality education, an instructors' academic freedom in selecting appropriate materials for their classes, and a recognition that affordability of required textbooks and instructional materials is important. Rod McRae will ask Dr. Crafton to address this issue simultaneously so that faculty understand that no autonomy has been revoked and that they are encouraged to select the best materials for the courses they teach. The members of the committee who were present at this meeting worked to craft the following statement for inclusion as an information item at the next faculty senate meeting:

UWG faculty are sensitive to student financial situations. Therefore, we support faculty decisions that provide students with the best educational resources at reasonable prices. This means that faculty retain their rights under academic freedom to select materials that best meet the course learning objectives. For example, faculty should feel free to use open educational resources (OERs), traditional textbooks, and other educational materials based on their expert judgement and pedagogical concerns. However, faculty are not required to meet the low-cost/no-cost designations for courses.

Discussion Item: Nominations for committee chair for 2018-2019

Notes: This person must be a senator, which means that Jennifer Edelman, Dan Williams, and John Morris are eligible for this position. Dan is cycling off senate at the end of this year and

Jennifer served as chair for 2017-2018, so John has agreed to take on this role. Jennifer has checked with Julia Farmer (faculty senate chair) to verify that an official election does not need to happen since we have only the one candidate.

Discussion Item: New business. None.