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SB029-14/15: Rafter360 and the Creation of a Textbook Exploratory Committee

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1 **The Associated Students of the University of Montana**
2 **Resolution Regarding Rafter360 and the Creation of a Textbook Exploratory Committee**
3 **September 24, 2014**

4 **SB029-14/15**

5 **Authored by: Asa Hohman, ASUM President**

6 **Sponsored by:**

7
8 Whereas, The Associated Students of the University of Montana (ASUM) exists to advocate for
9 students interests and to better the lives of as many students as possible;

10
11 Whereas, college textbook prices are skyrocketing, as shown by recent non-partisan research
12 which finds that college textbook prices have grown 812% since 1978 compared to health care
13 costs which have increased 575%, and the Consumer Price Index which has increased 250%;

14
15 Whereas, public interest research finds 65% of college students have skipped buying textbooks
16 due to costs, yet 94% are concerned that not having textbooks will hurt their grades, and 93% of
17 faculty believe students who use textbooks receive higher grades;

18
19 Whereas, an in-depth market analysis of the University's Fall 2014 textbook adoption found the
20 average student would pay from \$250 (online) to \$298 (Bookstore) to acquire all assigned
21 textbooks based on prices from 7 online marketplaces (e.g. Amazon), representing 5,783 book
22 sellers (e.g. the Bookstore), across 814,417 unique offers (e.g. new, used, rent, or ebook);

23
24 Whereas, 60% of all University undergraduates, and nearly 90% of all first-years receive some
25 form of financial aid, yet financial aid is not applied to the cost of textbooks under the current
26 student billing structure, leaving students with (often unexpectedly high) out-of-pocket expenses
27 for textbooks;

28
29 Whereas, the proposed University of Montana Book Plan would include all hardcover,
30 paperback, ebooks, access codes, and other published items given an ISBN, required by faculty
31 for all students in their course, and not part of current course fees thus reducing unexpected, out-
32 of-pocket expenses for students and giving all students an equal start;

33
34 Whereas, all students would ideally receive 100% of their assigned textbooks by the first day of
35 classes, either by picking up books at a central distribution center on campus (e.g. UM Bookstore
36 for residential students), or direct shipment (e.g. UPS for online learners);

37
38 Whereas, there are substantial printing / production efficiencies (e.g. multi-use vs. single-use
39 books) and transportation efficiencies (e.g. bulk freight vs. package shipping) created by the
40 proposed Book Plan that reduce the University's carbon footprint;

41

42 Therefore, Let It Be Resolved, that ASUM recognizes that the price of textbooks is rising and
43 that purchasing overpriced textbooks can be a burden for many students;

44
45 Therefore, Let It Be Further Resolved, that ASUM requests that a steering committee be created
46 to investigate any programming related to Rafter360 that could alleviate the aforementioned
47 problem, this committee will also create a plan for the implementation and roll out of any
48 possible new programing;

49
50 Therefore, Let It Be Further Resolved, that ASUM requests that this steering committee be
51 composed of staff, faculty, administration, and students and that of the students at least one be an
52 ASUM senator and one be an ASUM executive;

53
54 Therefore, Let It Be Further Resolved, that ASUM request that it be given monthly updates on
55 the work of the steering committee and ASUM will be given a final presentation outlining the
56 work of the committee and all findings and plans for rollout before any binding agreement is
57 signed;

58
59 Therefore, Let It Be Further Resolved, the function of the steering committee would be purely
60 exploratory and that ASUM does not endorse partnering with Rafter360 before further
61 investigation;

62
63 Therefore, Let It Be Further Resolved, that if the steering committee decides that the Rafter360
64 programming is not suitable for the University of Montana they will continue to pursue other
65 programming that could alleviate the costs of textbooks to students;

66
67 Therefore, Let It Be Further Resolved, that should the steering committee create a proposal in
68 conjunction with Rafter360, that is found favorable by ASUM, the final decision shall fall upon
69 the student body through a campus-wide vote;

70
71 Therefore, Let It Be Further Resolved, that this resolution be sent to the following: Dr. Stephen
72 Lodmell, Faculty Senate Chair for the University of Montana; Dr. Royce Engstrom, President of
73 the University of Montana; Clayton Christian, Commissioner of Higher Education; Paul Tuss,
74 Chairman of the Montana Board of Regents.

75
76
77 Passed by ASUM Senate:

78
79 _____
80 Sarah Smith,
81 Relations and Affairs Chair

Sean McQuillan,
Chair of the Senate