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Sierra College Academic Senate Adoption of Course Materials (2017)

The Academic Senate recognizes the importance of the following factors when selecting course materials: Academic Freedom, the academic quality of the materials, students' progress through courses, and students' financial resources.

The principles of Academic Freedom are of primary importance in the selection of course materials. **Faculty members are free to select materials for courses for which they are individually responsible, without having decisions reviewed by faculty colleagues or subject to the veto of the department chair or dean.** While it is presumed that faculty members' individual choices are pedagogically sound, faculty members should be able to articulate their reasoning; further, if a faculty member requires students to purchase a textbook(s) and course materials, it is understood that they will meaningfully utilize those materials as part of the course curriculum.

Course Outlines: The Course Outline of Record (COR) may be found in the curriculum management system WebCMS (faculty are encouraged to contact their department chairs for access information if needed.) Departments are required to review course materials for course outlines and to include recommended texts, and the final list of departmental course materials should reflect the consideration of multiple perspectives and pedagogy. While the course outlines do provide a list of recommended course materials suitable for the course, faculty are not required to choose from those listed on the course outline.

Common Texts: While there is a precedent for faculty deciding to use a common text in sequential courses, this cannot be done without significant compelling reasons. Department faculty majorities who agree to use course materials recognize the decision to choose conformity over Academic Freedom. Opportunity must be afforded to all full-time and part-time instructors involved in the department to participate meaningfully in the decision-making process. The significant benefits to students must clearly outweigh the right of the individual faculty to choose how and what to teach. There must be an overwhelming majority agreement among the faculty teaching the courses using the materials proposed for joint adoption.

In recognizing the value of Academic Freedom not only in protecting faculty rights but in ensuring that a wide variety of perspectives and pedagogies is offered to students, a faculty member must still be allowed to select his/her own textbook(s). While faculty have the autonomy to choose their own textbooks without needing approval, open communication with their department chair as a professional practice is encouraged.

Costs: While the quality and effectiveness of teaching materials are of primary importance, faculty bear in mind that the cost of course materials is an issue for students. Faculty should acknowledge possible lower cost alternatives, the value of providing copies on reserve in the library, and open educational resources, which may be free for students.