

MJC BOOKSTORE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
Friday, October 12, 2007
1:30-3:30 p.m.
MJC East Campus, Morris Memorial Building, Conference Room B

Present: Michael Adams, Don Bunce (ASMJC), Tobin Clarke, Rhonda Green, Jim Sahlman, Doug Smith, Arbella Solhkhah, Jeff Whalen, Gary Whitfield (Chair), Carrie Sampson (recorder)

Absent: Wendy Byrd, Susan Kerr, George Railey, Teresa Scott

In Teresa Scott's absence, Gary Whitfield chaired the meeting. Gary welcomed new members Tobin Clarke, who is representing the college deans, and Jeff Whalen, Columbia College Auxiliary Services Manager.

Update on Online Requisition Form

It was noted that per requests made by this committee, the Online Textbook Requisition form has been modified. The "Finish Requisition Later" button was changed to "Save Requisition for Later." However, the email update problem will take more time. Doug said he tried earlier to access the online requisition and was unable to do so. Arbella noted that they are currently upgrading the software, and so there are many problems at this time, but they are aware of them and working to resolve them.

Return Policy

Mike said the Bookstore policy allows one week after the start of semester for students to return textbooks in order to receive a full refund. The final class drop date is two weeks into semester. Why the discrepancy? Why cannot the dates coincide? Rhonda said there are two reasons for the short deadline for returns. The first is the publisher deadlines for accepting the return of unsold books. The second is that a small percentage of students have been buying the texts at the Bookstore and then returning them for a full refund as soon as they receive a less expensive book purchased elsewhere. Rhonda said this puts the Bookstore in the position of renting books, which is a liability. Rhonda checked other Bookstores in the state, and they also have short return policies. She also noted that the Bookstore does make exchanges during the second week. Jeff said that Columbia has a two-week return policy, but their student body is much smaller than MJC's, so the problem is less apparent. Don said it is more important that students understand the return policy than it is for a longer return period. He requested the written policy for the ASMJC newsletter and to post in the ASMJC office. He also suggested that the refund deadline be listed on the class schedule calendar. Rhonda said she will send the policy to ASMJC, but she also noted that the students are told the refund policy when they purchase the books and are asked to sign that they understand it. Doug suggested a compromise refund policy of one week for a full refund and in the second week a refund minus a 20% or 25% restocking fee. Rhonda agreed that this would be possible.

Textbook Order Dates

Mike said that Susan Kerr, who was not able to attend, commented that the textbook order deadline occurs at the same time as a number of other deadlines for faculty, making it difficult to meet. She wondered if it is possible to change the textbook order deadline. Rhonda said the date is the absolute latest that the Bookstore can receive textbook orders and still receive the books in time for start of semester. However, the earlier an instructor orders the books, the better. She said there is no limit on how early the Bookstore can receive textbook orders. The earlier the Bookstore receives the orders, the better price students will receive for buybacks as well. Rhonda said perhaps it's time to once again start an education campaign for instructors on why the deadline is important. Rhonda also mentioned that if instructors are willing to use dead books in their classes, if the Bookstore has enough on hand, they sell these to students at half price. Dead books are new books that were never used, but could not be sold back to the publisher for some reason.

Communication

The committee discussed problems regarding students being told by staff that books are sold out when they are not, books not kept stocked on the shelves, instructors needing to be notified if their textbook hasn't arrived, and who should order syllabus packets from Duplicating. Rhonda said any way you look at it the Bookstore is understaffed, especially during the rush around the beginning of semester. There are only a limited number of permanent staff working at any one time

during rush, and the rest are temporary student workers. Staff come in at 5 a.m. during rush to stock the shelves; however, it is not unusual for some books to sell out quickly. Shipments arrive continually during the day, and it takes time for them to be logged into the system, making it difficult to always know that the books are in the backroom. As for notifying instructors that their textbooks haven't arrived, it is far easier for the instructor to check the shelves than it is for the Bookstore to keep track of outstanding orders and notify instructors that it may be late, especially since orders can arrive at any time. As for the syllabus packets, the instructor needs to notify the Bookstore that more packets are needed. The Bookstore cannot initiate the order without instructor approval. The instructor should know if they have more students enrolled in the class than the number of packets printed.

Textbook Prices

Don reported that there are two legislative bills under consideration concerning textbook costs. The bills will require publishers to list the revisions of new editions, as well as other information. Rhonda said that the Bookstore puts a 25% markup on new textbooks and a 33% markup on used books. She said the reason for the higher markup on used books is that the Bookstore has a higher vulnerability due to the fact that used textbooks can quickly develop a zero value. Rhonda explained how book buyback pricing works. She said if the instructor turns in his/her textbook order prior to book buyback, which shows they are using the same textbook next semester, then the Bookstore pays a higher price for those textbooks up to the number of books requisitioned by the instructor. After that quota is filled, the books are bought back at the used bookstore price of \$10 or \$12. These books are then sold to used bookstores for the price paid to the student. This is done as a courtesy to students, since the Bookstore does not make any money on these transactions. Don asked if he could get a copy of the buyback procedures for publishing in the ASMJC newsletter. Rhonda said she would send it to him, and that it is also posted at the Bookstore during book buyback.

Bookstore Profits

Gary distributed the Bookstore's Balance Sheet for June 2007 as well as a six-year comparison of sales. He noted that in June 2007 there was a \$930,000 balance, but this was mostly tied up in inventory. He also noted that operation of the Convenience Store was moved to the Bookstore, effective May 1, 2007, in order to reduce Food Services' deficit. The six-year comparison showed that until 2006-07, the Bookstore had operated at a deficit for several years. The committee also discussed the \$30,000 a year payment the Bookstore made to ASMJC until recently. Rhonda said the previous Vice President of Student Services Wilma McLeod negotiated to have the Bookstore fund a part-time position for ASMJC. However, when the new procedure for assessing the student body fee was adopted by the Associated Students, their debt to the District for the Mary Stuart Rogers Student Learning Center was cut in half, from \$120,000 to \$60,000 a year, and the need for the Bookstore to subsidize the part-time position was eliminated. Gary said about 20-25% of the total sales come from West Campus Bookstore.

Other

Doug wanted to mention that while he recognizes that the Bookstore needs to sell non-educational merchandize in order to help make ends meet, he'd like to recommend that the prominent display of stuffed animals, balloons, and the like, interferes with the educational environment of a college bookstore. He also had some suggestions for the artist supplies corner of the Bookstore, which included staffing it with art knowledgeable workers. Rhonda said she appreciates any recommendations that might help with sales in this area. Jeff stated that as responsible managers, it is their duty to stock items that will bring students into the store during off periods.

Next Meeting/Future Agenda Items

The next meeting was tentatively scheduled for Friday, February 8, 2008, from 1:30-3:30 p.m. Faculty members agreed that Fridays are the best date to meet, if possible. Future agenda items should be forwarded to Carrie Sampson.