

To the FGCU Faculty Senate.

From Dr. Fernando Gonzalez, WCE.

I am asking the senate to propose a set of rules to guide the faculty on the use of books and services offered by publishing companies. These rules should go beyond the proposed changes to the current textbook affordability law, s. 1004.085, F.S. We all have heard about the struggles text book publishers are facing perhaps due to the vast amount of material available free on-line however the methods the publishing companies are using to protect their sales can be unethical, perhaps even illegal and definitely against our and the student's best interest. They are basically finding ways to force students to purchase their products. My concern is that the publishing companies cannot do any of this without the cooperation of our faculty. This is where we have a problem. The following is a list of some of their methods based only on my limited observations through my daughter who is a student here at FGCU and my son who is a student at FSW (Edison).

1. The required Calculus book runs for \$400 at our FGCU book store. We all know that the more copies they sell the more people share the cost of producing the book and so the cheaper the book becomes. So then why is this book, which perhaps has the largest sales volume of all text books in our university, costing an average of 400% more than most engineering books with very low sales volume? Also consider that the material has not changes for over a 100 years (when did Isaac Newton die?) unlike other cheaper engineering books on newer topics. For example the book titled "The Atmel AVR Microcontroller and XMEGA in Assembly and C" by CENGAGE runs under \$100. All the material in this book is new since the ATMEL XMEGA microcontroller is new. Furthermore it is only used by very few students when compared to Calculus. The \$400 is a very significant part of the total cost when you consider tuition is about \$200 per credit. This is totally undermining our efforts to reduce the cost of education which we are all working hard at. And the worst part is that this money does not go to us, the university, or the students but to some for-profit company none of us has any interest in.
2. Why do they constantly produce new editions when the material is exactly the same? I personally found my 25 year old calculus book much clearer and simpler to understand than this new \$400 text book. How much can one improve a book that has gotten rewritten every few years ever since calculus was invented? The reason is obviously to get the students to buy new books from the publisher as opposed to old books from previous students. Our student lose when they have to pay the price for a new copy and they lose again when they cannot sell their use copy. The proposed changes to the current textbook affordability law, s. 1004.085, F.S. is good but what if the changes to the law does not pass? We need our own.
3. One may think that the students will simply not buy this book and use another calculus book but the publishers have thought of that too. This publisher created a website called WebAssign where the faculty can direct students to turn in their homework as opposed to using Canvas. This way the publisher can punish those student who do not pay for this service by not allowing them to turn in their homework assignments. So my daughter had to pay \$100 for this service in order to be **eligible** to turn in her homework assignments. This is the part that looks very illegal and the changes to the current textbook affordability law, s. 1004.085, F.S. does not address this. It does not prohibit discrimination against student who do not buy the product. It's true

that an on-line version of the book is included in the service but that does not change the principle of matter. A student should not be punished by not buying the service. The book is not a PDF download but rather access via the internet. This forces my daughter to work only at school since our home internet is not reliable. The service also does not allow her to share the book with anyone else like a real text book or resell the book. The fact that the books store has large volumes of the \$400 books on the shelves shows students still are buying the paper book.

4. Why do faculty use WebAssign? Well it grades all of the homework for them. My daughter had to pay \$100 for a service that does the faculty's grading. Is assessment including grading not part of the faculty duties? I understand the calculus class is very large and the faculty needs help grading however this cost cannot be passed on to the students who already paid their tuition.
5. At FSW my son had to buy the book he did not want to buy because in the book there is a unique code that gives access to a website much like Canvas where the instructor post all the course material such as the test dates and on-line exams. FSW does have Canvas available. After missing the first exam because he did not have access to the course syllabus or the exam, he gave in and purchased the book.

The concept of charging our students to be eligible to turn in graded work or take exams is just wrong regardless of what the publisher offers the instructor. The good news is that the publishers cannot perform any of these functions without the help our faculty. I do not think our faculty are cooperating intentionally. I think they just are not looking at it from our student's point of view.

We need rules that guide us on what we can do as far as required books and services. I am thinking of some type of antidiscrimination rule that prohibits a faculty from denying access to course material not produced by the publisher and access to services that are needed to submit assignments from students who choose not to buy the required material.