

**The University Senate of Michigan Technological
University
Proposal 31-22**

**Establishment of an Accessible & Affordable Course Materials
University Standing Committee**

(Voting Units: Full Senate)

Submitted by:

The Ad hoc Committee on Textbook Accessibility and Affordability

Members:

[Nora Allred](#), Ad hoc Committee Chair and Senator (Library), Apurva Baruah, President Graduate Student Government, Annelise Doll, Scholarly Communications Librarian VPOL, Casey Huckins, Faculty Biological Sciences, Michael Meyer, Director CTL, Cheyenne Scott, Secretary Undergraduate Student Government, Shane Sullivan, Merchandising Operations Manager Campus Store, Judy Zei, Course Materials Manager Campus Store

I. Introduction

Following several years of observation and work, the Ad hoc Committee on Textbook Accessibility and Affordability has concluded that its charge reaches beyond the scope of a temporary or ad hoc committee. The issue of affordable and accessible course materials requires a university-level approach inclusive of all stakeholders and reporting to a small administrative decision-making body.

II. Rationale

The ad hoc Committee on Textbook Accessibility and Affordability (f.k.a. ad hoc Committee on High Textbook Prices & Publication Costs,) proposed in 2016 and was built on the work of the Textbook Strategy Study group formed in 2012 by Walt Milligan and Theresa Colman-Kaiser, had the following “aims”

1. To institute immediate measures designed to reduce textbook costs and access
2. To explore curriculum changes that would offer alternatives

3. To educate faculty and students about potential options.¹

The current (2021/22) ad hoc committee carries the following charge²:

1. Recommend and/or propose measures designed to reduce textbook costs and increase access
2. Explore curriculum changes that would offer alternatives
3. Educate faculty and students about the potential options

Since its inception, the ad hoc committee has investigated the need for affordable and accessible textbooks (later amended to course materials) available from the first day of class³. While this need has varied little, the materials, their formats and the model(s) by which they are accessed are ever-changing.

Early issues, efforts and outreach, were detailed by the ad hoc committee's first chair, Senator Dr. Charles Kerfoot, in his 2020 draft proposal.⁴ The ad hoc committee has since focused on the increasingly digital course materials landscape including but not limited to:

- Publisher-based subscription inclusive access (IA) programs (e.g. Cengage)
- Digital Rental Programs
- E-books accessible through the library's subscriptions
- Homework systems
- Open educational resources/materials (OER/M)

During the 2020-2021 academic year, ad hoc committee members explored departmental/college level interest in open course materials models through engagement with faculty, deans, chairs. They also sought opportunities for collaboration on both OER/M and IA projects. While interest was expressed, issues with vacant leadership positions, funding concerns, and shifted priorities during COVID-19 period limited these encounters to hypothetical discussions only.

ADVANCE was contacted to explore potential funding models for open course materials. The overall conclusion was that while there is potential for funding for a larger wide-impact open project, this work would require long term on-going effort and a university-wide approach.

Ultimately this ad hoc committee recognizes that its charge lies outside the purview of an ad hoc or temporary committee and proposes the creation of a university-wide body that is accountable and responsible for consistent, sustainable efforts to address options for affordable and accessible course materials.

The constantly changing nature of course materials requires an on-going exploration and analysis of affordable and accessible options, as well as a clear path of communication to consumers, stakeholders, and leadership. Consideration of non-textbook course materials (e.g. publisher-based homework systems, videos, problem sets) must be included within the scope of "course

¹ [W. Charles Kerfoot, Chair, Research Policy Committee: submitted to the Research Policy Committee for comments](#)

² Approved by the [University Senate Meeting #661](#), September 15, 2021

³ [StudentWatch Survey results, USG Course materials resolution \(draft\)](#)

⁴ [Draft Proposal: Textbook Availability & Affordability. C. Kerfoot. 2020](#)

materials.” In addition, learning systems and software adopted for university-wide use (e.g. gradescope, iClickers, etc.) need a clear decision making process and advisory body, falling within the purview of the proposed standing committee.

University-level groups addressing issues of course material affordability and accessibility are not an anomaly. Successful examples include: [Open & Affordable Education Committee](#) - Iowa State University [Affordable Learning Tools Committee](#) - TX A&M - Corpus Christi [Successful Teaching with Affordable Resources \(STAR\)](#) - U of NE
These groups are composed of faculty, students and staff and report to university administration.

III. Proposal

The Ad hoc Committee on Textbook Accessibility and Affordability proposes that the University Senate of Michigan Technological University propose the formation of the University Committee for Accessible & Affordable Learning Materials (U-CAALM.) A university standing committee, U-CAALM will be dedicated to monitoring and addressing the issues of affordable and accessible course materials for all university students.

The charge:

- Serve as contact point for university-wide questions regarding course materials
- Explore alternative models for course materials
- Engaging and educating faculty, instructors and students, including Graduate Teaching Instructors/Assistants (GTI/A,) about the potential options
- Recommend and/or propose measures designed to reduce costs and increase access to **high quality** course materials to the Provost and the Dean of Students, to be delivered annually by February 1st.

U-CAALM consists of a representative from:

- *Campus Store - 1
- *Library - 1
- *CTL - 1
- USG - 1-2
- GSG - 1-2
- Senate - 1
- *IT - 1
- Student Financial Services - 1
- Appointed by Assoc. Provost for Ugrad education (faculty/instructor/lecturer) - 1
- Appointed by Dean of the Graduate School (faculty/instructor/lecturer) - 1
- Appointed by Assoc. VP for Administration - 1
- Appointed by VP for Diversity & Inclusion – 1

- Appointed by VP of Student Affairs - 1

*The accessible technology work group (ATWG - when considering new tools) or other subject matter experts, should also be represented when necessary.