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**School of Business**

# Memo

**To:** Textbook Rental Service Advisory Committee  
Faculty Senate  
Council on Graduate Studies  
Council on Academic Affairs

**pc:** Ms. Carol Miller, Deputy Director, Textbook Rental Service  
Dr. Blair Lord, Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs  
Dr. Dan Nadler, Vice President for Student Affairs  
Dr. Mahyar Izadi, LCBAS Dean

**From:** School of Business Faculty

**Date:** May 15, 2011

**Re:** Position Paper on EIU Textbook Rental Service

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As we are increasingly utilizing the variety of electronic and on-line methods that are available to support teaching and learning, the faculty are finding it more challenging to work with the EIU textbook rental system to meet their needs and the expectations of the students.

The School of Business faculty are submitting the attached position paper describing the frustrations and challenges that the faculty and administrators face with regard to the textbook rental processes that we are expected to follow and how those processes do not match the ever-changing publishing industry.

The document is a collective portrayal of our experiences and discussions. It was originally drafted by the School of Business Faculty Council, with feedback collected from the faculty and incorporated into the final document. Dr. Cheryl Noll, Chair of the School of Business, will serve as the contact and will facilitate any feedback or questions to the faculty from the groups and individuals to whom this document is being addressed.

We are asking that the advisory and decision-making groups have open dialogues about this issue and make recommendations that will bring the two forces of the publishing industry and the EIU Textbook Rental Service closer together to meet the needs of our faculty and students.

## **School of Business**

### **Position Paper Regarding Textbook Rental Service**

The faculty and administration in the School of Business are becoming increasingly concerned about the university's lack of proactive planning to match our services to the changes that are occurring in the textbook publishing industry. As ultimate consumers of textbooks and supplemental materials, faculty and students have more and more on-line options presented to them to access teaching and learning materials.

Over the years, there have been discussions about the value of the textbook rental system with regard to student learning. However, we have always kept the system as it has been promoted as a cost-saving measure to prospective students and parents. With so many on-line options available to all universities, there is not only the potential that we will lose this edge, but that it will actually serve as a disadvantage.

In our disciplines in business, having access to current material is critical; information changes constantly. Because of the two-year requirement for using a hard copy textbook, there is increasing concern about having access to current materials.

The current practice includes ancillary materials such as videos, power point slides, practice tests, quizzes, and study guides, in the on-line environment only. Textbook publishers are now offering access codes for on-line supplemental materials, but they are limited to one for each textbook purchased. Since we cannot purchase new textbooks every semester, access to on-line materials is limited to the first semester that a new textbook is selected, unless additional access fees are paid. Not having the ancillary materials available to the students limits the amount of information that students have access to and limits the integrative and interactive environment. In addition, students have to pay for access to these materials, which is above the cost of the textbook rental.

The current textbook rental fee structure is not flexible and does not support options other than the hard copy text. Such options are becoming more prevalent in the textbook publishing industry and, before long, there will be few, if any, alternatives available. If an instructor, for example, chooses not to use a textbook and uses on-line materials that might be free, the student is still charged the same fee, as though they were using a textbook through the rental system.

On-line access to textbooks and ancillary materials provides for a much more interactive and dynamic learning environment. Students can select links and navigate much more quickly in the on-line environment, thereby creating a more integrative learning experience which allows them to connect what they are learning. In addition, when students use on-line materials provided through a textbook publisher, students have the opportunity to make annotations and take notes, many such systems allowing the student to do a later "smart" search for those notes. Students are penalized for making marks in textbooks rented through the EIU system.

On-line materials can be unique to the professor. They can select exactly what they want and can create a custom-published electronic version of materials that enhance learning.

Assurance of learning materials are available on-line to faculty, but faculty do not have access to them unless the students are purchasing the ancillary materials.

Although most of the preceding comments involve the textbook publishing industry, *per se*, there is a growing movement in open textbooks that completely circumvents the traditional publishing process. It is our opinion that this movement can also be of benefit to many professors and students, and at virtually no cost. For example:

- In July 2009, Trustees of The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation approved an award to the Foothill-De Anza Community College District (Los Altos Hills, CA) to manage the Community College Open Textbook Collaborative (\$1.5 million) over 2 years. According to their press release, the CCOTC is a consortium of Canadian and U.S. community colleges that have partnered with several other regional, national, and international consortiums to provide quality materials using open source licensing.
- Rice University's Connexions program received Hewlett Foundation grants totaling 2.25 million dollars over 3 ½ years to augment the program, with additional funding by Hewlett-Packard, the National Science Foundation, and the Shuttleworth Foundation. Connexions is one of the CCOTC's cooperating partners.
- Alternative venture-capital-funded enterprises, such as Flatworld Knowledge, are entering the marketplace as alternatives to traditional publishers. These companies feature free online textbooks and make their money from the inexpensive, on-demand printing of books. Flatworld's web page, for example, advertises their books as "free online, affordable offline, open-licensed, and customizable by educators."

We expect a paradigm shift in this industry within the next few years. Is our campus prepared to leverage this new environment, which is extremely favorable to faculty and students?

Currently, we are telling prospective students and parents that textbook rental is a bargain. The reality is that after the costs of the on-line software and on-line ancillary materials is included, we are not being completely forthcoming in our marketing of the textbook rental program. Further, we have seen no evidence that we, as a university, are prepared for any kind of paradigm shift in this arena.

We believe that Textbook Rental needs to reinvent its purpose, rethink its business model, and sufficiently react to competitive forces in the industry in order to be able to meet the needs of students and faculty while supporting and enhancing the learning process.