

University of Maryland Baltimore Information Campaign & Best Practices Regarding Textbook Adoption and Use

To address the rising cost of textbooks in order to maintain access and affordability for students, the University of Maryland Baltimore (UMB) has developed the following “best practices” in compliance with the Board of Regents’ Policy on Textbook Affordability Measures <http://www.usmd.edu/regents/bylaws/SectionIII/III1000.html> and the Maryland Education Article Sec. 15-112 entitled “College Textbook Competition and Affordability Act of 2009”

General Principles:

At UMB, most textbooks are selected by individual faculty members. This practice is consistent with our policy of academic freedom and allows faculty to make individualized choices regarding pedagogy.¹ Faculty, textbook coordinators, departments and/or schools are expected to provide timely textbook information to the UMB Bookstore. Early adoption and notification to the bookstore are important steps in the cost reduction process. Once accurate textbook information is posted on the web, students are equipped to search various textbook outlets to locate what they need for each course.

Guidelines:

1. Faculty should strive to minimize the costs of textbooks and other course materials for students while maintaining the quality of education and academic freedom. To the extent feasible, a majority of the content of required textbook(s) should be used in the course. The UMB Bookstore can order and stock as “recommended” rather than “required” textbooks that have ancillary information faculty consider helpful or supplementary but not essential.
2. To ensure textbook adoptions are made with sufficient lead time to confirm availability and wherever possible, ensure maximum availability of used textbooks, faculty, textbook coordinators, departments and/or schools are expected to submit textbook and course material adoption information to the UMB Bookstore² no later than the following dates which are mandated by the USM policy:

Fall semester adoptions by May 1
Spring semester adoptions by December 1
Summer session adoptions by March 1

Given that national demand for used textbooks far exceeds supply, early acquisition is essential. Wherever possible, faculty members are strongly encouraged to submit their adoptions in advance of the USM established deadlines noted above. In addition to allowing the UMB Bookstore to promptly obtain used textbooks, early textbook adoption

¹ In some cases, a departmental committee or a committee composed of faculty teaching a course may select texts.

² The Bookstore is obligated to post relevant textbook information within one week of receipt.

also enables the UMB Bookstore to pay students the most for their used books. Furthermore, timely adoption notice also allows students to actively search for the most reasonably priced textbooks.

3. Faculty members are expected to be aware of any variation in pricing when ordering a different book by a different publisher or a new edition of a previously used book.
4. Faculty members are encouraged to limit their use of new editions unless a new edition differs significantly in a substantive way.³ Obviously, selection of a new edition obviates a student's ability to purchase a cheaper used edition of the prior edition.
5. Faculty are encouraged to notify the bookstore when prior editions of a textbook remain suitable for use. Older editions are more available in used form and may have a lower base price than their newer counterparts.
6. Faculty should be aware of the existence of course materials that are available in both "bundled" and "unbundled" form as prices between these two forms of packaging can vary⁴.
7. Faculty are encouraged to consider using a standard book for all sections of introductory level courses so that used books will have more resale value and to explore ways that departmental coordination can reduce costs for students. Moreover, textbook adoptions, wherever feasible, should be used for multiple rather than single semesters or terms, thereby creating a demand and market for used texts that result in lower costs for students.
8. Faculty are encouraged to provide access to required textbooks and other educational materials, if applicable, through library checkout or similar arrangements; and allow for resale and reuse of textbooks and manuals. UMB also encourages faculty to consider electronic books, book chapters, electronic journal articles, and other digital materials provided through the web for supplemental and core reading in support of classroom work.

An important new obligation under new state law is the requirement that faculty "acknowledge" the existence of explicit information as it relates to the adoption of certain types of textbooks. Accordingly, The Office of Academic Affairs will implement a temporary paper-based textbook adoption acknowledgement process for the spring 2011 semester and will work with the schools/programs to secure acknowledgement from affected faculty members. The office will implement a permanent electronic textbook adoption acknowledgement process for the fall 2011 semester and beyond.

³ Under the new Maryland law, Educ. Art. Sec. 15-112 (E)1.(III), publishers are required to inform faculty (or their designees) of substantial content revisions when a new edition is released. The UMB Bookstore has contact information for all major publishers and can help you contact them if you wish to inquire about content revision. Publishers are also required to notify faculty as to which textbooks are integrated textbooks and thus not subject to the unbundling requirement.

⁴ UMB's Bookstore, as a matter of practice, unbundles all book sets in order to make purchase of the individual unit parts available to UMB students.