Memo

To:        Dr. Etting, President SUNY Plattsburgh  
From:      Karen Volkman, Chair Textbook Committee  
RE:        Textbook Committee Proposal to Meet Higher Education Opportunity Act  

Date:  June 1, 2009

The Textbook Committee submits the Textbook Information Process—a Proposal for your consideration to assist SUNY Plattsburgh in complying with the Higher Education Opportunity Act. The Committee has outlined a history of its work, federal mandate issues, and Proposal to meet the July 2010 deadline.

Spring 2008
The Textbook Committee was convened by President Etting during the spring semester 2008 in response to student and parent concerns regarding the high prices of textbook costs for students. The Committee examined the issue by discussing concerns with students and community representatives, learning the textbook publication cycle from Director of College Stores Decelle, and studying national reports such as the NYPIRG “Sticker Shock 101: Faculty Opinions about Textbook Prices, Publishers’ Tactics, and Efforts to Reign in Textbook Prices.” The Committee also explored such issues as: the proprietary nature of the ISBN list and textbook bundling with workbooks, keys, and other web accessible course items. The Committee distributed a survey to teaching faculty during the Spring Planning Day 2008 to raise awareness of the issue of textbook costs to students and to start the process of engaging faculty in methods to reduce textbook costs.

Summer 2008
Federal legislation under the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) was passed during the summer of 2008 which significantly changed the nature of the Committee’s work. All colleges in the United States will be required (as of July 1st, 2010) to provide certain information concerning books and materials required for classes on its Website within a specified time prior to the start of a semester.

ISBN
In summary, the HEOA requires that students be made aware of the IBSN numbers and retail costs to be charged by the college for their textbooks and related course materials at the time they register for classes for the following semester. Only if such ISBN information is not available from the publisher is the designation “to be determined” to be used. This information is to be provided online (Internet) via the College’s course registration system.

Prior to the HEOA legislation, college bookstores had considered ISBN information and retail costs proprietary. In addition, the Committee had not considered the implementation of textbook information on the College’s Banner system. Keith Tyo, Executive Assistant to the President, was authorized to work with the Committee and focus on meeting this federal legislation with campus computer systems. In addition, the Committee also needed to ensure that the Branch Campus at ACC also complied with the federal reporting.

Banner and MySubbookstore as the Proposal Solution
Original Committee members Craig Hoag (Chemistry), Mark Kaiser (Accounting), Lauren Eastwood (Sociology), Karen Volkman (Library), Jerry Decelle (Bookstore), and Morgan Pellerin (rotating SA representation) were joined by Tom Higgins (Programming Manager)
and Denise Philo (Associate Registrar). Tom Corigliano (Associate Dean Branch Campus at ACC) also participated in the discussion via teleconference with his staff members.

A computer systems solution involving three methods for students to retrieve cost and ISBN information is proposed by the Committee.

1) The College Bookstore will continue to offer access to textbook information (with ISBNs) via the www.mypsobookstore.com website. This website allows students to select courses by subject and course number to find textbook information. The Branch Campus at ACC textbooks will be integrated into www.mypsobookstore with a separate drop-down menu.

2) Computer Information Systems will link in Banner to www.mypsobookstore to allow students to see textbook information costs and ISBNs as they browse the master schedule.

3) Computer Information Systems will link in Banner to www.mypsobookstore as students register for courses. Once a student has completed the registration process, they will be able to order and pay for the textbooks and related material via Cardinal Cash, credit card, or check and pick up the material at the College Store.

**Faculty Issues**
The College Bookstore requires 45 days to research and process book and other related materials once they have been submitted by faculty members. For example, a textbook alone would have a different ISBN than a textbook package which included a workbook and a web key.

The new HEOA guidelines mean that the student must have the textbook information and ISBN at the time they are registering for classes the following semester. Registration typically starts for the spring semester at the end of October and the fall semester at the start of April. Thus, the College Store will need the textbook selections from teaching faculty approximately mid-September for spring courses and mid-February for fall courses.

As an example for the upcoming semester:
Students start registering for spring 2010 classes on October 26th, 2009. The College Store needs 45 days to process the textbook information, thus the College Store would need book selections from the teaching faculty by September 12, 2009.

Submitting book orders for the spring semester in mid-September will be a significant change for many teaching faculty. While the College Store has always encouraged faculty to submit book orders early, the College Store often receives book/material orders for spring semester during late November or early December.

The Committee is concerned regarding this significant cultural shift in faculty textbook ordering in meeting the federally mandated implementation deadline of July, 2010. The Committee suggests the possibility of a “test run” the semester prior to which SUNY Plattsburgh is mandated to meet this deadline under the HEOA. Under this test run, the new HEOA guidelines would be explained to faculty. Faculty would be asked to submit textbook/material requests for the 2010 spring semester on September 12th, 2009.

The results of the “test run” will be evaluated to determine if any further refining of the procedure is necessary. This “test run” will allow SUNY Plattsburgh to be ready to meet the
July 1, 2010 HEOA deadline, whereby textbook orders for fall 2010 semester will need to be submitted by February 17, 2010 in order to comply.