

Remarks before the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance

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My name is Stephen Hochheiser, and I am the Director of Academic Reseller Relations for Thomson Learning, a major U.S. post-secondary textbook publisher.

I am very proud to be here today as the representative of an industry whose products are so integral to the success of our nation's higher education process. I am also pleased to be able to report to you on the many ways that publishers have been providing both professors and students with myriad choices that address various teaching and learning styles.

It is important that the members of this Committee recognize just how sensitive publishers are to the rising overall cost of a college education. We are making every effort to be an integral part – not a barrier – to the educational process.

In recent years, there has been an increased demand for U.S. educational publishers to play a more pivotal role in support of our colleges and universities and their students. Some of the factors driving this evolving role include institutional budget issues caused by cuts in college funding, a greater percentage of adjunct instructors, larger class sizes, fewer teaching support personnel and the significant increase in the student population's diverse learning styles.

Publishers have also been called upon to address the marked increase in the need for remedial instruction. According to the 2006 ACT exam, only 21% of students entering four-year institutions are prepared for college-level courses in the four major subject areas of English, reading, mathematics and science. Nationwide, a full one-third of students seek remedial support during their freshman year. Publishers have addressed these 21st-century issues by developing materials that utilize the newest technologies and the latest information on learning styles and outcomes.

In fact, a major finding in last year's Government Accountability Office study reflects this trend. GAO concluded that one of the main drivers of the increased cost of course materials is the larger role that publishers have been called upon to play in supporting the educational process and in addressing the needs of today's institutions, instructors and students.

For example, a calculus professor can choose a textbook fully integrated with online graded homework and online student tutoring that provides each student with 24/7 feedback and assistance on his or her comprehension.

After students complete their online assignments, the professor automatically receives an assessment of both the strengths and weaknesses of individual students and the class as a whole. These assessments enable faculty to focus instruction on areas of weakness and to have more time to provide students with personal assistance. This combination of instructional and management tools has been shown to encourage critical thinking and analytical skills, improve grades, improve pass rates and lower per student cost of instruction, helping to hold down tuition. These tools are now used on thousands of campuses.

Other publisher innovations, such as handheld clickers, result in better student attendance, more class participation and measurable improvement in student effort, engagement and success.

The other topic I want to address is the vast array of choices that publishers make available to both faculty and students. Instructors can choose from a full spectrum of course materials that meet their teaching needs and their students' learning needs at a wide range of prices.

Working to hold down costs is not new. Publishers introduced paperback textbooks some 50 years ago in an effort to meet the specific needs of community college students. Since then, additional innovations, such as brief editions, streamlined editions and split editions have been published – each designed to meet specific teaching and student learning needs while also addressing price concerns.

For years now, publishers have produced many of their most popular textbooks in a growing range of versions. These vary from complete teaching and learning packages and no-frills value editions, which include loose-leaf page versions, spiral-bound editions, and one-color pages to e-book and e-chapter versions.

A lesser-known fact is that publishers have traditionally worked with individual instructors to produce customized course materials. Now, custom products are one of the fastest growing areas of educational publishing. Custom products reflect the specific content needs of each individual class. Instructors can create their own perfect textbooks, casebooks, or readers, using content from existing course materials, available third-party content, as well as their own material.

Custom titles address students' number one complaint, that they do not use enough of the required course materials that they are required to purchase. Research shows students like custom titles because they buy only the content their instructors are using, giving them a good return on their investment.

Publishers have also been quick to take advantage of emerging technologies by producing teaching and learning tools that either supplement or supplant the traditional textbook. These range from online programs to supplemental software to e-books. There are currently educational materials

available to be downloaded to PDAs and materials in MP3 format for iPods and other similar devices. Again, faculty can choose the exact materials that best meet their needs and their students' needs.

Publishers are currently piloting more new ways to provide students with choice. Thomson's iChapters.com site, for example, gives students the option of purchasing their course materials as discounted print books, discounted e-books and even individual electronic chapters, similar to the iTunes model. The site also provides a full range of a la carte solutions.

Publishers will continue to offer more options as new technologies emerge. Already, they are working with administrations and academic departments on new types of teaching materials, new delivery formats and new student purchasing models, such as including a flat course material fee for every student. There is a continuing search to find new savings for students.

Thank you for this opportunity to address the significant role played by publishers in facilitating the success of higher education today, as well as the broad array of choices we provide to meet the 21st-century needs of institutions, instructors and students. Publishers look forward to working with the Advisory Committee to find constructive ways to reduce cost barriers for students while improving the quality of an American education and the intellectual development of students.