

## Bookstore prices on the rise again

By **Gloryann Torres**  
Contributing Staff Writer

Most UNLV students are standing in a long line at the bookstore parting with a good chunk of their own or their parents' money and asking, "Why are textbooks so expensive?"

UNLV, like many other colleges and universities across the nation, has a concessioned bookstore on campus and a competing bookstore nearby.

The UNLV Bookstore on campus is owned by the book-supermarket chain Barnes & Nobles' college bookstore division.

Half submerged in a strip mall across the street from the university is Rebelbooks, which, for the past year, has been owned by the Nebraska Book Company.

Both of these stores would like to get your textbook dollars.

Around mid-semester, both bookstores are supplied with the titles of the texts professors have chosen for the following semester and with the caps, or maximum number of students projected by the registrar for each class.

The stores know how much they can expect to sell months beforehand. Everything should run smoothly and the bookstores should make easy money.

But the operation becomes much more complicated, according to Dr. Robert Ackerman, vice president for student services at UNLV. He oversees the on-campus bookstore operation. The process starts when the bookstore con-

tract is put out to bid by the university.

Ackerman says Barnes & Noble "has had a long-term relationship with the university as the successful bidder for the past 10 to 15 years."

According to information provided by Barnes & Noble, which operates more than 350 college bookstores across the nation, the "high prices for textbooks do not mean high profits for bookstores."

The standard industry margin on textbooks, according to Stan Hansard, manager of the UNLV bookstore is 25 percent. However, both local bookstores work on 20 percent.

Ackerman points out that this pricing cut was initiated by Rebelbooks and the campus bookstore was forced to follow suit.

This low mark-up, together with no sales tax on textbooks in Las Vegas, results in what Ackerman says are "some of the cheapest textbooks in the nation." Jeanne Field, Rebelbooks manager, says Rebelbooks is the lowest margin bookstore in the county.

This puts the pinch on the stores, but according to Ackerman represents \$500,000 a year in book savings for students.

The difficulty that arises from this competitive situation is that when the contract for the campus bookstore is put out to bid, some chains will not bid on it because of the tight margin.

The price of a new textbook, according to the Association of American Publishers and the Na-

## Rushing to get permits



by Shawn Beard / The Rebel Yell

Students crowd the Moyer Student Union on Thursday to buy parking permits in order to avoid getting ticketed the first day of school. All students must have a permit on their car to park in spaces reserved for students.

tional Association of College Stores, is determined by the following costs:

- Publisher
- Author
- Freight Company
- Revenue appropriated to UNLV
- Employee salaries
- Earnings (taxes, maintenance, etc.)

Field says that this nets the bookstore about one percent of actual profit.

Hansard points out that in addition to a percentage on each textbook which is kicked back to the university, the campus bookstore annually provides \$3,000 to the school's general scholarship fund and \$2,000 to the alumni scholar-

ship fund.

Despite the bidding process and the reimbursements made to the university by the campus bookstore, professors' book requests and the registrar's caps must be shared with Rebelbooks because, as Ackerman points out, the information is public record.

Although UNLV would receive more money from the operation of the bookstore if it worked on the 25 percent mark-up, Ackerman says the university does not look at the bookstore as a profit-generating entity.

He says the university's main interests are "in a company large enough to function in a used-book market" and in providing students with choice.

Field says that 90 percent of Rebelbooks' inventory is in used books. They will buy books back year-round, with a half-value buyback period which is longer than that of the UNLV bookstore.

Both stores say they buy back books at 50 percent of the new text price.

Hansard at the UNLV store says they are able to buy back titles they no longer have requests for because of Barnes and Noble's numerous outlets. Nebraska Book serves about 60 college bookstores, usually the competing stores like Rebelbooks.

Shipping books back and forth across the country does not

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## PRIMAL SQUAT

By Jerry Thompson

