

March 28, 2008

MEMORANDUM

TO: Deans, Directors and Department Heads

FROM: Larry A. Nielsen
Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor

SUBJECT: Textbook adoption and costs – NEW INFORMATION

It is time again to choose your textbooks for the fall semester, and, therefore, it is time again for me to encourage you to make your adoptions on time (**April 5 is our deadline**) and to be cost-conscious in your selections.

But this year I have positive news for you—so I encourage you to read on.

Before I get to the good news, though, let me repeat why this is so important. Textbook costs continue to rise at much higher rates than other costs, a national concern and a concern for the UNC system and NC State. President Bowles has identified reducing textbook costs as a central theme of his administration, and he is serious about making progress—so serious that he plans to tie his receptiveness to tuition/fee increases and faculty salary increases to how seriously we address textbook costs (that’s the stick part of the incentives; the carrot part comes later in this letter).

Our bookstore folks, led by Richard Hayes and Anthony Sanders, and our standing committee on bookstores, led by Scott Warren, are working along with you to reduce textbook costs, with some success:

- Our new “Guaranteed Textbook Buyback” program, implemented as a pilot this year, saved students an additional \$250,000 in just five classes. We’ll expand the program this year.
- Higher on-time adoption rates have allowed the bookstore to re-purchase books from students at higher prices because we know that there will be a market for books next year.
- Your attention to our “Best Practices” suggestions (attached and available on the bookstore website) continues to yield cost savings for our students.
- Our average cost of textbooks for an undergraduate student declined from \$887 in 05-06 to \$794 in 06-07, and I suspect we will see similar results for the current year.

Textbook adoption and costs – NEW INFORMATION

Page 2

March 28, 2008

Thank you for your attention to this matter, but as President Bowles said specifically in his letter to Chancellors on February 7, “**A critical factor in reducing the costs of textbooks is getting the faculty to adopt textbooks in a timely manner. We failed miserably on that score.... NCSU also must improve markedly.**” Therefore, he has set a goal of 85% on-time adoption for 08-09 and 90% for 09-10.

This past year, our on-time adoption was 49% for fall semester and 82% for spring semester. So, we did fail miserably!

We must improve our on-time adoption rate. As individual faculty and as departments, you must make adoptions for courses even before instructors are identified (a major reason why adoption rate is so low for the fall semester). On-time adoption rates will be a formal part of the annual evaluation of deans starting this year, and I encourage deans to do the same for department heads (a little more stick).

Now, here comes the carrot. As a trial this year, I will be implementing a Textbook Adoption Incentive Program. Several deans have indicated that they have great needs for faculty travel funds. So, I will provide a dedicated travel fund to each college based on the extent to which the college achieves high adoption rates. Katie Perry will be providing details in the coming days, but basically the program will deliver \$100 for each on-time adoption above the 50% adoption level for the college. For CHASS, for example, this could mean as much as \$100,000 in new travel funds for 08-09.

I hope this incentive program convinces you that we are serious about moving textbook adoption rates higher and that we want our students to get the best deal possible on their textbooks.

If you have questions or additional ideas for effective management of textbook costs, please contact me (provost@ncsu.edu), Scott Warren (scott_warren@ncsu.edu), Anthony Sanders (Anthony_sanders@ncsu.edu) or Richard Hayes (Richard_hayes@ncsu.edu).

Thanks for your attention—now, get those textbook orders in!

LAN/arj

Attachment: Best Management Practices for Textbook Adoption and Use

cc: Chancellor Oblinger
Executive Officers

Best Management Practices for Textbook Adoption and Use

- ❑ Thank you for considering the costs of textbooks in your strategy for textbook adoption and use of other materials in your courses. YOUR STUDENTS APPRECIATE YOUR CARE!
- ❑ All teaching faculty are to submit their book lists to the NCSU Bookstores by its established deadlines (Fall = April 5; Spring = October 15; Summer = March 15). Departments are encouraged to set their own deadlines for submissions that precede the dates specified by the Bookstore.
- ❑ Review Academic Policies and Regulation #02.20.10 entitled “Listing of Required Course Materials with the NCSU Bookstores” (http://www.ncsu.edu/policies/academic_affairs/pols_regs/REG205.00.18.php).
- ❑ At the same time faculty submit their book lists to the NCSU Bookstores, we encourage using the NCSU Libraries Book Reserves to make reserve copies available to students (<http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/reserves/faculty>); 515-2597.
- ❑ Unless specifically requested to do otherwise, NCSU Bookstores will
 - order unbundled texts whenever such are available,
 - encourage faculty where applicable to use texts in the same edition used previously,
 - work with faculty to adopt the least expensive textbook that is pedagogically sound.
- ❑ Require a textbook only if it will be used in a substantial way in the course. Students’ end-of-semester course evaluations can inform instructors’ decisions regarding perceived value of selected course texts.
- ❑ Whenever practical, we encourage providing students with supplemental materials to update textbooks rather than requiring new editions.
- ❑ Faculty-authored texts, required for purchase by enrolled students, must be approved through the process defined in the author’s Conflict of Interest statement.
- ❑ We encourage faculty to work with textbook publishers to develop more economical materials that may include low-cost on-line alternatives to traditional textbooks.
- ❑ We encourage faculty to donate desk copies they receive from publishers to the NCSU Libraries as reserve copies of the textbooks for their course.
- ❑ We encourage faculty to consider potentially lower cost text options such as electronic reserves and/or digital access to materials that are appropriate to course objectives.
- ❑ Faculty and departmental textbook coordinators should regularly review the section of the NCSU Bookstores website titled “How to save your students money!” (<http://www.fis.ncsu.edu/ncsubookstores/faculty.html>) and other cost-related information (<http://www.fis.ncsu.edu/ncsubookstores/textbooks.html#pricing>).