

LMIS Minutes, November 1st, 2019

Committee members present: Derek Buescher, Jane Carlin, Genevieve Caskey, Jeremy Cucco, Andrew Gomez, Matthew Link, Janet Marcavage, Kaity Peake, Adam Smith (chair), Mike Spivey, Bryan Thines

Guests: Kristi Dopp, John Hickey, Derek West

I. Meeting called by Adam Smith at 11:05am

II. October 18th LMIS meeting minutes with minor edits made by Adam Smith were approved. Adam requested that final minutes in the future be posted as a PDF file instead of a Word file.

III. The overall purpose of the meeting on 11/1 was to discuss book/textbook affordability for students, which is an issue that can impact student recruitment and retention. It was suggested that LMIS conversation could eventually lead to some sort of endorsement of practices that might then be passed on to the faculty senate. The meeting began with discussion of open educational resources (OERs) as a money saving possibility for students. Points discussed by the committee surrounding OERs and their development at Puget Sound were:

- That we work across groups on campus to support OERs and that faculty might consider how OERs could be incorporated into future classes
- Some faculty at Puget Sound (ie. in Chemistry, Math, Music Depts.) are using and/or are creating OERs, and their experiences and expertise could be harnessed in development of future resources
- Faculty could publish their own OER resources, remixed materials, reused materials, etc. (could be part of a class assignment)
- The library has hosted workshops in the past and is willing to work in the future to support OER use by faculty. The library staff is enthusiastic about helping, advising, learning about, and being advocates for OER use
- That we look at other colleges that have moved completely to OERs for guidance
- CWLT created *Sound Writing* using Rob Beezer's open textbook platform which is available to students at no cost
- Many Universities use small grants to encourage OER development, we do not have that here, but this could be something to think more about

The conversation then moved to how textbooks placed on reserve are used. Thoughts shared include:

- Many students across the country do not buy textbooks, but use copies on reserve as an alternative
- Some faculty have asked about the library buying textbooks for placement on reserve, but this has a very high associated cost for the library
- Having textbook copies on reserve as a cost cutting strategy for students is not an ideal situation because books can only be accessed by one or a few students at a time
- Students sometimes check out science books from library reserve and scan chapters for that particular week

The discussion on textbooks continued and explored how book/textbook costs and purchasing practices affect students either taking classes or majoring in different disciplines and departments. Main points were that:

- Some disciplines (ie. science and math) are much more dependent on textbooks than other disciplines
- Science, math, and statistics textbooks are exceedingly expensive for something that a student may not use in the future (for example, if the student is only taking the class to complete a graduation requirement)
- It was estimated that some science textbooks are hundreds of dollars but many English/humanities books are comparatively much less expensive and can easily be found used; furthermore, many humanities texts are already OER
- Science textbook use often depends on having recent editions and that these versions are more expensive for students
- UW Tacoma has special funding to buy textbooks for students, which is a huge recruitment factor
- Some universities have moved to a “rent” model for book usage

Continuing with the broader conversation of book/textbook purchases, the committee discussed how financial aid funds are spent on textbooks and the role that the Bookstore can/does play in helping students with their purchases. Some issues raised and discussed by the committee were:

- Students get financial aid money for books, but that this money has to be budgeted and students may not have money management experience
- The Bookstore is not set up to know how much a given student has for financial aid budgeting, which would limit their ability to help students with decisions
- Whether there is a system in place to check on if books are accessible as e-books, which could be a money saving strategy

The committee then discussed issues relating to how faculty are using textbooks that could ultimately impact cost for students:

- Older versions of textbooks can sometimes be used with faculty developing some of their own materials to complement older editions (ie. updated problem sets)
- Sometimes only a few chapters of a book are actually used and in only a tiny fraction of the class; maybe there is something the University could do to help make only certain chapters available
- The Bookstore can be a resource hub for both students AND faculty, and the Bookstore can help faculty with making available select parts of texts
- Sometimes there are fair use and copyright issues if faculty are selecting and making available only portions of a book/textbook; the library has resources to help faculty with fair use guidelines and the library would be happy to provide workshops on this topic
- Whether there is an automated way for faculty to know if a particular book is available as an e-book; it was pointed out that it would be possible for the bookstore to generate a list of available e-books that could be dispersed to faculty
- A number of advantages were identified with e-books, including that: the library can get access, and also the entire class could access together if made accessible on Canvas

Committee discussion then returned to what would be most useful for students to know in terms of textbook purchasing, especially relating to the effects on first-year students. Points made were:

- Students appear to get more savvy at finding less expensive textbooks and resources over their four years in college, and it was suggested that effort be spent educating and supporting first year students on different resources available to them
- A dorm program to educate students on various purchasing/access options could be useful
- Encouragement for faculty who teach first year seminars to help with educating newer students on resources and alternatives available
- Adding information to syllabi indicating that there are alternatives in some situations
- The high price can be alarming for students purchasing textbooks for the first time, and the committee wondered whether there might be ways to reduce “sticker shock” related anxiety for students.

Some additional thoughts from Bookstore representatives in the last few minutes of the meeting made the point that it is hard to make a one size fits all model, but that the bookstore tries to offer choices and present multiple options to students. The Bookstore is committed to students and keeping prices low (even if the store does not make money on a particular item). It is important to keep lines of communication open between faculty and bookstore because the Bookstore has resources that can help faculty find less expensive options. Regular communication between the faculty and bookstore is also important because: 1) timing of purchases can impact how costs are recovered by reselling and 2) timing of information can help with decisions on when to have e-books available.

From the conversation it was apparent that needs and costs can vary tremendously by discipline. It was also apparent that there are multiple options and interested parties from different areas of campus. Therefore, multiple committee members thought it would be worth taking the following next steps:

1. Gathering data from different departments about their classes and determining which have the highest associated book/textbook costs.
2. Querying students about their book/textbook expenditures and practices (possibly with ASUPS involvement)

IV. The meeting adjourned at 11:55am.

Submitted by Bryan Thines