

BOARD OF REGENTS
BRIEFING PAPER
Instructional Materials/Textbooks – Selection and Cost Considerations

BACKGROUND & POLICY CONTEXT OF ISSUE:

Existing Board Policy specifies that textbook selection is the responsibility of faculty who should exercise their expertise and professional judgment when selecting textbooks and carefully consider the academic, professional, and ethical implications of criteria used in textbook selections (*Title 4, Chapter 14, Section 29*). Institutions must develop an approved statement of guidelines governing the selection of textbooks, and these guidelines must address the desirability of minimizing costs to students.

In recent years, the cost of textbooks and instructional materials for students has been widely debated. NSHE institutions and their faculty are not alone in considering ways to reduce costs without compromising academic quality. TMCC recently conducted a study of textbooks and developed recommendations for faculty in selecting instructional materials. Other institutions are also examining textbook selection and cost. CSN recently conducted an “ETextbook” student survey. The results of this survey indicate that while students have a preference for owning a physical book over renting a book or using an “ETextbook,” cost is still a very important factor in deciding to buy, rent or borrow textbooks and course materials. Students also expressed dissatisfaction with the cost of textbooks and other course materials.

Building on the work at each of the campuses on the concerns related to textbook selection and cost, the Faculty Senate Chairs recommend revisions to Board policy. The Academic Affairs Council reviewed the proposed revisions and supports the changes as recommended.

SPECIFIC ACTIONS BEING RECOMMENDED OR REQUESTED:

Amend Board policy to specify that the selection of textbooks and other instructional materials and that these materials should also help students accomplish their educational objectives and should only be required when necessary and highly utilized. In addition, specify that cost should be considered when selecting instructional materials, and where appropriate, each institution shall encourage faculty to select or develop electronic and free or low-cost options for instructional materials. (See attached policy proposal.)

IMPETUS (WHY NOW?):

This policy proposal is brought forward at the recommendation of the Faculty Senate Chairs.

BULLET POINTS TO SUPPORT REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:

- The policy proposal retains the necessary faculty discretion in selecting textbooks and course materials but requires that both the academic and financial needs of the student must also be a consideration in this selection.
- Expanding the policy beyond textbooks to include instructional materials and specifically include electronic materials clarifies that faculty may consider materials other than textbooks when selecting course materials.

POTENTIAL ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:

None have been presented.

ALTERNATIVE(S) TO WHAT IS BEING REQUESTED/RECOMMENDED:

None have been presented.

COMPLIANCE WITH BOARD POLICY:

Consistent With Current Board Policy: Title # _____ Chapter # _____ Section # _____
 Amends Current Board Policy: Title 4, Chapter 14, Section 29
 Amends Current Procedures & Guidelines Manual: Chapter # _____ Section # _____
 Other: _____
 Fiscal Impact: Yes _____ No _____
Explain: _____

POLICY PROPOSAL
TITLE 4, CHAPTER 14, SECTION 29
NSHE Policy on Instructional Materials

Additions appear in *boldface italics*; deletions are [~~stricken~~ and bracketed]

Section 29. NSHE Policy on Instructional Materials

The selection of textbooks and other instructional materials [~~Textbook selection~~] is the responsibility of faculty. [~~Textbooks~~] ***All instructional materials*** should contain current, relevant information for the course, as well as appropriate assignments and supplementary material when applicable. [~~Textbooks~~] ***These materials*** should help faculty ***and students*** accomplish the educational objectives of a course ***and should only be required when necessary and highly utilized. Cost should be considered when selecting instructional materials.*** Faculty should exercise their expertise and professional judgment when selecting ***instructional materials*** [~~textbooks~~], and carefully consider the academic, professional, and ethical implications of criteria used in [~~textbook~~] selections.

To that end, each NSHE institution shall develop an approved statement of professional and ethical guidelines relative to the selection of textbooks or other instructional materials. Such guidelines shall address relationships with publishers or other providers, selection of one's authored text ***and electronic materials*** for instructional use, and shall address the desirability of minimizing costs to students when this can be accomplished without compromising academic standards and academic freedom. ***Where appropriate, each institution shall encourage faculty to select or develop electronic and free or low-cost options for instructional materials.***