To: University of Calgary Academic Staff  
From: Mary-Jo Romaniuk (Vice-Provost Libraries and Cultural Resources) & Leslie Reid (Vice Provost Teaching & Learning endorsed by the Teaching and Learning Committee of GFC  
Regarding: Learning Materials Costs to Students  
Date: July 2, 2019

Academic staff invest considerable efforts in recommending high quality learning resources that are closely aligned with the learning outcomes for each course. However, the cost of learning materials has become a concern. This memo highlights resources available through Libraries and Cultural Resources, the Copyright Office, Bound and Copied and the Bookstore that can assist in alleviating some of the high costs for learning materials.

There are a number of ways we may be able to enhance the cost-effectiveness of our choices to students.

• **Consider using open educational resources (OERs).** OERs may include peer-reviewed textbooks available for use and adaptation as primary learning sources, as well as supplementary textual and multimedia materials. OERs are typically made available through open licenses at no cost to students. To find existing OERs or get more information about adapting or creating OERs, consult with your Subject Librarian or use this guide.

• **Work with your Subject Librarian to explore other options for learning support material.** Subject Librarians can recommend publishers, specific books, articles and other learning support material in addition to OER’s for your class. Request a consultation with them and they can assist in finding material needed to support your students.

• **Be explicit about how learning resources will help students achieve intended course learning outcomes.** Students take our recommendations seriously and ask that we clearly indicate which texts are required (essential to success in the course and used frequently) versus those that are recommended (secondary resources that are not as frequently used and/or could be accessed through the Library’s reserve readings service). This clarification helps students prioritize which resources to buy and reduces student resentment about resources they perceive as under-utilized.

• **Remind undergraduate students that they can access some required textbooks in print and electronically through the Library.** The Students’ Union Library Assistance Fee provides funds to the Library to cover some high cost textbooks for undergraduate classes. The Library will review reserve requests for purchase based on the criteria set out by the Students’ Union through this fund. While the Library has an e-book preferred policy students should be aware that most e-books limit the number of simultaneous users, and that access constraints can be similar to print reserve books.

• **Consult with the Bookstore to reduce the cost of learning materials to students.** Recognizing the positive impact that savings will have on the student experience and retention, the Bookstore can
work with academic staff and students to offer learning materials in new, used, rental, custom, digital and OER formats. For more information about the textbook adoption process or alternative formats, please contact Bookstore staff.

- **Consider advantages of digital learning resources, but ensure students are aware of potential limitations.** Digital learning resources feature advantages for effective studying, especially for students whose first language is not English or who require adjustable print. However, the lack of a buy-back option and possible limited-term access to many digital resources mean that they may not always be an ideal choice. Digital resources may also create academic integrity challenges in cases where assessment plans include open book exams.

- **Work at a program level to use the same learning resources across sections, courses and years** to increase opportunities for buy-back, rental and used book options for students. In contrast, the selection of a new or alternate edition will preempt opportunities for buy-back, so the added value of these sources should be weighed carefully.

- **Consider using a customized selection of readings presented in a print course pack.** Course packs are often the optimal learning resource. Bound & Copied and the Copyright Office will work with instructors to create cost effective packages. Materials should be submitted to copyright@ucalgary.ca well in advance of the start of the semester.

- **Ensure course materials are copyright compliant,** including readings posted to the learning management system (Brightspace, commonly called D2L), handed out in class, etc. Copyright Office staff are available to assist instructors with this process and have access to funding for sources not covered by University of Calgary licensing agreements. All third-party materials must be submitted to copyright@ucalgary.ca for review. Please note that it is important that materials be reviewed each semester in which they are used (permissions need to be renewed and licensing agreements may have changed in the interim).

- **Make effective use of the resources associated with many textbooks.** Students appreciate the added value of these resources when they are used purposefully. Please ensure that these resources fall within the General Principles of Supplementary Fees. It is also important to note that these associated learning resources will not be available for textbooks made available through the Library’s reserve system. Furthermore, it is important to let students know if you do not intend to use associated resources so they can make informed purchasing choices.

- **To allow students maximum purchasing options, submit course material requests as early as possible.** Consolidation of textbook warehousing and a shift to print-on-demand means that certain resources are more difficult to access on short time lines. The earlier you can submit learning resources requirements to the Bookstore the more time they have to find options that reduce the costs for students (used books, books from the marketplace, rental options etc). The Bookstore publishes your course material requirements as soon as all of the details have been confirmed.

The selection of learning resources is a critical aspect of planning effective learning experiences for our students. The growing diversity of options makes this responsibility more complex, and more interesting, every year. Students respect your expertise in choosing learning resources and appreciate the efforts you make to provide the best value to them.