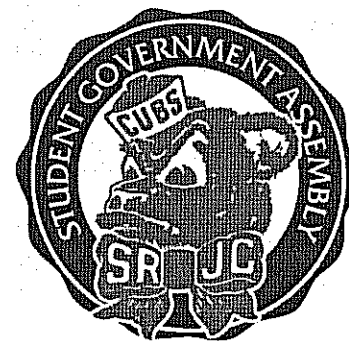


SONOMA COUNTY JUNIOR COLLEGE DISTRICT STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSEMBLY



R E S O L U T I O N

Submitted for the approval of the 158th SRJC Student Government Administration;

Textbook Reform

Eliminating Barriers to Education

- WHEREAS,** Santa Rosa Junior College (SRJC) Student Government Assembly (SGA) recognizes and affirms the hard work of our bookstore employees and commends them on their invaluable efforts to save our students money and provide them with alternative options when available; We also recognize and affirm the hard work of our library reserve desk employees in maintaining the books on reserve which, for many students, are their only means of keeping up in their classes; We further recognize and affirm the effort and consideration many of our faculty employ in an effort to keep textbooks as affordable, yet as high quality and informative as possible for their students; SGA also recognizes that the current textbook pricing scheme creates a perception of faculty culpability and fosters distrust and division between faculty and students. The resolves below do not serve as an indictment of any group on campus, but instead the systemic deficiencies, inequalities, power imbalances and intersectional oppressions that must be confronted if we are to maintain our core values and ensure equal access to education for all students;
- WHEREAS,** The effects of the 2008 Recession are still being felt and textbook costs present an increasingly great burden to all students.¹ This burden is significantly amplified for our students from backgrounds of adversity: disabled students, foster youth, single parents, students of color, etc. The nonfeasance of state and federal authorities to act on this form of structural and economic violence² is condemnable and thus there is a moral responsibility on the SRJC governing bodies to act in a decisive and authoritative manner; the values of the Santa Rosa Junior College, as stated by the *Santa Rosa Junior College Strategic Plan*, include **Learning**: "access to programs and courses that lead to transfer and/or gainful employment." **Diversity**: equal access for all students, honesty and integrity in an environment of collegiality and mutual respect. **Compassion**: empathy to identify the challenges and address the needs of others. **Innovation**: creativity, openness and risk taking; response to demographic, global, and technological changes. Students who cannot afford their books cannot access programs and courses or be successful on campus; this is a form of structural violence known as economic violence and our Student Government Assembly condemns this as a major barrier to student enrollment and success; our core values charge us with addressing these challenges compassionately and we need to take bold, innovative risks in addressing this crisis;
- WHEREAS,** For profit textbook publishers undermine the non-profit nature of a community college. Textbook prices have risen by as much as 1,041% since 1977.³ Textbook publishers are engaging in cartel behavior on a captive market.⁴ SGA defines "cartel" as "an association of manufacturers or suppliers with the purpose of maintaining prices at a high level and restricting competition." and profiteering as "make or seek to make an excessive or unfair profit." Students cannot easily avoid purchasing texts if they want to pass their classes, and are unable to legally circumvent this predatory behavior. Textbook industry practices are causing SRJC to not meet the postsecondary education standards enacted to the California State Education Code⁵ by California AB 2477⁶ signed into law on January 1, 2008, and those set by the Higher Education Opportunity Act enacted on August 14, 2008.⁷ Examples include: textbook publishers sending free "evaluation" or "desk copies" of texts to faculty which obfuscates and insulates them from the true cost to students; textbook publishers not proactively making reserve copies available to professors for use in library reserve system forcing SRJC library reserve to have to purchase texts from bookstore at these problematic prices further compounding economically disadvantaged students' ability to access texts; textbook publishers adopting new book editions without making substantive changes to the material within the book, not disclosing what content was added or removed, and what made previous editions academically unsound.
- WHEREAS,** SRJC internal practices are causing SRJC to not meet the standards set by the aforementioned as well as the Spring 2005 Resolution *Textbook Issues: Economic Pressures and Academic Values*⁸ of the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, as well as other items removed for the brevity's sake. Examples include but are not limited to: faculty unaware of the actual cost to students of the textbooks they assign; faculty unaware or unwilling to adopt alternate formats of textbooks, from commonly available e-books to alternate formats and editions as available through OpenStax, the Open Textbook Initiative and College Open Textbooks and resources such as Scribd; faculty assigning texts and not using them, or listing them as 'required' texts at bookstore when they are only recommended; **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT**
- RESOLVED BY THE STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSEMBLY,** Santa Rosa Junior College is encouraged to repudiate the textbook publishers' 'for profit motives' and demand immediate action from the state towards textbook price relief. 'For profit' motives are the major cause of this crisis and we do not accept a college textbook model that facilitates the plunder of student economic resources and makes our institution complicit in economic violence against students across all backgrounds; SRJC is to serve as a model to California Community Colleges, CSU and UC level schools to reject the for profit textbook model; SRJC is to encourage the state to explore all options including avenues through legal channels to investigate and to seek restitution for industry profiteering and encourage that the state regulate or dismantle the current profit based system of academic textbook pricing; additionally, SRJC is encouraged to complete the steps necessary to add funding under AB 798 College Textbook Affordability Act of 2015.⁹
- RESOLVE,** Faculty should be reminded and encouraged to adhere to bookstore text adoption timelines, as this is a large factor in availability of used texts; faculty must be further and officially encouraged to center student economic hardship and textbook company profiteering when considering textbook use in curriculum; faculty should strive to center the use of older editions, and work with the campus bookstore to ensure older editions are available before considering new editions where texts are still academically sound; faculty should be encouraged to assign a reasonable number of textbooks so as not to add additional economic burden on students and should ensure they are using the textbooks they require students to purchase from bookstore or other vendors; faculty should consider the use of electronic book formats and provide e-book alternatives to texts wherever possible; faculty is encouraged to accept and request free materials from the publisher and transfer to the library reference desk to ensure there are adequate numbers of reserve copies for students and to allow desperately needed funds to be used towards the purchase of yet more texts; faculty is also encouraged to consider authoring, curating or assembling their own texts and cooperating on such projects;
- RESOLVE,** The **Textbook and Instructional Resources Committee** is empowered and emphatically encouraged to directly negotiate textbook prices from the publishers and attempt to reduce markup, including the purchase of much cheaper and more affordable international editions. Additionally, this committee is charged to explore options on self sufficiency and independence from the textbook publishers, network with other campuses in SSSCC Region III, CSU, UC and at the statewide level to pool resources and expertise. This committee will be empowered to use bargaining tools and the option of a collective "book strike" - the freezing of purchases from the major book publishers and utilization of existing book inventory and buyback stock, with limited purchase from third party vendors and emergency purchases from major publishers, a media campaign and inter campus solidarity to provide additional muscle during negotiations if the TIRC committee feels the new charges fall outside the purview of their duties and mandate, a new committee can be formed solely to make actionable the resolves herein; and
- RESOLVE,** SRJC Bookstore is to remain an independent entity within the college and is not to be taken over by outside third parties, such as *Barnes & Noble*, or textbook publishers directly; SGA rejects a "third party bookstore" as a non-solution to the textbook crisis as doing so would add yet another for profit markup on textbooks, removes any chance of oversight on pricing and reform of textbook practices, would eliminate employees who are invested in the success of the SRJC Bookstore and Santa Rosa Junior College as a whole and replace them with external employees of a for profit institution dedicated first and foremost to the profit margins and shareholders of said institutions.

SGA Resolution No. 158.15-16.3

Approval: Dated this 29th day of February, 2016

Author

Sonoma County Junior College District
Student Trustee
Scott Rossi

SOURCES:

¹ Report: High Textbook Prices Leave College Students Struggling

<http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2014/01/28/report-high-textbook-prices-have-college-students-struggling>

² Economic Violence definition: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economic_violence

³ College Textbook Prices have risen 1,041 percent since 1977

<http://www.nbcnews.com/feature/freshman-year/college-textbook-prices-have-risen-812-percent-1978-n399926>

⁴ Are Students Held Captive by Rising Textbook Prices?

<http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/USA-Update/2015/0802/Are-students-held-captive-by-rising-textbook-prices-How-to-cut-the-cost>

⁵ California Education Code: <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/calawquery?codesection=edc>

⁶ AB 2477 amendment to above: http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=200320040AB2477

⁷ HEOA: <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-110publ315/pdf/PLAW-110publ315.pdf>

⁸ Textbook Issues: Economic Pressures and Academic Values: <http://www.asccc.org/papers/textbook-issues-economic-pressure-and-academic-values>

⁹ AB 798 College Textbook Affordability Act of 2015 http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201520160AB798

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

1. SPARC Open Education Fact Sheet <http://sparcopen.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/SPARC-Open-Education-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

2. Law Could Ease Textbook Costs

<http://www.presstelegram.com/social-affairs/20151011/law-could-ease-textbook-costs-at-california-state-university-and-community-colleges>

3. College Textbook Costs More Outrageous Than Ever <http://www.cnn.com/2014/01/28/college-textbook-costs-more-outrageous-than-ever.html>