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Georgia Southern University

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Royalties from self-authored instructional materials

6/30/1999

Motion:

Dr. Charles Crouch (CLASS) motioned that an ad hoc committee be established to recommend a policy that deals with royalties from self-authored instructional materials. The motion was seconded and approved. The Senate Executive Committee will establish the committee.

Dr. Janie Wilson (CLASS) reported that there were concerns that people are publishing textbooks and having their students purchase these texts while they keep the profit, and that there are many other issues that may surround this. She asked whether there is a policy on this issue.

Dr. Carter did not know of a written policy. He stated, "I think there is a practice on this campus, and the practice, my understanding of it, is that textbook selection has to be approved at the departmental level. And so if I am the author of a textbook, and a committee selects my textbook, I don't but a committee does for a class, and that in the past has been appropriate for the faculty member to receive royalties. Another approach is I create materials, I take them to the bookstore or to the University Printing Services and I have those materials packaged and the students purchase them at the cost that has been deemed acceptable in the past. Now, if I as a faculty member make the sole determination about the textbook in my class and I require my own book I think the position in the past has been that I should not benefit from that. And I believe, in fact, there are faculty members who have put the proceeds of that into agency accounts or foundation accounts and used those proceeds to enrich the course itself." He then asked department chairs and Deans for input.

Dr. Richard Rogers (NCAA Rep.) reported that a continuing significant example is that in his department is Dr. Lloyd who takes the royalties from her book in one of her classes and gives those royalties to the student organizations in Psychology.

Dr. Carter stated, "I think in general as a faculty community we have tried to stay away from the real conflict of interest that it puts an individual faculty member in if that faculty

member makes the decision by himself/herself, requires the book, and profits from it.” Dr. Janie Wilson asked whether it would it not be a good idea to have some kind of written policy. Dr. Carter replied that he thought it would be appropriate if the Faculty Senate developed that policy and brought it forward rather than having administrators develop the policy. He suggested a subcommittee of the Senate be appointed through the Senate Executive Committee.

2/15/2000

Dr Janie Wilson (CLASS) reported on the work of the committee: "The charge of this committee was to examine issues surrounding self-authored instructional materials. Two of these issues were 1) the use of legitimate textbooks and 2) profit from self authored materials used in the author's classes." In reference to item 1, legitimate textbooks are those published by established publishers who require peer review of the instructional material. A "vanity press" is not considered a legitimate publisher. Further, legitimate textbooks should have a used book market which allows students to sell their books and purchase used copies. The general cycle for these texts is 2-3 years. Item 1 would not refer to consumable instructional materials such as workbooks. The problem with enforcing item 1 arises from defining "legitimate publisher" and "peer review." While faculty members have an intuitive sense of what a legitimate textbook is, the term is difficult to define concretely." "In reference to item 2, profiting from self-authored instructional materials used in the author's classes is ethically unsound. While the faculty member's textbook may indeed be the best material for the class, taking the profit from a text students are required to purchase introduces an element of student exploitation. However, in most cases, the profit is negligible. Further, keeping records of whether students purchase new copies, used copies, or no text for the course, would be difficult. In addition, many professors routinely donate profits from their own students to the GSU Foundation, GSU student organizations, or a charity. A policy which requires that faculty donate profits would entail policing the amount of profit made and the organization chosen to receive the profits." "Although a policy which addresses these issues can be drafted, we are concerned that such rigidity would be detrimental to our university community. For the most part, we believe that the faculty make ethical decisions concerning textbook choice for their students, and the students are not exploited for a faculty member's personal financial gain. On those rare occasions when students are exploited by their professor, they should report the problem to the chair of the relevant department. If the problem involves the chair, the issue can be reported to the dean of the college." "We are not aware of a procedure to review accusations of ethical misconduct on the part of a professor; therefore, we assume that when a

complaint is filed, administrators make a decision as to how the situation should be resolved. As an alternate approach, we recommend that a Faculty Senate committee be formed to review such cases. Formation of this committee would provide faculty members with peer review of issues relevant to faculty." Dr. Wilson answered several questions about implementing the Committee's recommendations. She suggested that the Committee on Restructuring and Revitalizing the Senate consider the issue and perhaps recommend the establishment of an ethics committee to provide direction and oversight on such matters.