



News, Views and Careers for All of Higher Education

Dec. 4

Quick Takes: Houghton Mifflin to Sell Textbook Unit, Damning Data on Defaults, Cutting Off Immigrant Care, Dorm Boxing Kills Student, Fight Over ‘W,’ Wedding Planning 101, FIRE Questions Suspension, Grawemeyer for World Order, Whooping Cough at Bob Jones

- Houghton Mifflin [said Monday](#) that the publishing company had agreed to sell its college textbook division to Cengage Learning (formerly Thomson Learning) for \$750 million in cash. Houghton said the deal would allow it to focus on its elementary and secondary school market, following on [its \\$4 billion purchase this summer](#) of Harcourt Education.
- As if on cue, the U.S. Education Department on Friday [released data](#) that suggest how much higher student loan default rates would be if they were reported over a longer time frame, as [legislation pending in the House of Representatives would require](#). The data released by the department show that the average cohort default rate — the rate at which a group of borrowers default on their loans by a certain point after the loans enter repayment — climbs by at least a percentage point a year for every year that is added to the term. And the statistics also show great variation by sector in the rates of default. Five years after a cohort of borrowers entered repayment in 2002, the average “cumulative lifetime default rate” for the group of borrowers was 10.6 percent. But the rate was 6.4 percent for borrowers from four-year private colleges, 7.9 percent for borrowers from four-year public colleges, 19.3 percent for students from two-year public colleges, and 22.9 percent for borrowers from for-profit colleges, according to the department.
- The University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston, facing budget deficits, may stop providing cancer care to undocumented immigrants, [The Dallas Morning News](#) reported.
- A student at the State University of New York at Binghamton was killed Sunday — apparently accidentally — during a dormitory boxing match, the [Associated Press](#) reported.
- The University of Wisconsin at Madison has sued Washburn University, in Kansas, over its “W,” the [Wisconsin State Journal reported](#). Officials at Madison say the logo Washburn uses to signify its sports teams (a sample of which [can be found here](#)) too closely resembles Wisconsin’s own “Motion W (see sample [on this page](#)), infringing on the university’s trademark. Washburn officials told the Wisconsin newspaper that they had not seen the lawsuit, but were baffled. “We don’t understand how the two Ws could be a point of confusion,” said Dena Anson, director of university relations.
- George Mason University is offering a course on wedding planning, perhaps the first of its kind at a four-year college or university, [The Washington Post](#) reported. The instructor said that she faced administrative skepticism, but had no problem getting the minimum 10 students required to start the course (she now has 100). Students are a mix of those planning weddings for themselves, those interested in the tourism and events management industry and those seeking a different kind of elective.
- The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education has asked the president of Daytona Beach Community College to

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explain its decision to bar from its campus a student who has aggressively questioned whether the college's contractual relationship with its Follett-run campus bookstore is in the best interests of students. [In its letter last month](#) to President D. Kent Sharples, lawyers for the group said that it appeared that the college had punished Thomas Rebman for “engaging in speech protected by the First Amendment or for planning to attend a meeting of the Board of Trustees to present a grievance,” by trying Rebman in absentia on charges of threatening a college employee and disorderly conduct — accusations Rebman denies. FIRE asked that Rebman be allowed to return to the campus to finish his degree. College officials did not respond to requests for comment.

- The University of Louisville on Monday night announced that the \$200,000 Grawemeyer Award for Improving World Order will go to Philip Tetlock, a professor of business administration at the University of California at Berkeley, for his 2005 book, [Expert Political Judgment: How Good Is It? How Can We Know](#) (Princeton University Press).
- An outbreak of highly contagious whooping cough — affecting as many as 40 people so far, mostly students, with dozens more showing symptoms — has led Bob Jones University to end its semester a week early and cancel annual holiday events, [The Greenville News reports](#). Those affected are being treated in the field house because the infirmary is overflowing, and the South Carolina institution is hunting for antibiotics to fight the spread.

— [Scott Jaschik](#) and [Doug Lederman](#)

Comments

THE REST OF THE STORY

Hello Everyone,

I am writing this post in an effort to inform students nationwide of what is happening here in Florida. It is not just localized to our state, it is news worthy nation wide. It began almost 2 years ago when I looked into how Follett Higher Education Group (our campus bookstore at Daytona Beach Community College) was complying with the contract they signed with the school. Specifically, what concerns me is that the contract states that used textbooks shall not be sold for more that 75% of the current new text selling price and that students SHALL BE PAID A MINIMUM OF 50% of the current new text selling price when selling back their books!

You read that right.....FIFTY PERCENT! Now I ask you....how many times have you been paid 50% of the new text selling price when selling your book back at a Follett Bookstore? I believe the way they run the store results in students being overcharged for used textbooks and also being underpaid when selling their textbooks back. This is not just an opinion of mine, it is based on a 10-12 month investigation I personally conducted. I have student receipts, bookstore records etc that make me feel that my assumptions are valid. The contract at every college is very specific as to what should be charged and paid.

When I initially had meetings with our college President, D. Kent Sharples, he seemed to be interested in fixing the situation. Later, his actions made me feel he had no intention on fixing the issue. I wondered why he reversed field until through the Public Records Act I discovered that DBCC received \$500,000 as their “share” of bookstore receipts. This startled me since we are a small community college and this is an average of about \$50 per student per year (assuming EVERY STUDENT used the bookstore).

I tried and tried to have this investigated on the local level. Being a retired Naval Officer, I am familiar with the chain of command concept. I began addressing this with the College President. When this failed I tried to address the DBCC Board of Trustees. President Sharples prevented me from addressing the trustees and personally told them that my claims had no merit and if I wanted to pursue it further, I should take it up in a court of law....so I did.

This is not a hoax! It has been covered extensively in the Orlando Sentinel, Daytona Beach News Journal, WFTV TV and many campus newspapers (University of Florida, Texas Southern University and many others).

The case was filed in United States District Court (Case No. 6:06-cv-1476-ORL-28KRS Rebman v. Follett Higher Education Group) in Orlando, Florida on behalf of 3 classes of students. Class 1 — All DBCC students, Class 2 — All Florida Students, Class 3 — All Nationwide Students. We are currently waiting on class certification.

If you are a student (or have been in the last 5 years) and attend a campus with a Follett Bookstore (743 Nationwide) you may be part of the class action lawsuit and if we prevail you may be entitled to monetary damages. If you know other students...pass on the word somehow!

Now why am I posting here? I want every student on every campus with a Follett Bookstore to know about this. Additionally, if you need more information on how the lawsuit affects you and your campus specifically, just fire me an email at d4sceo@aol.com and I will happily assist you. If you are a Facebook member, send me a friend request and I will keep you updated once you are on my friends list!

Sincerely, Thomas Rebman LT, USN RetiredDaytona Beach Community College Student

Thomas Rebman, Student at Daytona Beach Community College, at 8:00 am EST on December 4, 2007

What ever happened to arms length?

Good luck, Thomas!

The college board of trustees should be ashamed of themselves for not addressing these conflict of interest problems!

College administrators have deceived you, however, since the board's contact information is publically available at the statehouse, including their resumes and applications.

Those looking for the least expensive textbooks can start with the ISBN from the bookstore and check it at www.fetchbook.info for price comparisons across the web.

SB, at 8:40 am EST on December 4, 2007

Florida Retaliation

A plantation mentality still prevails in the deep South, as evidenced by this apparent case of retaliation by heavy-handed overseers.

As is true in other semi-feudal settings, knowing your place and not rocking the boat are key virtues, and those found lacking will be punished. (See also: <http://insidehighered.com/news/2007/03/19/ufl>)

The classic text on this is *Max & Me: The Abuse of Power in Florida Community Colleges* (1994) by Marion Brady.

When will those entrusted with power by the public learn to live up to the responsibility this entails?

Moreover, when will sufficient safeguards be maintained to ensure that abuses of public trust are prevented?

DBCC Pres. Sharples and his board's president would benefit from taking a political science course or two at their own institution — to learn about the freedoms they should be defending, not undermining.

Glen S. McGhee, Dir., at Florida Higher Education Accountability Project, at 10:00 am EST on December 4, 2007

I have no doubt that B and N campus stores won't be far behind.

business prof, at 10:00 am EST on December 4, 2007

Mr. Kennedy, Mr. Cuomo, Do you want to take this issue on too?

Mike, at 10:00 am EST on December 4, 2007

The sociology of weddings

The course on wedding planning at George Mason may be the first to focus specifically on that topic. A sociology course at Texas Christian University that has been offered for many years by Prof. Angela Thompson, however, takes a detailed look at the wedding business. "Unveiled: The Sociology of Weddings," introduces students to the role of the wedding not only as a ceremonial rite of passage, but also as a multi-billion dollar industry. Beginning with a historical overview of the role of the wedding in society, the course addresses the emotion of wedding work, bride power, the role of the wedding industry in a culture of divorce and the impact of the illegal diamond trade on war-torn nations in Africa. A global comparison of wedding rituals is included in the analysis, as well as a cross ritual/industry comparison of the funeral industry.

Dick Jones, Principal at Dick Jones Communications, at 10:00 am EST on December 4, 2007

Ah yes...lets sratch down a few layers..

Well the first thing that should send up a warning flag is FIRE, a Templeton Foundation golden child awash with right wing and religious right pro-creationist funding.

And of course the second thing is FIRE's tactics itself. Read a few articles about your school on their so-called "Red Alert" pages and you see the height of partisan sniping in yellow sheet journalism. It seems that any school policy that has respect for minorities and/or deals with incidents of hate speech is targeted. Code Red can usually be interpreted as "This school has PC policies. and we hate all PC policies, so DON'T GO THERE!" Their "journalism" seems to be limited to a large extent to finding things in university student hand books, and then commenting on things they don't like as though they actually visited the campus and did something real journalists call "investigating!"

Of course you'll find right wing pundit/clowns like David Horowitz lionizing FIRE's pseudo 1st Amendment rights violation diatribes because they are so much like his own. Just look at Frontpage Ragazine, and you'll find all kinds of interesting praise and links. Birds of a feather....

I had a lot of respect for this student's work against bookstore corruption and his stand until I saw the company he keeps. Now, at least to me, his legitimacy is in question. I am well aware of the tactics these organizations use. How much has substance and how much is headline grabbing agit-prop is anyone's guess. That's what happens when right wing pundits live in the reputation they have built for themselves by consistently taking the low road. It stains those around them.

And in regards to a previous comment, my name and my academic affiliations are my own. I am under no obligation to share them. There's an interesting, short quote from Vice President Dick Cheney I could quote in regards to this. It's only three words long. Look itself yourself.

Diogenes, at 10:50 am EST on December 4, 2007

Defaulted loans are highly lucrative

Defaulted student loans have become highly lucrative for all involved..except, of course, the borrower.

In 2003, Albert Lord bragged to shareholders that the company's record profits that year were attributable to two things: loan originations, and collections on defaulted loans. Sallie Mae's "fee income" increased by over 150% between 2000-2004.

In January 2004, it was reported in the Wall Street Journal that for every dollar paid out in default claims by the Department of Education, the Fed would get back \$1.20.

This was the same article that detailed a dying man who had his benefits garnished to help pay an amount that far exceeded what he originally borrowed.

Wonder why the Department of Education recently decided to kill a default prevention program? This is why. They love defaulted loans. It helps them feed their bloated bureaucracy.

This is a uniquely oppressive lending system, so devoid of stanard consumer protections that decent citizens are now fleeing the country, going off the grid, even killing themselves- faced with a debt that has tripled, quadrupled, or more with legally mandated "collection costs" and accrued interest.

The people making fortunes off of this are quick to point out that "if you borrowed the money, you have to pay it back". What they don't tell you is that they are glad people default on their loans...it allows them to slap so much additional onto the debt as to ensure that many will never pay it off.

Using this principle of personal responsibility as a cover for corporate greed, irresponsible lending, and horrible loan administration has worked well for the student loan system, and resulted in personal fortunes of great enormity throughout the industry.

In light of this new evidence regarding defaults, hopefully some of you will begin to see it for what it is: a shameful, predatory, nationwide scam.

[Alan Collinge](#), Founder at Studentloanjustice.org, at 10:50 am EST on December 4, 2007

More details needed and FIRE

Mr. Rebman, Can you please provide the docket number, court, and, if possible a copy of the complaint (and other materials) in your lawsuit. (Your reference to the “chain of command” is a bit of a non-sequitur, since, as a student, your First Amendment rights don’t require you to report up any chain.)

Diogenes, I have been critical of FIRE in the past. It is true that they have accepted money from religious groups and, in the past, seemed extremely tilted towards “religious” causes. However, in recent years they appear to have a bit more coherent “free expression” policy and have taken on a balance of cases. If what Mr. Rebman says is true, then they would be taking on the cause of someone without any obvious ideological baggage besides wanting to pay less for books.

Larry, at 11:55 am EST on December 4, 2007

found it

The complaint is available on PACER, but it might help people if you can post it.

Larry, at 12:40 pm EST on December 4, 2007

Follett

Concerning the Follett & Text book issue:

I, as a student worker of a Follett Bookstore, was disturbed to see the publication and comments about how this company is ripping students off. In our store, if you buy a book new- when buying back you receive HALF of the price you paid back IF that book is being used by our school the next term. If the quantity that our school needs is filled then there can be the option of receiving a wholesale value or offcampus demand value (both of which would be less than keeping it for the next term). This same concept applies for if you bought a book used and they are using the same text the next semester then you’d receive half what you paid for it at the used price, etc. New editions come out, old editions can’t be bought back unless that edition is being used the next semester. It’s not a hard concept. The bookstore’s don’t set prices, publishers do. Though they are called “bookstores” the bookstore’s hardly make profit on books (about \$.10 of every dollar), so the real profit for Follett comes in the apparel section of the stores.

Though this did happen to one person in Florida, it’s not happening across the nation. Simply ask the workers at your Follett Store and you will hear an answer like stated above. I’m flustered that the implication is being thrown out to America that this company is unfair. It is fair, and it’s a great company to be employed by.

Jacob, at 2:35 pm EST on December 4, 2007

Jacob, While you make an interesting argument on behalf of your employer, it would be nice 1) if the bookstores would provide proof of what you are saying; and 2) if all schools provided reading lists in advance so that students could shop around to find the cheapest books.

Whether or not your employer is “fair” or “unfair” is only part of the issue. What I think students are complaining about is that there is little or no competition in that 1) there is generally only one bookstore on campus; and that 2) students must buy a given book.

Larry, at 3:10 pm EST on December 4, 2007

Professors not schools

Larry, professors set their textbook requirements, not schools. While it would be nice to assume that schools could aggregate the information quickly, professors are notoriously difficult to round up and make comply with deadlines or external requirements.

While it is certainly true that more could be done to help reduce the cost of textbooks, it’s not some grand conspiracy between

schools and textbook companies or bookstores to keep costs artificially high.

Professors should be more cognizant of the books they choose, seriously question whether the newest edition needs to be required, and evaluate the number of books they require overall per course.

Schools should encourage professors to plan ahead, submit book lists ahead of time and think about the issues above.

Bookstores (who are not bad actors by and large) should continue to increase buyback programs, scholarship programs, and help facilitate good choices on books.

Textbook publishers, well, they can probably rot in the 8th level of Dante's inferno, but there's nothing anyone can do about them except stop buying their 'newest, greatest edition' or making smarter decisions about what books to buy.

skeptic, at 4:20 pm EST on December 4, 2007

skeptic, Professors are difficult to round up because schools let them get away with it. Some schools have managed to make the textbook and syllabus requirements very clear and instill compliance. Others just don't care. Since undergrads are, at best, a nuisance, there is often little reason to make sure that they are placated in the textbook department.

I do not think that there is a conspiracy of any kind. But, schools can do a lot more than just "encourage" professors to plan ahead.

Larry, at 5:00 pm EST on December 4, 2007

Think About It

Think about it....

Would textbooks have more value to you (students) if faculty actually used the texts they required in class?

Do you want your text books to have the latest most up-to-date coverage?

Did you know that in order to have books "adopted" (required) by faculty that publishers send out thousands of free complimentary copies?

Did you know that supplements such as study guides, tutorial software and interactive websites that accompany your textbooks have huge developmental costs?

Did you know that all textbooks are subject to a rigorous technical review process before publication?

Think about it, think about the value that your textbook has and all the work that has gone into developing it before complaining about the price!

Publisher, at 3:40 am EST on December 5, 2007

Immigrant Medical Aid is NOT being stopped

For the record, UT G is not cutting off medical aid to immigrants. It is considering cutting off some tax supported medical aid to "undocumented" (ISHE) or "illegal" (the referenced article) immigrants.

The headline was not accurate.

Jack L., at 3:40 am EST on December 5, 2007

I work for a publishing company

I work for a college textbook publishing company, and although textbook prices have risen, that is not the reason we see inflated text prices at the bookstores. We all know how bookstores rip students off with used textbooks, but I think people are less aware of how they rip them off with new books. Bookstores mark new textbooks up to an inappropriate level, and as far

as I know, there is no regulation on this. My company will sell a textbook bundle to a bookstore for \$65, where several supplements are shrink wrapped with the text for free. What do bookstores do? They break up the shrink wrapped package that was meant for the students, individually price the free items, and drastically mark up the main textbook. I've seen 100% mark ups at bookstores.

So, before you condemn the publishers, please realize that they are actually a vital part of the educational process, while bookstores are just a needless middle man ripping off students. The future should be less-expensive e-books, and textbooks sold directly to students from the publishing companies, via the internet. Prices will be way down for students.

Universities cover for their bookstores because the bookstores make more money for their institution.

JF, at 9:40 am EST on December 5, 2007

Skeptic wrong

Skeptic is wrong about profs choosing their own textbooks. At many schools, this is done at the department level.

I should know — I lost my job defending the textbook I was using.

Oh, and yeah — it was in the South!

anti-skeptic, at 9:40 am EST on December 5, 2007

...and if you didnt put two and two together...

By the way-

A fairly recent NCEES study showed that borrowers in 1992 had a 10 year default rate of 9.6%. Yet now, we see a 5-year default rate of an even higher amount, at 10.6% !!

This shows conclusively that borrowers today are defaulting at a MUCH greater rate than a decade ago.

Are the implications of this lost on you people? Do you not see that the constant, continued, and incessant assertions by lenders, guarantors, universities, and even the Department of Education that default rates are at historic lows thanks to their hard work have been nothing but a BIG LIE, and a cover for their extortionistic behaviors against borrowers who often were induced into default by the industry?

Why is this not front page news for Inside Higher Ed?

The national news media deserves to know about this, and the people reading this who have promulgated this massive and widespread deception that has been used to hide the predation of decent citizens by the student loan industry need to be held accountable for their lie.

[Alan Collinge](#), Founder at Studentloanjustice.org, at 3:35 pm EST on December 5, 2007

Correction

Upon further inspection of the data, I shouldn't have said conclusively...there are some differences in the two sets of data above that still leave an open question about whether students are defaulting more than 10 years ago.

However, it certainly doesn't look good on the face of it. That 10.6% of the borrowers from 2002 have defaulted after only 5 years in repayment, we can only guess how high the lifetime default rate will be...This is A LOT of people, however, and all my other comments still stand. If indeed, it turns out that students are defaulting at a greater rate today than 10 years ago, this will be a huge deal, particularly for those of us who have been caught in this predatory, extortionistic rat trap.

This brings up another question: Why is it so hard for the Department of Education to answer the extremely simple question of whether students are defaulting more today than in the past?

This is the kind of information that one would think the Department of Education would have at its fingertips—That it does

not, apparently, really makes me wonder what is going on over there...

[Alan Collinge](#), founder at StudentLoanJustice.org, at 6:40 am EST on December 6, 2007

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