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Textbook Information Requirements



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About the Minnesota Office of Higher Education

The Minnesota Office of Higher Education is a cabinet-level state agency providing students with financial aid programs and information to help them gain access to postsecondary education. The agency also serves as the state's clearinghouse for data, research and analysis on postsecondary enrollment, financial aid, finance and trends.

The Minnesota State Grant Program is the largest financial aid program administered by the Office of Higher Education, awarding up to \$150 million in need-based grants to Minnesota residents attending eligible colleges, universities and career schools in Minnesota. The agency oversees other state scholarship programs, tuition reciprocity programs, a student loan program, Minnesota's 529 College Savings Plan, licensing and an early college awareness programs and initiatives for youth.

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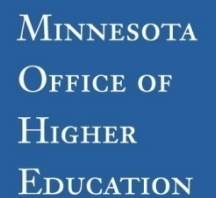
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Textbook Information Requirements

This report is produced in response to legislation passed during the 2009 Minnesota legislative session requiring the Minnesota Office of Higher Education to report on the “implementation of textbook information requirements under United States Code, Title 20, section 1015b, effective July 1, 2010”. The federal legislation, known as the federal Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA), passed in August 2008 and includes a provision effective July 1, 2010 intended to:

“...ensure that students have access to affordable course materials by decreasing costs to students and enhancing transparency and disclosure with respect to the selection, purchase, sale, and use of course materials.”

The report, as requested by the Minnesota Legislature, must include a template that publishers may use when providing the information required by the new federal legislation, and recommendations of methods for supplying pricing information. The following information is provided with cooperation from textbook publishers, college bookstore representatives, the Minnesota Student Advisory Council, the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system, the University of Minnesota and the Minnesota Private College Council.

Template

The new federal law requires publishers to provide specific data about textbooks and other course materials to faculty and others responsible for selecting course material at higher education institutions that receive federal financial aid. The required data is intended to provide faculty and others responsible for selecting course materials with relevant data to make informed decisions when choosing required and recommended course materials. Those data items include:

- The price at which the publisher would make the college textbook or supplemental material available to the bookstore on the campus of, or otherwise associated with, such institution of higher education and, if available, the price at which the publisher makes the college textbook or supplemental material available to the public.
- The copyright dates of the three previous editions of such college textbook, if any.
- A description of the substantial content revisions made between the current edition of the college textbook or supplemental material and the previous edition, if any.
- Whether the college textbook or supplemental material is available in any other format, including paperback and unbound; and for each other format of the college textbook or supplemental material, the price at which the publisher would make the college textbook or supplemental material in the other format available to the bookstore on the campus of, or otherwise associated with, such institution of higher education and, if available, the price at which the publisher makes such other format of the college textbook or supplemental material available to the public.

It is important to note that although publishers are required to provide this information to faculty and others responsible for selecting course material, the legislation does not require faculty or institutions to provide this information to students, nor does it prohibit them from doing so. In addition, many publishers have already taken measures to provide the required information to faculty and others responsible for selecting course materials in their catalogs and on their Web sites.

The Minnesota Office of Higher Education has learned that the United States Department of Education plans to provide a template textbook publishers may use to provide the required data in a consistent and efficient manner nationally. The template is expected to be available in early 2010 so publishers may prepare to use it prior to July 1, 2010. The Office of Higher Education did not develop a separate template for textbook publishers and had planned to include the federal template in this report. However, at the time of this report deadline, the federal template was not available.

Recommendations for Providing Pricing Information

The Higher Education Opportunity Act requires higher education institutions receiving federal financial assistance to provide to the extent possible, data elements related to required and recommended textbooks and other course materials. The legislation requires institutions to provide this information as part of their online course schedule; however, the report of the conference committee on the Higher Education Opportunity Act indicates that institutions can choose to provide a link to a Web site which includes the required information. The report of the conference committee on the Higher Education Opportunity Act also indicates that institutions that do not provide an online course schedule are not required to create one to satisfy the legislation. The textbook information required to be disclosed is intended to provide students with relevant information so they can make informed textbook purchasing decisions.

The federal regulation requires institutions provide the following information to the extent possible:

- International Standard Book Number (ISBN) and retail price;
- If the ISBN is not available, the author, title, publisher, and copyright date; or
- If such disclosure is not practicable, the designation “To Be Determined”.

In order for institutions to provide this information to students in a timely manner, it is essential that the required and recommended textbook requests from faculty are received well in advance of the beginning of the next term and if at all possible, prior to the beginning of registration. Faculty should use the data provided by publishers when choosing the required or recommended textbooks or materials for each course. Generally, the institution’s bookstore is responsible for gathering the requests from faculty and making any necessary orders for additional textbooks to ensure sufficient availability for students.

Some institutions in Minnesota already provide the required information to students and many use similar methods of providing that information. The following list provides examples of how institutions in Minnesota could choose to provide the required information to students.

- Provide a link from the institution’s online course schedule to its bookstore Web site. The bookstore gathers and maintains required information.
- Contract with an outside vendor to gather the required information and provide it to students via a link from the online course schedule.
- Publish a book list on the institution’s Web site including all the required information and provide paper copies of the list at the institution’s bookstore.