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Book Availability at the University Store

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Senate Executive Committee Request Form

SEC via campus mail: PO Box 8033-1

E-Mail: fsoffice@georgiasouthern.edu

Standard View

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Request for Information

9/27/2019

SHORT TITLE:

(Please provide a short descriptive title.)

Book availability at the University Store

QUESTION(s):

(Please state your request or requests in question form as concisely as possible.)

Question:


Why doesn't the University Store order enough books for students in classes? What is the role of the store in the academic mission of the University?


RATIONALE(s):


(Please explain why this issue is one of general concern for the Faculty Senate or for the University and not a matter concerning only an individual college or administrative area. Please note what other, if any, attempts you have made to garner this information before submitting this request to the Faculty Senate.)


Every semester I, and colleagues, have students who do not have books because the University store failed to order enough books for the number of students in the class. Students are then left without a book for several days or even weeks which may have a negative effect on their opportunity to be successful in a class or classes. It also impacts how faculty members teach classes if students do not have access to needed class materials. I have been told the store does not order enough books because many students order them through alternate sources. It may be that the store has created a self-fulfilling prophecy by not ordering enough books for classes. The University store should be committed to a mission of student access to textbooks not profit maximization.

If you have an attachment, press the button below to attach to form and send.

 Click here to attach a file

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SUBMITTED BY:

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RE-ENTER EMAIL

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Note to faculty users: Double-check your data before submitting, because the data cannot be edited afterward

SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ACTION

10/23/2019

Response:

Approved

Executive Committee Response:

The SEC forwarded the email to Mr. Derick Roberson, Assistant Store Manager for the University Bookstore. He replied on Oct. 7, 2019. His full reply is reported in the Faculty Senate Oct. 23, 2019 minutes, p. 19 - 26, and provided here: To The Issue of Reorders and Out of Stocks That Affect Campus: When answering the questions of why does the Bookstore suffer from out of stock/reorder issues, there are a myriad of reasons and/or scenarios. The following information is a detailed account of the process of Instructor Adoptions to Orders and the importance of submitting necessary information that meets the University System of Georgia and Georgia Southern University's guidelines and directly affects our ability to provide materials in a timely manner. Information to Faculty about Bookstore Adoption Process Adoptions are due: Spring – OCT 15th Summer – FEB 15th Fall – MAR 15th HOW TO SUBMIT ADOPTIONS Since the beginning of Spring Term 2019, the University Store invested into an adoption collection software called VERBA COLLECT. Verba Collect is the preferred method of adoption submission as it is a personalized and guided experience that ensures all of the necessary information has been provided. Emails to TEXTBOOKS@GEORGIASOUTHERN.EDU are the next preferred method of adoption submission, although the emails need to include all of the necessary information so that we do not spend more time than necessary communicating back and forth to determine what material is being requested – we have a form that we can send to you if you want to email your adoption and do not know what information to list. Lastly, phone calls for adoptions are okay, however it is best practice to email us the adoption information so that there is a record – any miscommunications via phone are hard to track and can cause huge issues with incorrect materials being ordered, etc. "No Textbook Required" and "same as last semester" are both still adoptions and need to be submitted. **All courses assigned to an instructor in Verba Collect are pulled from Banner. If you as an instructor are no longer assigned to a course that is listed for you in Verba, please let us know and we will remove your name from the course. The Bookstore does not manually assign courses in Verba – this information was submitted by your department to Banner – if you are removed from a section we DO have to manually remove you in Verba. It takes seconds and does not impede your ability to submit adoptions for your correctly assigned courses. **Some of the major features of Verba Collect are that we can communicate individually with each instructor about their chosen material or mass-email instructors requesting their material information. We can also track all communication as well as previously adopted material that is available for your review as an instructor. It is not limited to your previous courses, but any instructor's courses. NECESSARY ADOPTION INFORMATION Certain information should be provided BY THE INSTRUCTOR for their adoption: *Verba Collect will guide you through submitting this information - Course(s) that books are associated with, especially if more than one course. DEPT, COURSE, SECTION. "My course" is not the best

information. - Requirement Code (REQUIRED, RECOMMENDED, OPTIONAL, SEE PROFESSOR, etc.) - Title - Author(s) - ISBN - Edition/Publication Year - Publisher More information that is incredibly helpful for us to make sure we are ordering the correct material: - Whether or not the book comes with an access code, whether or not that access code will be required for your course (Pearson's Mastering, McGraw Hill's Connect, etc.) - If you require for students to have the physical version of a book (as in digital version is not allowed due to in class work, open book tests for which you would not allow a digital book, your required book is a workbook that needs to be written in, etc.) - Estimated enrollment (we check the enrollment for courses and take that into consideration for our estimated sales and order amounts - if your course has 22 seats but you only ever have ~6 students register, or if your course has 22 seats but you regularly have ~28 students, that is good information for us to have) ** No Textbook Required IS an adoption and it must be submitted. ADOPTION APPROVAL PROCESS - If an ISBN is not provided for a title, we have to determine what ISBN is the correct ISBN and then confirm with the instructor that we have identified the correct material before we move any further. Depending on the material, it can take anywhere from minutes to hours to figure out what is being requested. - Determine that the ISBN (the ISBN-13 should always be provided by the instructor so that we can guarantee that we are processing the correct material) is correct and not a Kindle ISBN, Publisher Consignment Rental ISBN, or anything else that we cannot provide in our store. ** Sometimes the ISBN for an item (especially packages with a book and access code) will be different than what is listed online. ALWAYS discuss with your sales rep for the publisher what ISBN will be for your material. (If you don't know who your sales rep would be, please contact the Bookstore and we will give you all of the necessary contact information and can also start the dialogue with the sales rep for you.) - Determine if the item is current or old edition; determine who the publisher is; determine who distributes the item; determine the availability of the item between wholesalers/publishers/distributors. - If a title is current edition and is available, the adoption is APPROVED. - If a title is old edition but readily available from a wholesaler/distributor, the adoption is APPROVED. - If a title is old edition and is not available from a publisher or wholesaler/distributor, the instructor is notified that we will not be able to guarantee that we can satisfy the estimated sales for the course. We research to determine if there is a new edition/version available for the requested title, and provide that information to the instructor in case they would like to change to the new, available material. If the instructor chooses to keep the lesser/non-available title, we still approve the adoption and will order what we can, but we cannot guarantee that we can get any or enough of these titles. - We do not consider Amazon, Chegg, Half Price Books, or any other online marketplace when buying books in bulk. Any books purchased from these other online marketplaces are nonreturnable. We have purchasing limits for Amazon that are low enough that we could only buy enough books for a very small number of courses before we hit our limit. A single purchase is limited to \$1000, and for the entire month we are limited to \$5000 for purchases with our University Purchase Card. This includes any custom titles where credit cards are required for course materials. Prepaid orders constituted \$3050 of our available \$5000 limit. - We have students who receive their materials through scholarships, and typically any hard to get books that they need will be the majority of what we can spend with Amazon. The University Store is fully responsible for the cost of Dual-Enrolled students' materials. - Buying books from online marketplaces like Amazon, etc. remove the students' opportunity to purchase their materials elsewhere. It should also be considered that students for a specific course at Georgia Southern are not the only students/people that may be buying these books on Amazon. A title with only 12 available copies on Amazon and none available from any approved vendors for a course with 24 students may not be the best choice as far as making sure all students have the opportunity to purchase their required materials - regardless of price. - Once a title has been approved, we record the information in our Adoption System to prepare the estimated sales information and list the material online for students to view. - Once an adoption is approved, we determine the enrollment (or anticipated enrollment depending on how early the adoption is received) of the course. - After determining enrollment, we look at each title that has been adopted and look at all of the previous semesters' sales history (percentage of books sold to students enrolled - rented books included) - We input these numbers into a formula that determines the estimated sales for the new term. This formula includes the percentage of books sold to the students enrolled, PLUS a buffer percentage - meaning that we do order more books than we think we will sell. HOW WE ORDER YOUR ADOPTED BOOKS - As we receive adoptions, our system keeps a record of all the books we have estimated that we need to buy. This is our "OPEN TO BUY" list. We send these lists - "WANT LISTS" -- out to Wholesalers regularly once we've reached the adoption due date

so that we can try to source as many USED or LESS EXPENSIVE copies of books as we can before we begin ordering new books from publishers. These books are held for us and then shipped to us a few weeks before the start of term. - With major publishers like McGraw Hill, Pearson, and Cengage, fulfilling the want list with national titles may be easier because of the volume of available materials. - With novels and custom publications, it can be a struggle to fulfill the wants lists because inventory is not available and no approved vendors of the USG system carry stock of the title. - If your book/material includes an access code we will always order those new from the publisher - If your book is a workbook or if the student will need to purchase it new - PLEASE make note of this. If the item is not listed as a lab manual, workbook, etc., we may not be able to determine that it should be new and not used. - With books or titles we have communicated will be hard to source, we cannot guarantee that our WANT LISTS will be fruitful, but we will try to find those books if the instructor does not choose to move to a more available text. - A few weeks before the start of the term, our system will take account of everything we have been able to source through our WANT LISTS and remove those items/quantities from our OPEN TO BUY list. Everything remaining on this list is sorted by Vendor/Publisher and then purchase orders for each vendor are created. - Once the orders are created, the orders are placed with the Publishers. This is a very time consuming process - between waiting in queue to speak to a publisher's order team and actually communicating the order, we find that orders regularly can take anywhere between 20 minutes and 1 hour to place. - Once books are ordered, we estimate that it will take between 8-10 business days for those books to arrive. When it is during the month that the semester begins, the publishers are incredibly busy sending out books to other schools nationwide. It can take DAYS before an order that has been called in is actually processed on the publisher's side. - Just because we order a title does NOT mean that the vendor/wholesaler can provide the needed quantity. - If books are not adopted until the semester begins, for some publishers it is difficult to contact the order team to place the order due to large volumes of calls and orders that the publisher is experiencing. - If books are not adopted until the semester begins, the Bookstore is forced to pay for expedited shipping in the hopes that the books will arrive in a timely fashion. Expedited shipping for books is incredibly expensive, depending on where in the US the books are coming from. - Some publishers are very small companies that do not keep stock of books on-hand, but rather their titles are Print on Demand, meaning that the books are not printed until the order is placed. Print on Demand books usually take about 3 weeks to arrive. If those books are adopted on the first day of classes, they usually will not arrive for a month. - Some publishers require that we prepay for the material that we order, which has to be done with our P-Card. This is the card that is subject to pre-determined limits. Depending on the cost of the order, we may or may not be able to order the quantity needed simply based on our payment limitations. FALL 2019 SPECIFIC INFORMATION - For Fall Term 2019, we placed orders with MORE THAN 150 VENDORS. We placed OVER 420 ORDERS. If each of those orders ONLY took 20 minutes, that is 8400 minutes - 140 hours - that we spent calling in orders. Over 50 of those orders (around 16 hours) were received on the first day of classes - keep in mind that ... a business we are dealing with THOUSANDS of customers at this point and finding 16 hours during the first week of the semester to place orders for books that students and instructors expect to be available is an arduous, demanding expectation and takes away from our ability to better service students as well as deal with any issues that arise for instructors that have submitted their adopted materials on time. - This Fall Term the Statesboro campus listed 3733 sections and an additional 1038 online sections. We were tasked with communicating and collecting adoptions for the 922 instructors on campus and the 390 online instructors. This added up to: 1671 physical book titles, 523 eBook titles - a total of 2194 individual titles that we have to source with vendors. - As of August 13, 2019, the first day of classes, 500 course material adoptions were submitted to the University Store. RETURNS, BUYBACK, AND OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION - We are not allowed to assume what material you are using - not for returns, not for buyback, not for ordering, and not for listing your materials online. - A percentage of the books that we order can be returned to the vendor we received them from, although most of them have restocking fees and shipping/handling fees that can be very expensive, or we are limited to 20% returnable overstock. Once we purchase these books, we have anywhere from 30 days to 6 months to return those books to their vendor for partial credit. - The adoption due date is very close to midterm. Once the midterm has passed, we assess what books have been readopted for the next term and what quantity we need, keep those books if we already have them on our shelves, and begin our returns process for almost all of the other books that are returnable. - If the books are not returnable and not readopted by the adoption due date, we are required to contact our wholesalers and sell off all of the

inventory possible that has not been deemed necessary for next term. - We cannot keep books that MAY be used for the next term due to inventory regulations and requirements that are mandated by the University. Each semester we are required to track value of books that become "dead stock" and are only allowed to write off so much inventory. Returning unadopted books at the end of each term is required to combat this issue. - If you as an instructor do not require a book until later in the semester, especially after midterm, please know and let your students know that we do return books starting after midterm and may not have what they need in stock if they wait until after this date to purchase their materials. We can always reorder, but that does take a few business days. Instructors, PLEASE let us know any titles that will not be required until after midterm. - The adoptions due date is very important so that we can estimate our BUYBACK quantities. Even if you use the same book every semester, if you do not submit your adoption we have no way of knowing that we should buy back your books from students. - If you have not submitted an adoption once the term has started and a student brings us your syllabus that lists your required material (with ISBN, edition, etc.) then we will list that information at that time and order books. However, if the material listed on the syllabus is incorrect or no longer available different issues could arise. - A title published before 2010 could be easily be sold several times to different distributors. The publisher may stay the same but the rights to distribute will change. An older edition book DOES NOT MEAN it will be less expensive to purchase. If the supply is low and the demand high, some vendors will increase the price over a newer edition. - Again, Amazon is not a vendor nor do we consider them until we have exhausted all other means of sourcing a book. Our purchasing limits for a single purchase are \$1000, and the total for the month is \$5000. This includes orders that MUST be prepaid. We are responsible for providing books to scholarship students, dual-enrolled students, and honors students at no cost to the student - we reach our limit VERY quickly due to these constraints. CLASS NOTES AND COURSE PACKS - EAGLE PRINT SHOP - If you will be using a course pack or class notes that are printed by the Eagle Print Shop, you will need to adopt that material as well as contact the print shop to send them the file that you would like printed as your course pack. This must be done EVERY SEMESTER. Even if you are just contacting the Print Shop to let them know to use the same file as before, it is best practice to make sure that your materials are being printed. - We do communicate with the Print Shop and share information about who has adopted course packs and who has only emailed the Print Shop about their material so that we can make sure it is listed as an adoption. It is still the instructor's responsibility to make sure that both entities know about the printed materials. WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO SUBMIT ADOPTIONS IF YOU EXPECT STUDENTS TO HAVE BOOKS - A large percentage of the student body utilizes their Financial Aid Bookstore Credit to purchase their required textbooks. If an instructor has not submitted an adoption, this student is being put at a disadvantage because they may not have another way to access funds to purchase books elsewhere. Financial Aid funds are not disbursed until around the 3rd week of classes, and once books are ordered it can take time to receive those unless the material is available digitally. - Any students that order books from us that are not in stock on the last day to utilize their Financial Aid Bookstore Credit are pre-charged for their ordered materials as a courtesy so that there is no interruption in the student's ability to pay for their items that come in between the last day to utilize credit and the day the student receives their Financial Aid disbursement. - A number of students are scholarship students (athletes, dual-enrolled students, honors students) that receive all or some of their materials without having to pay themselves. If an adoption has not been submitted, those students have to purchase their material elsewhere (if they can afford it). - If an instructor has submitted an adoption for an older edition/unavailable book, especially if we have communicated to that instructor the difficulty in finding this particular book, whatever we can source will be provided to the scholarship students first, and then the remainder of the books will go to the shelves. If we are unable to source any books, we may resort to Amazon for orders but only if we are given approval and if the cost of the book does not greatly exceed the original market price of the book, and if we have not already met our University-determined limit for Amazon orders. COMMUNICATION - Communication is key to fulfilling the needs of students when it comes to course materials. - The University Store does not dictate to any instructor what material to use but we will strive to communicate what is not available and what we simply cannot provide under the guidelines set by the University System of Georgia. - As an instructor, if you find that one or more of your students has commented that the Bookstore is out of your required materials, PLEASE contact us. We are more than happy to let you know if we are, in fact, out of your materials and whether or not we are already aware of this out of stock title and if we have already made efforts to place a reorder for your materials. - We have thousands of books

on our shelves, but overlooking a book is possible. Situations have arisen where student(s) misinform their instructors about the availability of their required materials, and had we been contacted at the Bookstore, we could have correctly informed the instructor of the availability of materials, in turn allowing the student to make a more informed decision about how and where they will purchase what they need. - Sometimes a publisher only sends us part of what we order – such as when they run low on stock and have to reprint the books, sometimes packages get lost in transit on their way to us, sometimes another instructor is using the same material as you but did not submit an adoption for said material so we have been put at a disadvantage when trying to determine our estimated sales, and sometimes we have genuinely exceeded our estimated sales and just need to reorder more books. - We know that running out of stock is frustrating to instructors, however reordering is generally an easy process and all reorders will have expedited shipping. Simply inform us that we may need to order more books to satisfy the needs of your students. We will gladly order more books for your students if they are in need. When we estimate sales we are making educated decisions and also over-estimating what we believe your students will need. We accept responsibility for any mistakes and missed opportunities. - During our Textbook Rush period, we employ over 60 student assistants that are carefully trained to interact with customers and provide them with assistance and information that is helpful to the student as far as what they need and how to get it. We are one of the largest employers of students on campus. - At any given time during our Rush period, there are no less than 10 student assistants who are constantly engaging customers to make sure they are finding what they need. - We have posters and signage that inform students how to access their COURSE BOOK LIST, which is found directly through MyGeorgiaSouthern (Registration Information Tab, Course Book List – Statesboro) and lists all of the materials for the specific student based on the courses in which they are enrolled. - As books are ordered, a sign is attached to the empty spot on the shelf with information about the date the book was ordered, when we estimate that it will arrive, and how to reserve a copy of the book that is not currently in stock. - To reserve a copy of an out of stock book, and to inform us of a need to reorder out of stock books, we have a Web Order system in place. Students can absolutely order in stock books through this Web Order system. We regularly monitor any items that we place on “backorder” or “reorder” status. Within the day that an item is determined to be backordered, it is noted for reorder. - Generally after the second week of classes, we close the textbook aisles to customers and they are given counter-service, which forces our customers to interact with our staff who will inform them when a book is out of stock and how to place an order to reserve a copy and to let us know that it is needed. - We have noticed a trend (see attached statistics from the National Association of College Stores magazine article) over the past few years that many students are waiting longer to decide if they are going to purchase a textbook for their courses. Some decide not to purchase a textbook at all if they can pass the course without the book. Most of these students do not want to admit this to their instructor and may blame the store. Submitted by Derick Robertson, Assistant Store Manager for Course Materials