



October 7, 2016

*Provost and Executive Vice  
President for Academic Affairs*

TO: All University Faculty

FROM: Andrew T. Hsu, Ph.D.  
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RE: Guidelines on Assigning Faculty Authored Textbooks

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The University of Toledo currently does not have a policy on assigning faculty authored textbooks and other instructional materials to students in classes that they are teaching. While the practices of assigning faculty authored materials may not by themselves constitute a conflict of interest, they can cause major concerns. AAUP, in its statement titled “On Professors Assigning Their Own Texts to Students,”<sup>[1]</sup> identified some of these concerns as: “quality, cost, availability, and the need for coordination with other instructors or courses.” The AAUP statement further pointed out that “students in a classroom can be a captive audience if they must purchase an assigned text that is not available either on library reserve or on a restricted website. Because professors sometimes realize profits from sales to their students (although, more often than not, the profits are trivial or nonexistent), professors may appear to be inappropriately enriching themselves at the expense of their students. To guard against this possibility, some colleges and universities have adopted policies meant to regulate the assignment of a professor’s own works.”

The University of Toledo’s Faculty Senate discussed this issue during the 2005-2006 academic year and recommended “that reasonable policies should be put in place to avoid requiring students to buy inferior book/materials; requiring students to buy books/materials that are overpriced (when more inexpensive but quality texts are clearly available); and, requiring students to buy a book or materials that are not used or minimally used.”<sup>[2]</sup>

While The University of Toledo works through its shared governance process and procedures to develop and implement a formal policy on assigning faculty authored textbooks and other instructional materials, following best practices as enumerated in the above mentioned AAUP statement, and based on the discussions of the Senate in AY 2005-2006, the Provost Office provides the following guidelines for assigning faculty authored materials, beginning with courses offered in Spring 2017. The goal of these guidelines is to **not** infringe upon faculty members’ academic freedom yet at the same time protect students and ensure quality instructional material selection.

1. Faculty responsibilities: Faculty members, when selecting the most suitable instructional materials, should consider “**quality, cost**, availability, and the need for coordination with other instructors or courses.”
2. Disclosure: Faculty who intend to assign self-authored materials, for which students are required to pay, should provide a written disclosure submitted to the department chair.
3. Approval: Adoption of faculty-authored materials needs approval from the chair of the department from which the course is offered. The department chair’s review should take into consideration the “quality, cost, availability, and the need for coordination with other instructors or courses.”
4. Dispute: When there is a dispute regarding the “quality, cost, availability, and the need for coordination with other instructors or courses,” or any other concerns, a department faculty committee with the appropriate curriculum background should be convened to help resolve the disagreement.
5. Student Complaints: Any student complaints should be lodged with the department chair and a department committee should be responsible for addressing issues of student redress.
6. Final Decision: The academic dean should be the final decision point in cases of dispute.

[1] <https://www.aaup.org/report/professors-assigning-their-own-texts-students>

[2] Minutes of the Senate Meeting of April 25, 2006,  
<http://www.utoledo.edu/facsenate/docs/0506FSmin042506.pdf>