

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

**MINUTES**

**Date:** Tuesday, April 8, 2008

**Location:** UC Rodeo, Room 264

**Time:** 3:11 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

**Members Present:**

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:**

Esmeralda Valdez, Business Services  
Tom Ehardt, Budget and Finance Operations

**Members Absent:**

Samuel Dike, SGA Representative  
Jonas Chin, SGA Representative  
Tim O'Brien, SGA Alternate  
Mujan Noroozian, SGA Alternate  
Brandon Brewton, SGA Alternate  
Brian Shaw, Staff Council

Ms. Essinger called the meeting to order at 3:11 p.m.

- I. Review and Approval of February 21 Meeting Minutes
  - a. Ms. Essinger asked the committee to review the minutes to the February 21 meeting.
  - b. Ms. Essinger motions to approve the minutes; Dr. Norwood seconded.
  - c. Minutes to the February 21 meeting were approved.
  
- II. Bookstore Updates
  - a. B&N Cooperatives
    - i. In response to an inquiry Dr. Kasschau made at the last meeting regarding B&N co-ops Mr. Robinson noted that:
      1. B&N runs two cooperatives in the country; one at Harvard and another at MIT.
      2. They were established 43 years ago and the company has not started any new ones since.
      3. He will continue to research cooperatives and will share any new information at the next meeting.

- b. On-line Textbook Inventory Feature
  - i. In response to an inquiry Dr. Kasschau made at the last meeting regarding the ability of faculty to see the UH Bookstore's textbook inventory online Mr. Robinson noted that:
    - 1. Tracking textbooks is more challenging than tracking trade books because they are constantly moving.
    - 2. He spoke to his IT team last week who advised that adding that feature to the website would result in inaccurate information because the information would be tied to the manual inventory check that the Bookstore staff are currently doing, i.e. it would not display real time inventory.
    - 3. B&N is looking at a perpetual inventory system that will automatically update figures for them; eliminating a physical count of the textbooks.
  - ii. Dr. Kasschau asked if the Bookstore had a declining balance system set at the registers.
  - iii. Mr. Robinson responded that they don't have anything in place at the registers to track when textbook are sold, but is currently working to set something up; he will have an update at the next meeting.
  - iv. Dr. Norwood mentioned that it becomes irritating to have student come to class without their homework because they don't have their books.
- c. Cap & Gown Rental Study
  - i. Mr. Robinson mention that:
    - 1. He conducted a study to determine an approximate cost for establishing a cap & gown rental program for UH.
    - 2. The University would be looking at an initial investment of \$1.4 million dollars for 4000 gowns.
    - 3. It is estimated that it would cost \$112,000 per semester to clean the gowns after each graduation.
    - 4. There would be additional costs associated with managing the rental program.
  - ii. Dr. Norwood also noted that space at UH is very limited plus the initial investment of \$1.4 million is not be the end of it because the gowns would eventually have to be replaced.
  - iii. Dr. Kasschau requested clarification on the role of the Bookstore Advisory Committee and its functions; he feels like he is being talked to instead of making an impact on the Bookstore.
  - iv. Ms. Fern noted that she couldn't imagine that at the committee level the members could make decisions; the committee's role is to make recommendations.
- d. Profit and Loss Report
  - i. Mr. Robinson projected a spread sheet with the Bookstore's profit and loss report and noted that:
    - 1. Because of the confidentiality agreement they have with UH, he couldn't distribute handouts.
    - 2. The category Contract Payment refers to guarantee payment made to the UH, Depreciation refers to build-out expenses and Occupancy refers to cost of renting the Bookstore space.
  - ii. Ms. Valdez clarified that the Bookstore agreement requires B&N to pay a quarterly guarantee plus a percentage of sales if they sell over a certain amount.

- iii. Mr. Robinson noted that :
  - 1. The Bookstore saw a profit in FY07.
  - 2. When there's a major change in the way professors teach their courses, it affects the Bookstore sales, like in 2006 when the Math department converted to using online textbooks.
  - 3. In 2005, B&N opened up the Law Center operation; before then Brazos books owned 90% of the Law Center sales.
  - 4. He presented the same report during an SGA meeting recently; the students saw the operating budget for the Bookstore and got a better understanding of what it takes to run an operation of this size.

e. Sales Reports

- i. Mr. Robinson mentioned that:
  - 1. March is clean up month on returns.
  - 2. General reading books sales grew 15%.
  - 3. Sales of school supplies have flattened out; in an effort to boost sales, the bookstore has been rearranged placing the school supplies next to the textbooks.
  - 4. Sales of clothing are continuing to grow; the Bookstore has placed the Alumni and Sports clothing items in the same section.

f. Textbook Adoptions

- i. Mr. Robinson noted that:
  - 1. They have struggled this semester to get book orders submitted; currently they are at 47% adoptions for the Summer and 18% for the Fall.
  - 2. They met with the department chairs and sent all the faculty emails.
- ii. Ms. Essinger asked about the status of the step-by-step manual for submitting book orders online.
- iii. Mr. Robinson mentioned that step-by-step instructions have been sent to the department coordinators who do the ordering.
- iv. Ms. Essinger asked how the Bookstore handles orders from new teachers who may have a very short amount of time to select textbooks for their course.
- v. Mr. Robinson noted that they will welcome all textbook orders and they can typically have the books at the Bookstore within three days.
- vi. Ms. Essinger asked how faculty members find out that their book title has been discontinued.
- vii. Ms. Eugene noted that the textbook team will send a notification to the coordinator when the order is placed.
- viii. Ms. Fern mentioned that she submitted a book order before the deadline in December but did not see an email about the order for a couple of weeks.
- ix. Ms. Eugene stated that:
  - 1. Their contact is the department coordinator and in Ms. Fern's case there might have been a communication delay between the coordinator and the faculty.
  - 2. They have considered copying the faculty and the chair person on their correspondence with the coordinators.
- x. Ms. Fern thought emailing the faculty and coordinator would be sufficient.
- xi. Dr. Kasschau asked if the University Copy Center could make copies of out-of-print material.
- xii. Mr. Robinson advised that they Copy Center would need to get copyright permission and a release from the author before making copies.

- xiii. Mr. Robinson asked for the committee's help to boost textbook adoptions; he added that some students, in an effort to find out what books will be required for their course, walk the order form to their professors.
- g. Campus Outreach
  - i. Frontier Fiesta
    - 1. Mr. Robinson mentioned that:
      - a. Frontier Fiesta is a great event and lot of fun but operating cost of participating is greater than their return.
      - b. Sales numbers for the County Store continue to drop.
      - c. This year the Bookstore prepared to sell \$10,000 over the three day event but sold less than \$1,000.
      - d. They will have determined their participation level for the future.
  - ii. Book Signing
    - 1. Mr. Robinson mentioned that the Bookstore partnered with the College of Engineering to host a book signing with Martin Melosi and Joe Pratt; they had great student turnout at the event.
  - iii. Coordinator Appreciation Luncheon
    - 1. Mr. Robinson mentioned that:
      - a. They hosted the Coordinators Appreciation Luncheon two weeks ago.
      - b. They gave out great gifts and had wonderful dancing.
      - c. The department of Economic continues to be the champions for getting 100% of their Fall adoptions submitted; Lynn Smith's replacement was the winning coordinator.

### III. New Business

- a. Committee Research
  - i. Mr. Kasschau recommended that committee members become more involved with research of ideas and policies that pertain to the Bookstore.
  - ii. Ms. Essinger asked that for future research studies pertaining to items discussed at the meeting, committee members should partner with Mr. Robinson to present a proposal or recommendation to the committee.
  - iii. The committee agreed.

Meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.