UNC Charlotte Textbook Affordability Report  
January, 2012

UNC Charlotte Campus Committee on Textbooks

We have had challenges getting faculty participation on textbook committees, due to competing time commitments. In Spring 2011, the Bookstore Liaison met with the Associate Dean’s Council at the invitation of the Associate Provost to solicit ideas for how we could improve faculty input on textbook advisory issues. (See Attachment 1.) After considering several approaches, it was decided that the matter would be turned over to the Faculty Council to convene a separate subcommittee on textbook affordability issues. We sent the Faculty Council President a charge for the committee, and are waiting to hear back about when the committee will convene.

This year, for the first time, we created videos of faculty members urging fellow faculty to consider affordability issues when they choose textbooks. Links to these videos were included in emails requesting adoption information, and are posted below:

http://video.uncc.edu/textbook-affordability-s-kathryn-yarbrough
http://video.uncc.edu/textbook-affordability-concepcion-degodev
http://video.uncc.edu/textbook-affordability-mohammad-kazemi

We also continue to send, with each request for adoption orders, the following information on how faculty can help control the cost of textbooks, and we continue to solicit faculty input in every email:

What UNC Charlotte faculty can do to help control the cost of textbooks:

1. Inform bookstore about adoption decisions on or before adoption deadlines, to give the bookstore enough time to plan for buy-back (as books adopted for the following term are bought back at 50% of the original price) – and to source used books in order to increase the likelihood of offering more used books at a 25% discount to students.

2. Adopt the kinds of textbooks that can be added to the University's textbook rental program. Renting textbooks at Barnes & Noble at UNC Charlotte can save students 50% off the cost of a new textbook. We offer at least 50% of our titles as rentals, with no commitment required from instructors, and we may be able to add additional titles to the program if they meet the following criteria:
   - The book cannot be bundled with software, access codes or other packaged items.
   - The book cannot be a “consumable” item – i.e., with perforated or loose pages.
   - If the book does not have high national resale potential (based on Barnes & Noble analysis), the faculty member and department chair will be asked to commit in writing to use the same edition for 4 consecutive semesters.
3. Consider costs of books and packages before making an adoption decision. Be aware that you can negotiate prices with publishers. Always ask the publisher how much the bookstore will be charged, and then make sure that price is honored.

4. Consider adopting stand-alone texts instead of “bundles” so students can rent, sell back at up to 50% and buy used at savings of 25%.

5. When adopting a “value format” from a publisher (e-book, loose-leaf version, etc.), consider the impact on students not being able to rent or sell back a book, and not being able to buy used books. (Bookstore can help you run the numbers to determine which version is most cost-effective for students.)

6. Inform students on the first day of class (or send email prior to start of class) about their textbooks. Letting them know when a book is required vs. recommended and telling them how the book will be used (in class, for homework, testing only, etc.) helps students understand the value of their investment, and reduces the frustration many students feel when they purchase an expensive book but do not use it in class.

7. If enrollments are large enough to make it cost-effective, consider a customized version of a text that may eliminate chapters not covered and may reduce costs.

8. Avoid bundles that contain items (access codes, readers, etc.) that you do not plan to use in class. While often billed as “free,” these items may add costs and may add to student frustration over being required to purchase items that they do not use, or being prohibited from choosing a used book or rental.

It may be interesting to faculty to note what the campus bookstore can do to help control textbook costs:

1. Offer a rental option. Starting Fall 2010, Barnes & Noble at UNC Charlotte introduced a rental program, offering students savings of 50% off the cost of a new book. For Fall 2010/Spring 2011, the savings to students renting books totaled $392,000.

2. Lower the margin on new for-sale textbooks. Since Fall 2009, Barnes & Noble at UNC Charlotte lowered their margin from 23% (the current national average) to 18% (the lowest in the state and probably the country).

3. Buy back titles at 50%. When faculty inform the bookstore in time that a book will be readopted again the following term, the bookstore will pay students 50% at buy-back, until enrollment levels have been reached.

4. Make more used books available, at 25% off the price of new books.

5. Offer a 100% price-match guarantee to all local competitors.

UNC Charlotte On-Time Adoptions of Textbooks
See UNCC Textbook Report Academic Year.xls Tab: % Adoptions Summary

This attachment represents the adoption information as requested using the required methodology. In exploring this analysis, we discovered that removing the “no text required” adoptions from the analysis
significantly changes the overall adoption percentages, as we have a large percentage of “no text required” courses (e.g. labs, thesis, studio, internships, dance classes, etc.). For comparison purposes we have also provided the on-time adoption information if all adoptions (text and no text required) are compared against the total number of courses. Computing the adoption percentages in this manner provides a significantly higher rate. These adjusted figures better represent our overall effort to secure course adoptions. They also indicate that we must continue to improve our effort to secure a higher percentage of adoptions for those courses that use textbooks. Many campuses routinely remove courses with recurring “no text adoptions” from their adoption data. To date, UNC Charlotte has not done this, primarily because we wanted to insure that our bookstore partner was processing adoptions for all courses, and their system is not integrated with our course scheduling system. Also, courses may change their “no text required” status from semester to semester so it may be necessary to contact them each semester to confirm their status.

For Fall 2010, we saw our on-time adoption rate drop to 73.88%, down from 79.95% the prior Fall. For Spring 2011, we saw the on-time adoption rate decline to 76.04% from 82.07% the prior Spring. While we have no indication of why such decreases occurred, a theory is that a greater number of faculty do not pay attention to our exhortations to submit their adoption orders on-time, despite continued emails and video messages. (See attachments 2-4 for examples of these messages; these were in addition to hundreds of individual follow-up emails and phone calls.)

For Spring 2011, we tried something different: we had the “adoptions due” notice sent from the Vice Chancellor for Business Affairs, with an introduction by the Associate Provost. Unfortunately, this did not increase our on-time adoption rates. We also sent the links to the faculty videos mentioned in Section 1 above. We also filmed a student talking about the advantages of the new rental program and encouraging instructors to consider textbook affordability when they selected their course materials: http://video.uncc.edu/textbook-affordability-graciela-mateo. This video was sent to all instructors in an email in June 2011, urging them to submit their late textbook adoptions so that their students could take advantage of the savings offered by the NC Tax Holiday.

We will continue to attempt to remedy the situation with more compelling and more individualized communications. And we will continue to seek the support and participation of Academic Affairs in this effort.

**UNC Charlotte Rental Program**

For Fall 2010 semester, UNC Charlotte amended its contract with Barnes & Noble to introduce a rental program, starting in July 2010. Since Spring 2011, at least 50% of our titles are available in the rental program, with no commitment required from instructors. We continue to work with faculty to make more titles available for rental (especially the introductory titles for the large courses), and to get the word out to students and parents.
The program, which is very popular with students, saves students 50% off the cost of the new book. For the Fall 2010/Spring 2011 period, our students saved a combined total of $392,000 by renting textbooks.

One of the challenges of the program is the number of rental titles not returned by students at the end of the semester. For the first semester of the program, Barnes & Noble reported a national rate of 21% non-returns, and UNC Charlotte's rate was in line with that – despite having stickered our books with “Rental” labels and despite several rounds of emails, text messages and other communications to students to remind them to return their rentals. Since then, the non-return rate has dropped to under 7%, thanks to more communication and to students becoming more familiar with the program.

**UNC Charlotte Digital Textbook and No Textbook Required**

In 2010/2011 the campus bookstore sold $15,981 worth of digital titles. While this represents a huge increase in the past two years, digital sales continue to represent a small percentage of overall sales. While digital titles offer savings of about 50%, we think few students opt for them because they do not want to be limited to their computers for reading. However, we expect to see sales of digital titles increase as etextbook-reader devices proliferate and more students and instructors become aware of the digital options and potential savings. E-textbooks began appearing on our campus bookstore website as an option (when available) for Fall 2010 -- along with new, used, rental, and e-textbook rental. (E-textbook rental is the newest category, appearing for the first time in Spring 2011).

**UNC Charlotte Average Undergraduate Textbook Cost (Including Average Buyback Amounts And Net Cost)**

See UNCC Textbook Report Academic Year.xls Tab: **Summarized Information and detailed back-up tabs**

The tab **UNCC Summarized Information** provides a summary of the information requested. Other tabs provide the detailed back-up information for calculating this summary information. Per the methodology outlined, we included “no text required” courses in this analysis. The tab **Sales Summary** presents the information requested for the percentage of new and used textbook sales. This information is calculated on sales figures. This tab also includes our buy-back information for the same period. Our buy-back for Spring 2010/Fall 2011 represents 15.45% of our annual textbook sales (new and used combined). For the 2010/2011 period, we saw continued erosion of our buy-back volume, from $879,563.47 in 2009/2010 down to $689,266.00 in 2010/2011. There are several reasons for the drop in buy-back:

- The most significant reason for the drop in buy-back is the increase in rentals, which is not factored into the methodology, but in fact saves our students considerable dollars ($392,000 for the Fall 2010/Spring 2011 period, as stated above).
• Another reason for the decrease in buy-back is that many of our adopted textbooks continue to move more quickly into new editions, and publishers continue to bundle access codes and other items that prevent buy-back.

• Also, these numbers reflect results from buy-back at our campus store only, and students pursue many other avenues for buy-back. We have one significant long-standing off-campus competitor and one relatively new off-campus competitor, and both have aggressively pursued buy-back from our students.

• In addition to our local competitors, we see groups like Belltower Books and Ed & Bob’s Books come onto campus every semester to conduct buy-back, even though they are informed regularly that their activities are in violation of the University’s contract with Barnes & Noble. This activity by our competitors greatly impacts the number of used books we can offer on campus.

We anticipate continued erosion of on-campus buy-back, due not only to our local competitors but also to increased use among students of online textbook rental and sales sites. Barnes & Noble also reports national trends showing lower buy-back volume due to the proliferation of options, including rental, for students.

The data indicate the following about our average textbook costs:

• Our efforts to control our GROSS costs of new and used textbooks were successful. The average gross cost of a NEW textbook per year decreased: down to $203.38 in 2010/2011 from $206.30 in 2009/2010. The average gross cost of a USED textbook per year also decreased: down to $152.55 in 2010/2011 from $154.73 in 2009/2010. This is without even factoring in the rental savings that are not part of the methodology.

• However, because buy-back as a percentage of annual sales continues to drop as described above (down to 15.45% in 2010/2011 from 16.87% in 2009/2010), our NET average costs were negatively impacted. Based on 5 books per semester, our NET cost for NEW books per year increased to $852.23 in 2010/2011 from $844.04 in 2009/10. And our NET cost for USED books per year increased to $639.24 from $633.06 in 2009/2010.

Trends, Observations, and Future Efforts

We expected to see stronger sales of digital books in 2010/2011. However, as described earlier in this report, while they continue to increase, they remain a relatively small percentage of overall sales. Many publishers have already moved beyond e-textbooks to offering integrated suites of online learning materials that include not just e-textbooks but also embedded video, diagnostic materials, online homework, grade-books and classroom management tools, and more. UNC Charlotte held a symposium in Spring 2011 designed to make faculty aware of the many digital options available to them and their
students. We will continue to work with faculty to encourage evaluation of these materials for potential adoption, and to advise them on related affordability issues.

We have been watching with interest some of the situations around the country where publishers are working directly with university libraries or academic departments to license content that is then delivered to students for a user fee (or as part of other fees). Some of these situations represent models that are not necessarily scalable (e.g., one-time grants used to pay licensing fees), but some may be models that could be implemented at UNC Charlotte to give students and instructors even more affordability choices.

Students have never before had as many choices in course material formats – and we believe this proliferation of choices increases our arsenal of tools to help control textbook costs. As mentioned above, this is especially true at UNC Charlotte where students have as many as five different formats for selected titles available on the bookstore website. Putting the choices in students’ hands helps them drive the decisions about what kinds of formats publishers will invest in for the future, and what kinds of new adoption criteria faculty will face. This is a positive change for students, who in the past have been significantly limited in exercising their consumer options when it came to purchasing required textbooks.

Contact for additional information:  
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Licensing & Bookstore Contract Manager  
704-687-7683; knatale@uncc.edu

Ray Galleno  
Director of Auxiliary Services  
704-687-2396; regallen@uncc.edu

Keith Wassum  
Associate Vice Chancellor, Business Services  
704-687-2800; knwassum@uncc.edu
ATTACHMENT 1: Campus Textbook Committee Document

ATTACHMENT 1: Agenda for meeting with Associate Deans Council on 4/5/11

Regulatory Background:

1) Higher Education Opportunity Act (signed into law August 14, 2008):
   One of the primary goals of HEOA is to reduce textbook costs. Effective July 1, 2010, HEOA mandates institutions disclose textbook prices earlier and post them publicly, along with ISBNs – to help students determine what their textbook costs will be before registration, and to know which version of textbooks instructors will be using. Students can then make informed decisions about which classes to take based on textbook costs.

   “Not later than July 1, 2013, the Comptroller General of the United States shall report to the authorizing committees on the implementation of this section by institutions of higher education, college bookstores, and publishers.”

2) UNC General Administration:
   From the Report on Implementation of Recommendations from the Subcommittee Studying the Cost of Textbooks, March 2007:

   “Campus requests for increases in tuition or fees must be accompanied by a calculation of average textbook costs for undergraduates on their campus. General Administration will define a standard methodology for this calculation.”

   From the Report on the Cost of Textbooks, Submitted with Campus-Based Tuition and Fee Increase Requests, February 2011:

   “Each institution is required to document the average textbook costs for undergraduate students, the on-time adoptions of textbooks by faculty, and their progress towards implementation of a guaranteed buyback or rental program for required textbooks for introductory courses. Campuses are also required to submit information on the percentage of their textbook sales that were new and used books. Furthermore, campuses have reported buyback averages, in order to arrive at a “net” cost of textbooks for undergraduate students.”

Campus Textbook Advisory Committee (mandated by UNC GA)

- Involve Undergraduate Coordinators?
- Make recommendations and ensure compliance

Recommendations/Best Practices for Improving Textbook Affordability at UNC Charlotte:

1) On-time adoptions (to increase 50% buy-back and 25% discounted used book inventory)
2) Rental/Guaranteed Buy-Back Programs (no bundles; usually no commitment required)
3) Stand-alone textbooks rather than bundles
4) Digital/Open-source textbooks
5) Negotiating with publishers on format and pricing
6) Moving more lab manuals/course-packs to Moodle
7) Using textbooks longer, over more courses
8) Talking to students about their textbook investments
9) Other ideas?

ATTACHMENTS 2-4: Examples of Emails Circulated to Increase On-Time Faculty Adoptions

ATTACHMENT 2: “Adoptions Due” Notice – sent to all Faculty on February 14, 2011

To All UNC Charlotte Instructors:

Please read the message below from Beth Hardin, Vice Chancellor for Business Affairs, about textbook affordability, and place your textbook adoption orders by March 15. If you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions about UNC Charlotte’s textbook affordability initiatives, please contact the University’s bookstore liaison, Karen Natale, at 7-7683 or knatale@uncc.edu.

Dr. Jay Raja
Senior Associate Provost

Before You Delete This Email, Here’s the Simple Message

- Place your textbook orders for Summer and Fall 2011 by March 15.
- The easiest way to do it is on the website at www.uncctextbookadoption.com.
- Placing your order by the deadline is one, simple thing you can do to save money for our students. We have one of the highest average costs for texts in the UNC system. Last year, our students had a tuition increase of more than 16%, saving us from larger budget cuts. It’s the least you can do, right? One, simple thing – please do it.
- If you are still not sure whether you are going to meet the deadline, read the rest of the email.

Why It’s Important to Adopt Textbooks Early

We understand and appreciate the care you put into choosing the right text for your classes. Students also appreciate it when you place your orders early and consider affordability options to help reduce the overall cost of textbooks. A report recently submitted to the UNC Board of Governors showed the average net cost (after buy-back) for UNC Charlotte undergraduate students per semester (based on five courses) for the academic year 2009/2010 was:

- $844.04 (for all new books)
- $633.06 (for all used books)

These costs are among the highest in the UNC system. The most important thing you can do to help lower these costs is to place your adoption order with the campus bookstore by March 15. By doing so, you give the bookstore enough time to source used books, which are sold to students at a 25% discount.
You also give the store time to plan for buy-back; when you inform them that you will use the same book next term, the campus store will buy those titles back from students at 50% of the original price paid.

Ordering early also helps the bookstore put together a better rental program. The rental program offers students savings of more than 50% off the new book price. Approximately one-third of our adopted titles currently are in the program, and we welcome your help in increasing that number. Here are the criteria to include a book in the rental program:

- The book cannot be bundled with software, access codes or other packaged items.
- The book cannot be a “consumable” item – i.e., with perforated or loose pages.
- If your book meets the above criteria but does not have high national resale potential (based on Barnes & Noble analysis), you still may be able to add your title to the rental program by committing in writing to use the same edition for 4 consecutive semesters.

Another action you can take to help control costs is to consider adopting stand-alone texts whenever possible, so students can rent, sell back at 50% (or 55% in the Guaranteed Buy-Back program) and buy used. Avoid “bundles” that contain items (access codes, readers, etc.) that you do not plan to use in class. While often billed as “free,” these items may add costs and may add to student frustration over being required to purchase items that they do not use, or being prohibited from choosing a used book or rental.

**How To Order**

The best way to place an order is through the online ordering system: www.uncctextbookadoption.com. You also may call or email our campus textbook manager, Dominic Raby, at 7-7072 or unctext@uncc.edu. Or visit the bookstore to place your order in person. Bookstore staff is available to help you through the ordering process, and to help you evaluate affordability options for your students.

Beth Hardin  
Vice Chancellor for Business Affairs

**ATTACHMENT 3: “Missing Adoptions” Notice – sent to all Faculty on June 13, 2011, with link to video of UNC Charlotte student urging faculty to comply with Textbook Affordability Efforts**

Every summer during SOAR, incoming students learn about the campus bookstore’s popular pre-pack service for Fall classes. The bookstore offers to:
pull students’ registration information and gather the required textbooks
pack the books in a box
charge the books over sales tax holiday on the first weekend of August – saving 8.25% on sales tax, and guaranteeing early access to the best selection of discounted used books and rentals
hold the boxes for pick-up after the sales tax holiday

This year for the first time, the bookstore is offering to ship boxes to students’ homes immediately after the sales tax holiday, to eliminate the need to wait in long lines the first week of class. If books are not on the shelves because the bookstore has not yet received an adoption from an instructor, students miss out on the convenience and savings of this program. If you have not yet sent your textbook orders in, please do so by July 8 to allow your students to take advantage of these services. To those of you who have submitted your adoptions already, thank you!

The best way to place an order is through the online ordering system: www.uncctextbookadoption.com. You also may call or email our campus textbook manager, Dominic Raby, at 7-7072 or uncctext@uncc.edu. Or visit the bookstore to place your order in person. Bookstore staff is available to help you through the ordering process, and to help you evaluate affordability options for your students.

Another program affected by missing adoptions is the popular rental program, which saves students over 50% off the cost of a new book. If you have any doubt about the importance of the rental program, please watch a short clip of UNC Charlotte student Graciela Mateo, who refers to it as “a great revolution and an amazing program”: http://video.uncc.edu/textbook-affordability-graciela-mateo

Please take a look at the attached list of Fall 2011 textbooks currently available for rent at the campus bookstore. If you have already submitted your adoption, and you do not see your book on the rental list, we still may be able to include it. Here are the criteria for rental titles:

- Ideally, the book should be used for all sections of a course – but we have some flexibility on this.
- The book cannot be bundled with software, access codes or other packaged items.
- The book cannot be a “consumable” item – i.e., with perforated or loose pages.
- If the book does not have high national resale potential (based on Barnes & Noble analysis), the faculty member and/or department chair will need to commit in writing to use the same edition for 4 consecutive semesters.

If you think your book should be in the rental program based on the above criteria – or if you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions – please contact me.

Sincerely,
Karen Natale
ATTACHMENT 4: “Adoptions Due” Notice – sent to all Faculty on September 26, 2011, with links to videos of UNC Charlotte instructors urging fellow faculty members to comply with Textbook Affordability Efforts

Dear UNC Charlotte Instructors:

Before You Delete This Email, Here’s the Simple Message:

- Please place your textbook orders for Spring 2012 by October 17.
- The easiest way to do it is on the website at www.unctextbookadoption.com.
- Placing your order by the deadline is one simple thing you can do to save money for our students.
- If you are still not sure whether you are going to meet the deadline, please read the rest of the email.

Why It’s Important to Adopt Textbooks Early

We understand and appreciate the care you put into choosing the right text for your classes. Students also appreciate it when you consider affordability options to help reduce the overall cost of textbooks.

The most important thing you can do to help lower textbook costs is to place your adoption order with the campus bookstore by October 17. By doing so, you give the bookstore enough time to source used books, which are sold to students at a 25% discount. You also give the store time to plan for buy-back; when you inform them that you will use the same book next term, the campus store will buy those titles back from students at 50% of the original price paid.

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How To Order

The best way to place an order is through the online ordering system:

www.uncctextbookadoption.com. You also may call or email our campus textbook manager, Dominic Raby, at 7-7072 or unctext@uncc.edu. Or visit the bookstore to place your order in person. Bookstore staff is available to help you through the ordering process, and to help you evaluate affordability options for your students.

Click on a link below to view a brief video about what some UNC Charlotte instructors are doing to help lower textbook costs:

http://video.uncc.edu/textbook-affordability-s-kathryn-yarbrough
http://video.uncc.edu/textbook-affordability-concepcion-degodev
http://video.uncc.edu/textbook-affordability-mohammad-kazemi

Thank you, and please let me know if you have any questions or suggestions.

Karen Natale