

Rent College Course Materials: A Choice
P116Y090008 Seminole State College
Seminole, Oklahoma

Seminole State College hit the ground running when word came of the grant award notification on October 1, 2009. The college has been successful in developing a textbook rental program beginning the Spring 2010 semester. A Rental Program Coordinator was hired and began the task of fostering support of the textbook rental program and disseminating information. An Advisory Committee was established of six faculty and three staff which developed rental program guidelines, faculty textbook agreements, and student rental agreements. Textbooks to be used in the rental program were determined by this committee, which were all general education courses with input from the respective academic divisions. The program “kicked off” and is running as planned with evaluations being developed and completed by the end of the semester.

Advertisement of a new position for the Rental Program Coordinator was made, quickly screening and interviewing was complete, and Angelina Wind was hired. She has a bachelor’s degree in marketing and more than five years retail experience. Angelina promptly began learning the higher education environment and the grant initiatives. First among her duties was to form an Advisory Committee to develop the guidelines for the textbook rental program.

The Advisory Committee formed was made up of six faculty and three staff members who began by discussing the grant objectives. It was then that the committee determined that the college should offer students attending Seminole State College the opportunity to rent selected textbooks from the required general education courses. The committee reviewed the budget allocation and determined that enough funds permitted

purchase of half of the required general education course textbooks to be used for the first semester. Continued discussions about the success and long term goals of making this program self-sustaining firmed up the necessity of the required textbook rentals to be used for a minimum of four semesters and a maximum of six semesters and would only include the required textbook and not supplemental materials. The committee then created a Faculty Agreement form on which the Division Chair and necessary faculty would sign off in agreement. This conversation also created an unexpected outcome that faculty would be considering the cost of textbooks and thus a savings to even those non-participant students.

Further discussions led to developing strategies of disseminating information and gaining support from the student body and faculty. A Student Rental Agreement form was developed and it was determined that it would include a signature of the student, who by signing (and reading), would understand and accept the responsibility that it is a rented book to be returned, and that if not returned a replacement cost would be assessed to the student's account which would not permit them to be eligible for the program in the future. The replacement cost and rental cost were determined by the committee at a rate of 30% of the purchased price of a new textbook. The Project Co-Director, Coordinator, and other staff prepared the rental textbooks with labels and stickers to distinguish them separately from regular textbooks.

The committee discussed the potential of renting textbooks for multiple semesters and chose to keep it at a single semester only. It was also decided that in cases of exception the bookstore staff would use their discretion for approval in regards to

damaged and late return of textbook rentals. Meetings were held with the committee and/or staff throughout the semester to discuss progress and direction of the program.

The newly hired coordinator began promoting the rental program to the campus community by posting information on the institution's website, hanging flyers, and discussing the program at every opportunity to student and faculty groups. The staff formally adopted rental procedures within the bookstore for the day to day processes. Project Co-Director Edith Cathey began the task of ordering the designated textbooks as approved by the Advisory Committee.

Given this new program, software and technology considerations had to be made in order for it to be supported by current program. The information technology upgrades were made to accommodate the existing system and enable it to connect with student accounts, and also to track the necessary data required for the program. This was completed and tested to determine accuracy, and as with all technology continued upgrades will be implemented as required.

The next big hurdle was to establish the storage space for the rental textbooks and this seemed to be the biggest concern yet. Due to minimal existing storage space shelving will be added to accommodate the expanding inventory of rental textbooks. Storage space will continue to be of concern until adequate space is made available.

The textbook rental program had a student enrollment of 1,312 in the seven pilot general education courses. There were 631 textbooks rented, of the purchased 674 rental textbooks, at 57.16% rental rate, when compared to only 473 purchased new or used textbooks for an overall total of 1,104 textbooks either rented or purchased. The students were not limited by opportunities of rental only, but allowed to purchase new or used as

well. Given the first semester implementation of the textbook rental program this rental rate of 57% is outstanding, although a goal of this program was to meet and exceed a rental rate of 60%.

Evaluations and surveys were developed and completed during the later part of the semester and the detailed results can be found in the consultant evaluator's report. A Faculty Program Evaluation was first implemented by the coordinator to each faculty member affected by the textbook rental program. Overall the acceptance and positive feedback from the faculty indicate that they were allowed to select the textbook of their choice, the faculty agreement form was clearly stated, and they had an overall positive experience in the program. Then late in the semester a Classroom Program Evaluation was anticipated to be completed on every student enrolled in the seven general education courses chosen for the textbook rental program. Although the evaluation was completed late in the semester and scheduling the evaluation with part-time faculty was difficult it was given to as many students as possible. The results varied and identified that students would like to rent, save money, and they reported an average a cost of textbooks at approximately \$500 for the semester. A final evaluation was completed by those students returning rented textbooks and found that the experience was overall very positive. The students indicated they were able to save money at a total cost to rental students of \$281.56, which was a savings of \$657.29 if they purchased the textbooks.

Returning the rental textbooks was a procedure outlined early on, but was one of major apprehension. The rental textbooks were returned as designed with a fair (but need to improve) non-return rate of 15.53%. Of the 631 rented textbooks 98 were not returned and the replacement price was added to the respective student accounts. It will be a goal

to communicate and promote the return deadline and requirement more often in the coming semesters as it would be ideal to have a non-return rate of less than 10%.

One completed semester of a textbook rental program at Seminole State College has been done! Whew, what a whirlwind the last eight months have been. Was the program successful? Yes, it was used as indicated at a 57% rate. Did the program perform and save the students money? Yes, with 57% renting it saved those students \$26,451.08 if they had to purchase the same textbook. Can this program be adopted by other institutions? Yes, if the institutions realize the startup cost. Will the program be self-sustaining? Yes, if the revenue rental continues. At this point the reinvestment income of \$32,062.49 in rental revenue will be for future operation in order to continue this program.

Recommendations made by the consultant evaluator will be taken into consideration for future semesters in order for this program to continue the success it has begun. Efforts will be made to post the findings, present information, and disseminate that information to outside groups as to the importance of a textbook rental program and the potential savings to the students. Textbooks were rented, students saved money, and the college is well on the way to a self-sustaining program!