

**UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON  
DIVISION OF ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE  
BOOKSTORE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES**

**Date:** Thursday, February 21, 2008

**Location:** UC Rodeo, Room 264

**Time:** 3:08 p.m. – 4:05 p.m.

**Members Present:**

Samuel Dike, SGA Representative  
Jonas Chin, SGA Representative  
Tim O'Brien, SGA Alternate  
Catherine Essinger, Faculty Senate, Chair  
Karen Fern, Faculty Senate  
Marcella Norwood, Faculty Senate  
Richard Kasschau, Faculty Senate

**Bookstore Representatives Present:**

Felix Robinson, Bookstore Manager  
Kris Richie, Assistant Bookstore Manager  
Tameka Eugene, Assistant Textbook Manager

**Ex-officio Member Present:**

Theodore Kelley, Administration & Finance

**Members Absent:**

Esmeralda Valdez, Business Services  
Mujan Noroozian, SGA Alternate  
Brandon Brewton, SGA Alternate  
Brian Shaw, Staff Council  
Tom Ehardt, Budget and Finance Operations

Ms. Essinger called the meeting to order at 3:08 p.m.

- I. Review and Approval of December 6 Meeting Minutes
  - a. Ms. Essinger asked the committee to review the minutes to the December 6 meeting.
  - b. Dr. Norwood moved to approve the minutes; Mr. Kelley seconded.
  - c. Minutes to the December 6 meeting were approved.
  
- II. Bookstore Updates
  - a. Graduation Gowns
    - i. Mr. Robinson addressed the inquiry Mr. O'Brien made at the last meeting regarding the master's and bachelor's gowns not being available as rentals.
      1. Mr. Robinson stated that he spoke to Dorita Hatchett, the Special Events coordinator who oversees the Graduation Committee. She stated that:
        - a. Students are not seated in the Graduation Committee.
        - b. The Graduation Committee is not typical committee composed of members from each of the governance groups; it is a facilitating group that makes sure the University's traditions remain intact.
        - c. Students can take concerns or comments on the graduation gowns to their department heads.

2. Ms. Essinger wondered if a cost analysis could be done to determine the investment required to support space, the gowns and the management of the inventory.
  3. Dr. Norwood indicated that besides the huge investment of buying the rental gowns, there is a cost associated with getting them cleaned and storing them as well as the inventory procedures that would need to be put into place. She also indicated that often more than one college has graduation at the same time.
- b. Sales Report
- i. Spring Rush
    1. Mr. Robinson noted that:
      - a. The Spring book rush made January a busy month with total revenue increase of \$2,341 over last year.
      - b. They cleared out the Cougar Spirit merchandise area to make room for 28 registers. Line managers assisted customers through the lines.
      - c. The Bookstore was open the Saturday prior to the semester and had extended hours the first 4 days closing at 9 p.m.
  - ii. Buyback/Refund Tent
    1. Mr. Robinson mentioned that in the past, they opened the basement for buy backs and refunds but this year they set up a tent on the UC mezzanine right in front of the store. This highly visible set up worked very well.
- c. Textbooks
- i. Updates
    1. Mr. Robinson mentioned that:
      - a. In January used textbook sales increase 7% over the previous year which represents approximately \$65,000.
      - b. New book sales decreased 4% and this continues to be a trend.
      - c. Students have multiple options for getting their textbooks including swapping books with other students, buying online, and purchasing at other bookstores. Therefore the UH Bookstore is committed to offering as many used textbooks as possible.
  - ii. Sell through report
    1. Mr. Robinson presented a spreadsheet with three packaged textbook titles didn't sell well because the customer only wanted to purchase the portion that is truly required for the course.
    2. Mr. Robinson stated that adding one or more component to one text book to create a package makes it more expensive and students don't want to spend that much when they can get the single item they need elsewhere.
    3. Dr. Kasschau noted that this is the kind of activity the Provost's program was targeting and suggested starting to speak to the department chairs with the most outrageously low sell through figures.
    4. Dr. Norwood noted that she has been irritated when a textbook publisher will not make a previous version available for a course she is teaching even though the book is in stock.
    5. In response to an inquiry from Ms. Essinger regarding the Bookstore's ability to return packaged items, Mr. Robinson stated that they do receive a 100% refund on returned items but that they still have to cover a significant amount for packing and shipping them back.

6. Dr. Norwood suggested inviting a committee member and some students to converse with the department chairs with a history of low textbook sell-through rates so they can express the impact of the choices they make when they submit their textbook orders.
- iii. Text book adoptions
    1. Mr. Robinson mentioned that:
      - a. They are receiving a great response for textbook adoptions for the Summer and Fall and thanked the Faculty for a great start.
      - b. They are looking for a way for the website to populate the information on previous textbook orders so it is easier for professors who want to use the same text book next semester.
  - iv. Textbook inventory system
    1. Dr. Kasschau asked if the UH Bookstore has a system that will subtract a textbook from the inventory once it has been purchased.
    2. Mr. Robinson stated that:
      - a. Right now they don't have a perpetual textbook inventory system that will allow the Faculty member to see how many books are available at the bookstore.
      - b. Currently the only thing they have is to do a physical count of the books.
  - v. Student Integration in PeopleSoft
    1. Mr. Robinson noted that the Student Integration project is still in process.
    2. Mr. Kelley mentioned that the PeopleSoft team is working out some of the kinks that have caused some trouble since the student section of PeopleSoft was launched.
- d. Outreach
- i. Promotion at Cullen Oaks
    1. Mr. Robinson mentioned that they worked with Cullen Oaks on some promotions to welcome the students back.
  - ii. Customer Service Assessment
    1. Mr. Robinson noted that an outside service visited the Bookstore during rush week gave it a score of 93%. Last year the Bookstore got a score of 98%.
- e. General Merchandise
- i. General Merchandise Promotions and Events
    1. Ms. Richie stated that:
      - a. January was a very good month for general merchandise. Some of the promotions they offered included 25% off fleece items and 50% off on calendars and day planners.
      - b. They will have a three week promotion on Gear t-shirts starting the week before Spring Break. The t-shirts will sell for \$9.99.
      - c. More seasonal items were offered for Valentine's Day including gift cards and sweetheart baskets.
      - d. A large display has been set up at the front of the Bookstore promoting African-American History Month.
      - e. Amy Madden, UH alumni and author, held a books signing in early February. Her cook book will be featured on the Food Channel next month.

- ii. Book Fair
  - 1. Ms. Richie noted that:
    - a. They will have a three day Book Fair event in March.
    - b. Several authors will be invited to attend to read from their books and have book signings.
    - c. Grade schools will be notified and encouraged to attend.
    - d. She will send more information via email.

III. Other Business

a. Barnes and Noble Scholarship

- i. Mr. Dike asked about the Barnes and Noble Scholarship, specifically the amount and what the criteria for applicants.
- ii. Mr. Robinson noted that Barnes & Noble contributes \$20,000 annually to the UH System which is distributed through the Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid.
- iii. Mr. Dike suggested that the scholarship be marketed more.

b. Postal Station

- i. Mr. Dike mentioned that as a member of the UC Policy Board he is aware that the University Copy Center will no longer be a tenant of the University Center. He wondered if the space could be used by the Bookstore to expand their postal station.
- ii. Mr. Robinson stated that he believes a University campus of this size could support its own postal station.
- iii. Mr. Kelley noted that the University Copy Center will be relocating to a space at the Parking Garage where they will have dual operations of copying and packaging/shipping services.

c. University Complex Renovation

- i. Dr. Kasschau mentioned that a commission has been set up to plan for the expansion and renovation of the University Center.
- ii. Mr. Kelley noted that the UC and Associate Facilities are in the beginning stages of designing and planning the master plan for their renovation project which will include enhancements to the student space and the meeting rooms.
- iii. Mr. Dike added that the UC should be the University of Houston's living room, a space that can be used by everyone.
- iv. Mr. Dike asked Mr. Robinson to share how the Bookstore tour with the consultants went.
- v. Mr. Robinson stated that he gave one consultant a tour of the Bookstore and discussed what he thought would be needed to set up the ideal Bookstore operation. He responded that he would love to significantly expand the textbook department.
- vi. Mr. Robinson noted that at one of the focus groups attended by approximately 60 people the number one item they would like at the Bookstore is a leisure and lounge space.

d. Textbook Order Submission

- i. Ms. Essinger inquired about the status of having Faculty submit their orders online.
- ii. Mr. Robinson noted that they are working to setup the Faculty's profile into the new online system. The program will be easy to use but said he will still give Faculty the option to submit the orders on paper forms. The online submission process will make it easier to run reports but the reports will not reflect accurately unless all the Faculty use it.

- iii. In response to an inquiry by Mr. Chin on the number of Faculty using the online system, Mr. Robinson responded that approximately 70% are using it.
- iv. Ms. Essinger suggested communicating the benefits of using the online ordering system to the department coordinators that submit the textbook orders.
- v. Mr. Robinson noted that they are working on a step-by-step manual for the Faculty and their coordinators. He mentioned that he will consider sending a team of his employees to promote the program.
- e. Textbook Manager
  - i. Mr. Robinson noted that Tameka Eugene has been doing a fabulous job as Interim Textbook Manger. He is currently interviewing candidates including Ms. Eugene.
- f. Barnes and Noble Cooperative
  - i. Dr. Kasschau asked if the committee could see the annual operating figures for the Bookstore. He also asked if Barnes and Noble supports or runs a cooperative.
  - ii. Mr. Robinson stated that as far as he knows, Barnes and Nobles does not run cooperatives.

Meeting adjourned at 4:05 p.m.