

Student Feedback Progress Update

Algonquin College Students Association Board of Directors



Presented to: Algonquin College Class Representatives

Date: Friday, February 26, 2010

Prepared by: Emily Boehm, VP Students' Association

Students Association Student Feedback Progress Update

Area/Topic: BOOKSTORE

Status: IN PROGRESS

- Time of the bookstore opening is being looked at and has been looked at in the past, there is a possible trial period of opening at 7:45AM in the near future
- The bad quality of textbooks and missing pages: The SA is not allow to disclose your personal information to anyone, your comments are confidential, therefore you would need to self identify yourself to the bookstore so they may fix these problems
- Availability of textbooks could be for a number of reasons: bookstore error, publishers are unable to supply, your program's department failed to order books by deadline, your program's department was not informed of additional students to program, etc.
- Price of textbooks : Your department chooses the textbooks, they are encouraging people to sell their used textbooks, teachers are having textbooks printed with certain pieces of the text missing (that won't be used in that course) to reduce the cost for students, etc.
- Old textbooks sold as new- this is a surprise to the bookstore, please self identify and the problem will be resolved
- Name tags and error – there is a signing process for this and perhaps the type of name tag you needed wasn't clear from your professors, the bookstore is working with the departments to prevent future problems as such
- Returning Items- there is a 14 day return policy on items in the bookstore unless otherwise specified, these deadlines are more flexible at the beginning and end of terms.

SEE APPENDIX FOR MORE DETAILS

Area/Topic: LIBRARY

Status: IN PROGRESS

- ITS and Learning Resource Center struggle with enforcement strategies for ensuring people who use the computer are using it for school work. They are looking for suggestions to improve this.

Area/Topic: ITS / TECHNOLOGY

Status: RESOLVED

- Open Office (The word processing suite that is free to download) has been installed on all the open access lab computers in time for the first day of the Winter 2010 semester.
- Assured us that they will clearly inform students when the computer printout sheet count gets reset, and that they will ensure it is always done the day before the first day of a new term.
- Printing Kiosks are in progress at the college instead of a forced 10-15 minute time frame on some computers for printing purposes- this might not be around for a while but it's in the works!

Students Association Student Feedback Progress Update

Area/Topic: FOOD AND BEVERAGE

Status: RESOLVED

- Portion sizes in cafeterias are being tweaked. Food and Beverage is hoping to have a "pay per weight" system set up for more of the vendors, as well as ensuring correct portion sizes are given to students. Also working on smaller portion size options for students.
- Please send in your suggestions for healthier food choices and F&B will try to make it happen as they mostly already have all the fresh ingredients for almost anything!
- Bag of chips out of vending machine was claimed to be \$3 – if there is a bag of chips priced that high, report this to F&B and it will be dealt with! Other things in vending machines such as frozen dinners and cashews are around \$3
- Focus Groups and Research is currently being conducted for students and staff to give input on F&B, all students were invited!

Area/Topic: FOOD AND BEVERAGE

Status: IN PROGRESS

- **Price of food at the college:** food and beverage operations at the college are working to lower the price but at the same time they need to remain consistent with national averages, also one of the reasons for the higher costs of food is the union for F&B which set pay demands on F&B.
- Opening hours of caf's on the weekend: The Observatory is open, The portable feast, 35th Street Market Café (in residence building open to everyone not just residence students).
- Longer Caf hours during the weekdays to accommodate students with evening classes: 35th Street Market Café (in residence building open to everyone not just residence students) is open 7 days a week until midnight or later, more variety is available in vending machines, re-evaluation of the hours of the big Caf will be occurring in the near future.

SEE APPENDIX FOR MORE DETAILS

Students Association Student Feedback Progress Update

Area/Topic: PHYSICAL RESOURCES

Status: RESOLVED

- Accessibility issue in Early Learning Center is being resolved by Physical Resources and Wayne McIntyre, Director of Student Services
- Water pressure in J-Building was checked by Physical Resources
- More seating (tables and chairs) and laptop hook up available on the second floor of T. building. To be handled by Physical Resources

Area/Topic: PHYSICAL RESOURCES

Status: IN PROGRESS

- Scent Allergy posters in washrooms are being considered by the College. We brought it to their attention and Physical Resources is looking into it
- Brown paper towels are not available due to environmental reasons. There was a large demand from students that the College be more environmentally conscious, so they removed paper towels in the washrooms as they were a large contributor to the overall waste output from the College.

Area/Topic: OTHER MATTERS

Status: IN PROGRESS/UNDER REVIEW

- Kathryn Moore – Registrar, brought request for making course outlines available before enrolling in a program to Kent McDonald, VP Academic. They are hoping to have this available for the Fall 2010 intake
- The registrar office has looked into broadcasting their information not only on the department site but also posting the information at first glance at the Algonquin college website. The registrar also does post information on ACSIS for students to be informed.
- All birth control requested to be covered under the Student Insurance Plan at Algonquin College
- Getting emails and updates from student success specialist and from the college on bursary deadline, tuition deadline etc..
- Anti-smoking strategy. Students' Association and College are collaborating on anti-smoking strategies in ongoing meetings. Thoughts on new smoking shelters outside B building, H building, and courtyard. Also, working towards no smoking zones in high traffic areas where there is a zero – tolerance policy in place. Also talks on volunteers to remind students to move away from doors. If you have any thoughts, please email a director with them!
- We're trying to get more parking on campus. It's an uphill battle as Algonquin is already over the limit that City By-law allows for parking spaces in a certain area. Parking waitlist is completely cleared out now. Recommend students get parking passes in the summer.

Students Association Student Feedback Progress Update

Why there is limited explanation of denial or acceptance of Bursaries?

Bursaries are evaluated and awarded based upon the outlined requirements stated on the website. When a person is denied this means that they did not meet the specified requirements and that is why there is no further explanation for students. If a student would like more information about why they did not receive a bursary they should contact Diane Cardinal at cardinad@algonquincollege.com

Removal of students from computer labs when using social networking sites.

It is not possible to block those sites or remove students for using them because the IT department believes that it is too difficult to determine what sites students use for work and which they use for leisure. At this time there is no solution.

Why is the SA office not open on weekends?

The reason for why the SA office is not open on the weekends is because we have not had the sufficient demand needed to keep it open. We do keep the office open during the first three weeks of the year to handle the influx of questions and services during this time. We will continue to assess the needs of the campus and consider weekend hours in the long term.

Why is the library not open on the weekends?

Algonquin is currently evaluating the services provided to students. They have been notified of the need for the Library to have extended hours of operation and are looking at weekend hours going forward in 2010-2011.

Why did the SA not supporting the protest against tuition fee hikes this past fall in Ottawa?

The SA did not support the protest regarding tuition fee hikes because we were not asked to do so by the students. We are always in favor of supporting our students and if there had been a significant number of students requesting our support we would have acted accordingly. We felt that this particular 'vehicle' for expressing our concern is not in coordination with our working relationships and policies. We would never discourage our student body from participating as individuals but we did not feel we needed to put the "SA Stamp of Approval" on this particular protest initiative.

Why is there not a designated location for breastfeeding at the Ottawa Campus?

A permanent location is currently unavailable on the Ottawa Campus.

**Should you have any questions or comments
please contact the Algonquin College Students' Association**

Vice President, Emily Boehm

by email: boehme@algonquincollege.com or phone: 613-727-4723 x5270

Bookstore Appendix

Some students want the book store opened earlier so that they may get supplies that they may need for class - before classes start at 8am!

Answer: We have tried opening before 8:00am in the past and it has been found to not be cost effective to do so. In the past, we tried opening at 7:30am and on the days that any students arrived before 8:00am, it was only a few minutes before.

As a result, although we officially open the store at 8:00am, if clients are waiting outside the store, we will open the store early to assist them, as early as 7:45am (if our staff arrive early, we have been known to open the store as early as 7:30am, but more often it is 7:45am when clients are waiting to enter the store).

We are intending on reviewing the opening times again this year, and may launch another trial of an earlier open time for Fall 2010, but it would likely be 7:45AM official opening. It is currently being discussed.

A variety of students are having issues pertaining to the availability of textbooks - some claim to wait up to two months?

Answer: I cannot speak to textbook availability issues without specific textbooks to address. In general terms, we literally had 99% of the textbook titles required for courses that were requested by the teachers by the due date, in the store and on the shelves for the 1st day of classes. (Not an exaggeration). That said, we do hear about the 1% that were not here. There are many things that can go wrong in the ordering cycle of textbooks that would cause delays, many of which we have little to no control of, including:

- a) Publishers are unable to supply the book despite it being ordered on time.
- b) Department failed to order books for their classes by deadline (or at all).
- c) Department over enrolled in the course and although we ordered what we were asked to, we were not informed of the additional students now in the course, resulting in a shortfall in books for the course.
- d) Department opened an entirely new section of the course, and failed to notify the Bookstore so we could order the additional books for those students.
- e) Department ordered the wrong book. We ordered the product requested, but once it arrived and the students came in to purchase the textbook, they were looking for a different book than was requested by their department.
- f) We made a mistake in our process, and although it is uncommon, it does happen.

These are just a few of the issues we face in getting the books here on time. We have several checks in place to help ensure these do not occur, but despite our best efforts, sometimes they do still occur. It is in our best interest to sell the textbooks to the clients and we do not wish any student to be unable to purchase their textbook for their course. We have taken many steps to avoid this from occurring. If you have any specifics you can share, I would very much like to receive that data; we can investigate why the problem occurred, and continue to work with our partners to ensure they do not occur in the future.

There was one known case this year of a textbook that was delayed for a little over a month, entitled "Human Diseases", but in this case the instructor specifically wanted the new edition, which did not release until October. The students in this case were able to obtain the required chapters through the Bookstore until the Textbook was released.

Students Association Student Feedback Progress Update

Books that students are purchasing are said to be bad quality, soft cover and are missing pages - yet priced very high?

Answer: If you had any specifics in terms of which books have quality issues, I would very much appreciate receiving it. The Textbooks are selected by the Academic departments themselves, in consultation with the publishers. We do not have any input into which textbooks are selected for students to purchase. We do try to pass on feedback and our opinions, combined with sales data to the departments, and we hope they use this information to make their future decisions, but it is believed very few do.

In our case, if we fail to sell a textbook to a student, that typically means that they do not see the value in the textbook. Perhaps a different textbook should be selected instead, or a course pack be investigated instead of the textbook the students are choosing not to use. If a textbook is not being used, we feel that the student is missing out on a valuable tool in their learning experience, which only makes it more difficult for the student to be successful. In our view, it is imperative to select the right textbook for the course, one that is cost effective and has content that will be used by the instructors and relevant to the course curriculum.

In regards to the quality of the products sold, in situations where textbooks are defective (missing pages, binding, etc.), the Bookstore has worked with publishers to facilitate an exchange of the defective book for the student without a cost to the client.

There have been many situations where a student has come in to complain about missing pages/chapters where the student was unaware that the title selected by the instructor was a "custom" publication, made specifically for their course. In these cases specific chapters not relevant to the course were removed from the publication as a cost saving measure to the student.

If you can provide more detail in regards to the book(s) in question, I would be happy to have my Books Department Supervisor review it for you, and if quality is an issue, we would discuss it with the Publisher to identify a solution.

Some students are finding the texts books to be way too expensive!

Answer: We don't disagree. As I mentioned above, we do try to provide that feedback to the departments and instructors who are choosing their textbooks so that they can take the cost of the textbook into consideration when making that choice.

In our case, although we cannot determine which textbook is being used for a course, when a textbook is being adopted again for a course (not its first printing) we do focus our efforts on obtaining and reselling used textbooks for students to purchase. This represents a very major saving to the client.

In terms of the savings for a used textbook versus a new one, the savings can be significant. In the situation where a client purchases a \$100.00 "new" textbook, instead they purchased it used, it would only cost approximately: \$67.00. If

Students Association Student Feedback Progress Update

this textbook were to be re-adopted for the following year, the student would be able to sell that used textbook back to the College for ½ the sell price of the new text (so in this case, ½ x \$100.00, or \$50.00). The total cost for the student for this textbook would therefore only be \$17.00, after reselling the book back to the College.

Our focus therefore has been encouraging departments to readopt textbooks as much as possible, so long as the content remains current.

There were a few students that purchased textbooks that were wrapped and sold as new - when they opened them there was writing in their text books (they were actually used books)

Answer: This is the first I have heard of this. Did these students approach the Bookstore with this issue? I can assure you that we do not sell used textbooks as New. If you have a student who is in this situation, I would encourage them to please come in and ask for a Book Department representative, and they will address this issue for them.

Name tags that students order for specific programs had errors in colour and names in some cases (students claimed that the book store would not take them back - although i'm aware there is a signing process)

Answer: As you point out there is a signing process to ensure that the student has confirmed that the name badge requested is for the correct program and that their name is spelled correctly.

In the event that it is the Bookstore or the supplier's error, the name badge is reordered with no cost to the student.

That said, we have had several problems where students indicate they were not sure what program they were in (Cook Culinary vs. Hospitality Management program for example) and we are working with the departments to try and ensure that there is a better process in place for the future.

The returning of things purchased at the book store -students had found things that they purchased they were unable to return them! Some of the items were brand new never used, and the bookstore would not accept them back?

Answer: Our basic policy is that we will accept returns from clients with their original receipt and with the product in its original packaging, so it can be resold to the next client, within 14 days. That is the policy, but we do tend to extend it during the back to school periods of the year for course required materials. It is imperative that the product be in its original wrapping though, as that is the only way we can ensure that the products purchased have indeed not been used, which can include the textbook itself, any access codes that were part of the package, that a software program was not installed, etc...

If the product was a course required material, such as a textbook, and it was in brand new condition, without being opened or used, then there are very few situations where it would not be accepted back. There are items that for hygienic reasons (Stethoscopes for example) cannot be accepted for a refund however, and that is listed on each sales receipt and the employees advise each customer in that case at time of purchase. In addition, textbooks where the publisher's terms are non-returnable, in those cases returns would only be permitted within the standard return policy. All returns outside of the normal returns period result in a store credit for the client.

Students Association Student Feedback Progress Update

Again, I would need to look at the specific details to identify why this would occur, as it is not what we would normally do. We actually bend that policy quite regularly, as long as it is reasonable. (We have had clients try to return products they purchased 6 months to a year later, which is clearly beyond reason, but if it was due to extenuating circumstances even then we would look to make an exception).

In situations where I have requested more detail, I do not require the client's data (so confidentiality should not be compromised), but more information in regards to the books or items specifically in question so that I can identify where the process went wrong or how we can improve upon the service delivery, etc...

Food & Beverage Appendix

We keep getting the repetitive complaint on the high price of food (and I know we discussed this but if you could kindly write a response)? An example the students gave: An apple is the same price as a chocolate bar.

Answer: The price of food is always a concern for staff, students and the Food and Beverage Operations. Our prices reflect the cost of food from our suppliers and what our competition is doing. We also review local and national prices at other post secondary institutions to ensure that our prices are in line with businesses within the industry. We recognize that students have limited disposable income and this plays into the pricing decisions.

More healthy choices, more affordable healthy choices.

Answer: We endeavor to offer many healthy choices throughout the College food services. We produce the majority of the food in our kitchens. This means we can use fresh ingredients and buy local where possible. We are always trying to solicit input on specific suggestions of healthy foods our clients would like to see. Please, by all means, send forth any suggestions!

Some students claimed a vending machine charged \$3 for a bag of chips - that's too expensive and why?

Answer: There are some products that retail for \$3 in our vending machines. These are usual almonds or cashews which are higher cost products. A bag of chips should not be \$3. If a student runs into a scenario where they see a bag of chips priced at \$3, we would encourage them to report it to the Food and Beverage Office.

The big caf closes early than posted- Why? If the hours say it is open until 6pm - then it should be serving mostly everything until that time and clean up after. Students were not impressed with the scraps of food at that time.

Answer: The hours of operation in the Marketplace Food Court are based on consumer demand. We close some of our areas early in this location because it is not financially realistic to keep the entire operation going during the slower night time periods. This would drive up costs, which we try not to do. We monitor sales closely and if we see spikes in activity than we will definitely look and see what can be extended.

Opening hours to caf's on weekend to accommodate full day weekend students

Answer: Our weekend hours are also based on the demand on campus. The Portable Feast, 35th Street Market Café and the Observatory are open on the weekends to services the staff and student population on campus.

Longer opening hours during the weekdays to accommodate student who have class until 9pm.

Answer: The 35th Street Market Café is open until midnight or later 7 days a week. We also stock vending machines around campus with frozen dinners, fresh sandwiches and other products to meet the needs of students after 9 pm. As the College continues to have more classes at night we will evaluate later hour opportunities.