

# UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN SYSTEM

## GUIDELINES FOR MAKING TEXTBOOKS MORE AFFORDABLE

### I. Background

The University of Wisconsin System is concerned with the high cost of textbooks. As a response, some institutions within the system have encouraged their faculty to adopt textbooks early, while others have established textbook rental programs. To date, seven UW institutions including the UW-Colleges have textbook rental programs: UW-Eau Claire; UW-La Crosse; UW-Platteville; UW-River Falls; UW-Stevens Point; UW-Stout; UW-Whitewater; UW-Barron; and UW-Richland. Despite these efforts, the unabated rising cost of textbooks continues to be a concern for the University of Wisconsin System. And, to maintain access and affordability for UWS students while ensuring the quality of the educational experience, this concern needs to be addressed.

In developing a policy to address this concern, several factors must be considered including the: (1) UW System governance structure; (2) primary role or responsibility of the academic faculty and instructional academic staff in selecting textbook as an integral element in curriculum development and; (3) market forces that involve bookstores and textbook publishers. The UW System anticipates arriving at such a policy in the fall of 2009. In the meantime, the following guidelines are proposed as interim actions that all campuses are encouraged to follow in bringing about some immediate relief to students from the rising cost of textbooks.

### II. Federal Requirement

By July 2010, all institutions within the University of Wisconsin System will comply with Section 133 of the 2008 Higher Education Opportunity Act which, among its provisions, requires “*to the maximum extent practicable, each institution of higher education receiving Federal financial assistance shall:*

1. *Disclose on the institution’s Internet course schedule and in the manner of the institution’s choosing, the International Standard Book Number (ISBN) and retail price information of required and recommended college textbooks and supplemental materials for each course listed on the institution’s course schedule used for preregistration and registration purposes.*
2. *If the ISBN number is not available for such college textbook or supplemental material, then the institution shall include in the Internet course schedule the author, title, publisher and copyright date for such college textbook or*

*supplemental material. If the institution determines the disclosure of the information required above is not practicable for a college textbook or supplemental material, then the institution shall so indicate by placing the designation “To Be Determined” in lieu of the information required.”*

### **III. Guidelines**

- A. All institutions within the University of Wisconsin System are encouraged to develop and implement schedules for the early adoption of textbooks in ways that are effective.
- B. Bookstores at each institution shall provide faculty and instructional academic staff who are placing book orders with current information about the retail price of selected course materials.
- C. To the extent feasible and appropriate, faculty and instructional academic staff teaching the same course for multiple semesters are encouraged to use the same textbooks and course materials for multiple semesters.
- D. Whenever appropriate within the goals of the course, faculty and instructional academic staff are encouraged to order new editions of textbooks only if older editions are not of comparable educational content. In such cases, instructors are encouraged to list information pertinent to previous editions which are of acceptable use.
- E. When available, faculty and instructional academic staff are encouraged to request unbundled versions of textbook and course materials.
- F. If bundled materials are assigned, the bookstore should make available both bundled and unbundled versions of the materials for purchase. In situations where bundling is involved, institutions and bookstores should clarify on the bookstore website that students should purchase either the bundled package or all required portions of the bundle individually.
- G. When appropriate, faculty and instructional academic staff should permit students to purchase electronic versions of textbooks.
- H. All UW institutions are encouraged to look for creative ways to lessen the financial hardship of college textbooks purchases, such as targeted scholarship and financial aid funds, exploration of economically viable textbook rental programs for selected courses, consideration of placing selected course materials on reserve in campus libraries, and encouraging student managed initiatives such as textbook swaps.