

## Sierra College Academic Senate

### Adoption of Course Materials (2021)

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

**Academic Freedom:** The principles of Academic Freedom are of primary importance in the selection of course materials. All 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, appropriate to the course outline of record, and adhere to the tenets of the discipline, faculty members should be able to articulate their rationale for selecting course materials; 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.

**Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility:** Sierra College maintains a commitment to equity, inclusion and accessibility. When it comes to the selection of course materials, faculty are encouraged to consider the relationship between culturally-responsive pedagogy; student success, retention, and persistence; and the cost of required course materials. In addition, faculty are encouraged to select materials that are culturally-responsive to diverse student populations, accessible, and available.

**Costs:** While the quality and effectiveness of teaching materials are of primary importance, faculty must bear in mind the cost of course

materials as a matter of equity for students, and the impact on overall student success and retention. Faculty should acknowledge potential zero and low-cost options for all course materials. These options include but are not limited to providing textbook copies on reserve in the library, assigning eBooks when available, requesting rentable or loose-leaf textbook copies from the bookstore, and engaging open educational resources (OERs), which may be free for students.

**Course Outlines:** The Course Outline of Record (COR) may be found in the curriculum management system (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 representative texts and materials, and the final list of departmental course materials should reflect the consideration of multiple perspectives and culturally-responsive pedagogy. Included in this consideration are Open Education Resources (OERs), publisher content, as well as other low and no cost alternatives, if available and suitable for the course. While the course outlines do provide a list of representative course materials appropriate 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 who agrees to use common course materials recognize it is their decision as individual faculty members to choose departmental conformity over choosing their own course materials, a right and responsibility safeguarded by 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 when deciding on a common text. The significant benefits of a common text to students must clearly outweigh the right of the individual faculty to choose the instructional materials for their individual class. 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 their own textbook(s) and/or resources, including OER and no/low-cost alternatives best suited for the course and that falls within the basic tenets of the discipline.

\*Other considerations:

In the case whereby a faculty member takes over a course for another instructor: Academic Freedom remains at the forefront of all course assignments. However, if it is found that a zero textbook or low textbook icon was assigned to the course schedule by the original instructor, and the semester has commenced, the new instructor will be encouraged to uphold the zero and low-cost commitments originally assigned to the course in support of **AB1359 (Block, 2016)**. Whenever possible, faculty members are encouraged to collaborate in order to minimize any potential disruption to student learning. Together, faculty can work within their departments and divisions to achieve desired outcomes.

If, however, a new instructor is assigned prior to the course start date, the new instructor may select course materials they find pedagogically sound and in support of student learning outcomes, regardless of cost. In this case, students will be notified prior to the course start date that new materials have been assigned. The college will provide expedient support and resources for students who may not be able to cover new costs.