



Spectrum

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Taming the Cost of Textbooks

Do you know how much the textbook you have selected for your course will cost students? Are the CD and/or supplementary materials bundled with the textbook really necessary for the course? How often are new editions of a textbook released by the publisher? Are there significant differences between editions? Answers to these questions and their impact on the cost of textbooks are eye-opening!

In less than 20 years, textbook prices have nearly tripled, "rising at the average rate of six percent per year" (Powers, 2006). A California Public Interest Research Group found that 22 frequently assigned textbooks had an average cost of \$131.44 (Capriccioso, 2006). For an undergraduate student taking a full load of courses, the cost of textbooks alone can easily add up to several hundred dollars a semester and several thousand dollars over a four-year period. Considering these numbers, it is understandable why there is uproar over the escalating cost of textbooks. To address this issue, state policy makers and universities are exploring ways to ensure students have access to affordable textbooks.

In 2004, the Illinois Board of Higher Education requested university faculty, student groups and bookstore managers examine college textbook prices and the feasibility of a textbook rental program. The ensuing report states that "although textbook rental programs would provide a lower-cost alternative to students, such programs are inappropriate for the large, research-oriented public universities in Illinois" (State of Illinois Board of Higher Education, 2005). There are, however, ways to make textbooks affordable. Consider the following cost-saving alternatives from that report, the Chicago Tribune (Bigda, 2007), and other common sense suggestions:

1. Investigate the cost of a textbook before adopting it for a course. If the cost is prohibitive, explore other alternatives such as an electronic version of the book which may be less expensive.
2. Make textbook adoptions early so that students can explore cheaper alternatives for purchasing the book.
3. Increase students' awareness of textbook purchase or acquisition options, such as used textbooks, electronic texts, discount book sellers, cheaper versions of the same books sold abroad, and reserve copies in the library. Facilitate book exchanges and swaps among students. This could be a service activity for student organizations.
4. Check textbooks on the same course topics available for other disciplines. Sometimes books on the same topic may be sold at different prices for different disciplines.
5. Avoid requiring more than one textbook for a course. Instead, provide class notes or other materials for content covered in additional textbooks.
6. Analyze the content and price of different textbooks available for the same course. Consider using a less expensive textbook that contains most of the necessary content and provide class materials for the missing information.
7. Use the same textbook for several semesters even if the publisher releases newer editions. Newer editions may only have minor changes or corrections and faculty can notify students about the revisions.
8. Use textbooks with substantial content that can be used for more than one course. In some cases, it may be possible to use one part of a book for an introductory course and the other part for an advanced course.

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9. Discourage publishers from bundling textbooks with CDs or supplementary materials that are not essential for the course.
10. Negotiate with publishers for lower prices based on volume purchase or textbook adoptions for several courses. Support publishers who provide low-cost textbooks.
11. Develop your own course materials and post them online or have them sold as a bookstore course pack.

There may not be one perfect solution for taming the cost of textbooks for all courses. But we can join the ranks of other universities and faculty who are implementing a number of alternatives mentioned above. The results can benefit us all.

References

Bigda, C. (2007). *Learn to cut cost of books for college: Illinois mulls programs for renting, not buying*. Chicago Tribune.

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Call for David Raymond Grant Proposals

The *David Raymond Grant for the Use of Technology in Teaching* funded by former trustee, Mr. David Raymond, NIU Foundation, and the Office of the Provost, provides a \$2,500 grant to the faculty member with the best proposal for incorporating new technologies into his or her teaching. Tenured and tenure-track faculty are eligible to apply for the grant. Applicants must describe a project that incorporates instructional technologies in the teaching of a course or the preparation of supporting materials for a course according to the proposal format. The proposal must include a budget for the project and a letter of support from the chair of the applicant's department, school or division. Five copies of each proposal should be submitted to the Grant Review Committee, Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center, Adams Hall 319, by **March 19, 2007**. For proposal format and additional information about the grant, check <http://www.facdev.niu.edu/facdev/grants/raymond.shtml> or contact facdev@niu.edu.

Call for Faculty Development Grant Proposals

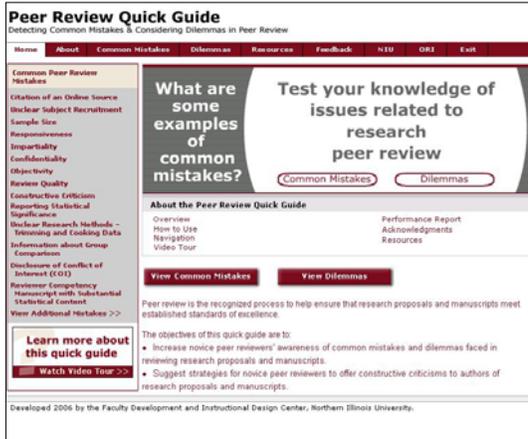
Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center is offering grants of up to \$2,500 each annually to regular, continuing tenured or tenure-track faculty. The purpose of the grants is to encourage and support faculty development activities that directly benefit the applicants' departments, colleges and/or the university. Equal matching from the applicants' academic units or appropriate external sources is required. Five copies of each proposal, including the proposal cover sheet, accompanying letters of support and other relevant documents must be submitted to the Grant Review Subcommittee, Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center, Adams Hall 319, by Friday, **April 6, 2007** for activities scheduled between July 1 and December 31, 2007. Complete proposal guidelines and cover sheet can be obtained on the Web at <http://www.niu.edu/facdev/grants/fdgrant.shtml>. Faculty who plan to submit proposals by the April 6th deadline and need more information are encouraged to register and attend the grant writing seminar that will be held from 12 to 1 p.m. on Friday, March 9, 2007. To register, go to <http://www.niu.edu/facdev/forms/fsprogreg.shtml> or email facdev@niu.edu.

Call For SPS Development Grant Proposals

Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center is offering grants up to \$1,000 each to Supportive Professional Staff (SPS) pursuing professional development activities that benefit the individuals as well as their academic units. Candidates must have completed a minimum of two years of at least half-time employment as SPS at NIU. For proposal guidelines and other relevant information, check <http://www.niu.edu/facdev/grants/spsdgrant.shtml>. Five copies of each proposal, including other relevant documents must be submitted to the SPS Awards Committee, Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center, Adams Hall 319, by Friday, **April 20, 2007** for activities proposed between July 1 and December 31, 2007. SPS who plan to submit a proposal by the April 20th deadline and need more information are encouraged to register to attend the SPS Grant Writing Seminar from 12 to 1 p.m. on Tuesday, April 3, 2007. To register, go to <http://www.niu.edu/facdev/forms/fsprogreg.shtml> or email facdev@niu.edu.

Promoting Responsible Authorship and Peer Review with Online Quick Guides

How can objectivity compromise the quality of a peer review? Why is disclosing a conflict of interest equally important for both proposal/manuscript authors and peer reviewers? How can one assess the justification for conducting research? Can authors plagiarize their own work? What are the issues in duplicative publications? These are some of the questions researchers in the early stages of their careers may face when taking on the role of author or peer reviewer. Questions such as these are the focus of the recently completed online modules or 'quick guides' for Responsible Authorship and Peer Review funded by the Office of Research Integrity (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services). Access to both modules can be found online at <http://www.niu.edu/rcrportal>.



The purpose of the quick guides is to increase researchers' awareness of common mistakes and dilemmas that novice authors and peer reviewers may be at risk of committing. The quick guides provide opportunities to explore issues that can compromise the integrity of the research process. By selecting from a list of topics, users can read through a number of interactive case scenarios, take quizzes about a course of action to take, and review feedback on their responses. Users have the option to print a 'Performance Report' of their interaction with each case scenario viewed. A narrated video tour is available to assist users in navigating the Web site.

The quick guides were collaboratively developed at NIU by the Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center with faculty and staff from a number of academic units. Although the content was compiled from various sources including existing literature, faculty from numerous

departments at NIU contributed their perspectives and experiences on issues that compromise the quality of research proposals, manuscripts, and the peer review process.

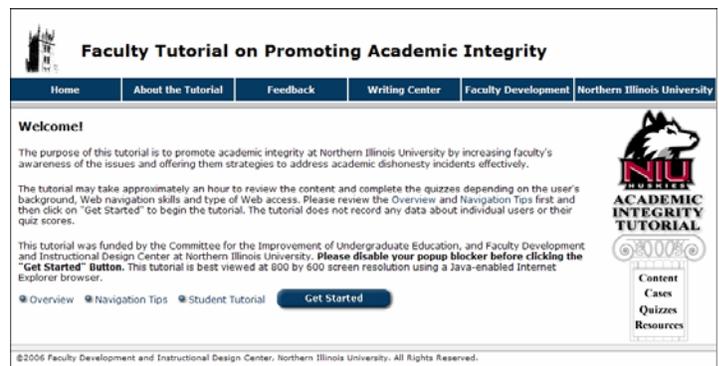
The quick guides can be used as a supplementary resource in courses or seminars on research or as a self-paced learning tool by anyone. The quick guides cover a range of responsible authorship and peer review issues such as citing online sources, selecting the appropriate sample size, ensuring confidentiality, and disclosing conflict of interest. Users can freely explore the quick guides as the guides do not require any special login, passwords, or approval, and do not collect data from users.

The quick guides are the third project supported by the Office of Research Integrity. This agency also funded the development of interactive online modules on Data Management, Responsible Mentoring, and Collaborative Research. For more information on all online modules, please contact Dan Cabrera, Multimedia Coordinator, at 753-0613 or dcabrera@niu.edu.

An Online Tutorial for Faculty on Promoting Academic Integrity

Due to the increase in academic dishonesty incidents, a number of universities have developed online resources to promote academic integrity among students. Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center has also developed and published an "Online Tutorial on Academic Integrity" for students at <http://www.niu.edu/ai/students>. However, educating students on academic integrity addresses only one side of the issue and faculty should also be familiar with strategies for addressing academic integrity issues effectively in their courses and curricula. To address this need, the Center has developed another online tutorial that increases faculty's awareness of academic dishonesty by students, offers strategies for designing course activities effectively to promote academic integrity, and provides tips for protecting students from unintentional accusations of cheating and plagiarism.

The faculty tutorial on academic integrity includes easily-readable content organized under eight sections, quizzes, case studies, and resources. The tutorial can be accessed at <http://www.niu.edu/ai/faculty> without any login or password. Similar to the student tutorial, the faculty tutorial was also funded by the Committee for the Improvement of Undergraduate Education's "Project for the Improvement of Undergraduate Education Grant" and Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center.



Blackboard is the course management system used campus-wide at NIU that allows faculty to post materials, deliver tests and surveys, hold online discussion and perform many other course-related functions. During the fall 2006 semester, the Teaching with Blackboard Web site was redesigned to reflect the new NIU Web presence and reorganized to make the support resources available online more accessible for those teaching with Blackboard at NIU.

The following resources that have been recently added to www.blackboard.niu.edu are now available:

- **Teaching with Blackboard Podcast**

This new podcast provides tips, ideas, suggestions, and best practices of teaching with the Blackboard learning management system. The goal of this podcast is to discuss the pedagogy of online teaching and learning and share ideas and tips for how NIU faculty can leverage the Blackboard course management system to improve the teaching and learning experiences they offer for their students.

- **NIUOnline Listserv**

This email listserv was developed in response to requests from NIU faculty to serve as a place to discuss and explore techniques and solutions, and share general information on using technology in their online and face-to-face teaching. Faculty members are encouraged to use the listserv as a means for sharing ideas to improve online teaching and learning experiences offered to students. General discussion will emphasize the pedagogical issues surrounding online teaching, including student and faculty readiness to teach and learn online. Faculty members are also encouraged to share their experiences, online teaching tips, and most successful assignments.

- **Blackboard Workshop Email Subscription**

The list of upcoming Blackboard workshops is readily accessible from any page on the Teaching with Blackboard Web site. Faculty can now subscribe to the schedule of upcoming Blackboard workshops to receive automatic notification either via email or RSS when new Blackboard workshops are announced.

- **Recent Blackboard Q&A**

Answers to recent questions submitted by NIU faculty concerning Blackboard are now archived and can be viewed either online or via RSS. The subscription feature makes it possible for those interested to receive answers to recently asked Blackboard questions automatically via RSS or email.

- **Blackboard A-Z Index**

The Blackboard A-Z Index provides an alphabetical directory of all Blackboard help topics available within the online help documentation as well as Blackboard-related help topics on the ITS Web site.

- **Links to Additional Blackboard Resources**

Blackboard Support Staff are compiling additional Blackboard resources developed by other institutions, and these newly compiled resources will be of interest to NIU faculty. These newly compiled resources will be added to the online collection of Blackboard links listed under "Additional Resources."

- **Ask a Blackboard Question**

Using the online question submission form, NIU faculty can submit questions regarding Blackboard. NIU Blackboard support staff makes every effort to respond to questions submitted within 24-48 hours.

In the coming months, these new resources will be utilized to help communicate details concerning upcoming Blackboard system upgrades.



Spectrum is published every fall and spring semester by Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center, Adams Hall 319, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Illinois 60115. Phone: (815) 753-0595, Email: facdev@niu.edu, Fax: (815) 753-2595, Web site: <http://www.niu.edu/facdev>. For more information about featured articles or upcoming faculty development programs, please contact: Brenda Hodges, Program Coordinator, at (815) 753-3015 or brhodges@niu.edu.