Date: March 25, 2019
To: Mike Herndon, Executive Director of Procurement
From: Kyle Housman, Student at Tarrant County College
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Subject: Proposal for inexpensive replacement for textbooks.

Purpose

The purpose of our proposal is to conduct a study to find a free or inexpensive replacement for expensive textbooks for students at Tarrant County College Northeast Campus.

Summary

On March 6, 2019, Dr. Stuewe asked us to conduct a proposal for an issue we want to resolve. The price of textbooks for courses is outrageous, even though some professors do not use the textbook. According to the most recent survey from the College Board, college students spend roughly $1,250 on textbooks during the 2017-2018 academic year.

Many professors require students to purchase or rent textbooks for their course. Then the professor does not use the textbook at all throughout the whole semester. By doing this students are wasting money that could have been used for a better cause.

This is an issue for students at TCC; especially ones who have a limited source of income and have other financial responsibilities to take care of. This would relieve students of financial stress allowing them to allocate their full focus to education.

However, our group wanted to determine the need for a textbook for every single class. We propose to research the need for textbooks and if there is a cheaper alternative to textbooks. To do this we would have to perform primary and secondary research.

We developed a plan to perform six tasks: We plan to research information online about textbook alternatives and benefits, survey how many students would benefit from inexpensive textbooks, interview various professors, survey students that have free resources or textbooks , as well as survey students who pay full price for textbooks. After we have gathered our information will then analyze the collected data and write a recommendation report.

If the proposal is authorized, we would begin our research immediately, submitting our proposal to Dr. Stuewe on March 25, 2019, and a recommendation report on April 10, 2019. The recommendation report would include the details of our research and recommendation regarding a cheaper alternative to expensive textbooks.

Introduction

On March 6, 2019, Dr. Stuewe requested that we conduct a proposal for an issue we want to resolve that affects TCC students and faculty. Textbooks, which are required for many classes, are expensive and are oftentimes rarely used in the course. The purpose of this proposal is to provide ideas for free resources to use as an alternative to expensive textbooks.

Over the course of many students' education, many will be required to purchase at least one textbook, whether it be an online or physical copy. This can pose as an issue if the student has financial problems and doesn't have the money to pay for a textbook. Even if the student does have the money for it, they likely don't feel the need for one, and oftentimes when students do buy textbooks for classes they never use them, making them an unnecessary waste of money.

The sources of our information for this proposal come from personal experience, research, interviews, and surveys.

Our group developed a plan to perform six different tasks:
1. Obtain basic information and understanding on textbooks and their alternatives.
2. Survey students who pay full price for textbooks.
3. Survey students who use free resources or textbooks.
4. Interview professors about the proposed solution.
5. Assess how students could benefit from free resources or textbooks.
6. Analyze our data and prepare a recommendation report.

In the following sections, we provide additional details about the proposed tasks, schedule, and budget, as well as our credentials and references.

Proposed Tasks

Following approval, the following tasks would be immediately performed to determine the validity of the proposal.

Task 1. Obtain basic information and understanding on textbooks and their alternatives
        We have already begun our research by looking up articles online over this topic. While researching we have found out that other universities are looking for other textbook alternatives. We found one study at the University of Otago (New Zealand), held a survey that showed the percentage of students that felt like they were greatly affected by the cost and lack of textbooks (Stein).
        At the University of Kansas, they started teaching with an OAER in between the years of 2014-2016 students saved $1.61 million. Students then found other resources, in which could help them save money. The university continued to use this program in order to help the students financially (Lashley).

. Survey students who pay full price for textbooks

      During the first week of our research, we will survey students who pay full price for textbooks. The survey will be conducted in person/online. Flyers with a URL to the survey along with a QR code will be present on site, so students can more easily complete the survey. We will attempt to obtain a laptop from the library for students to use. The survey will take approximately one minute to complete. The survey will open with a question to verify the students have purchased their textbooks. If the students are renting, or purchased used, they will be able to indicate this along with a rough percentage of how much they saved.

Task 3. Survey students who use free resources or textbooks

      Students who used free resources, rather than textbooks, will be surveyed on a separate day. The process will be similar: students will be prompted to fill out surveys on campus, with QR codes/URLs to visit the survey website. The survey will take approximately two minutes to complete. The survey will open with a question to verify the student obtained their information for free. We will then inquire further, and attempt to obtain the source of the information. We will not collect incriminating data on the student, in the event they illegally downloaded a textbook online. Instead, we will ask more creative questions to lead to the same result. We will later compile the results and attempt to determine the quality of mentioned sources.

Task 4. Interview professors about the proposed solution. The questions will be:
1. What's your plan with the grant?
2. How effective do you think this program will be?
3. What kind of open resources do you think would be most useful? (online, or free open textbook)

Task 5. Assess how students could benefit from free resources or textbooks
1. How much do you spend on textbooks per semester?
2. How many of your textbooks do you use frequently?
3. Do you feel as though you would greatly benefit from open resources?

Task 6. Analyze our data and prepare a recommendation report

      Compile the data we learned during our research, and report on the potential success or failure of switching from textbooks.

Schedule

The following (fig 1) is a schedule of the tasks we will complete for this project.

Tasks	Date of Tasks														
Task 1: Research textbooks and their alternatives	██	██	██	██	██										
Task 2: Survey students who pay full price for textbooks	░░	░░													
Task 3: Survey students who use free resources			▒▒	▒▒											
Task 4: Interview professors about the proposed solution								██	██	██	██				
Task 5: Assess how students could benefit from free resources												▒▒			
Task 6: Analyze our data and prepare a recommendation report.													██	██	██ ██ ██
	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M T W
	Week 1							Week 2							Week 3

(Figure 1)

Experience

We are all experienced students at Tarrant County College, therefore we have gone through the struggle of buying or renting textbooks and then not using them once during the semester. Also many students may not be able to afford textbooks. Some students barely have enough money to pay for classes let alone useless expensive textbooks.

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Ryan Arif, Student at Tarrant County College, Computer Science Major

Citations:

Lashley, Jonathan, et al. "Cultivating Textbook Alternatives from the Ground Up: One Public University's Sustainable Model for Open and Alternative Educational Resource Proliferation." *International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, vol. 18, no. 4, Jan. 2017, pp. 212–230. *EBSCOhost*, ezp.tccd.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1146246&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Stein, Sarah, et al. "Student Views on the Cost of and Access to Textbooks: An Investigation at University of Otago (New Zealand)." *Open Praxis*, vol. 9, no. 4, Jan. 2017, pp. 403–419. *EBSCOhost*, ezp.tccd.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1165496&site=ehost-live&scope=site.