

To: The Texas A&M University Community

Please note: this document is a summary version of a complex negotiations process. If you want more detail you can access a more complete update [here](#).

I have spoken to many campus faculty groups over the past several months alerting you of our participation in the Texas Library Coalition for United Action (TLCUA). The Coalition includes a total of [43 institutions across the state](#) and represents the largest, voluntary coalition of institutions of higher education in Texas ever established. It was formed specifically to negotiate with the for-profit publisher Elsevier for reduced costs and improved conditions of licensing, especially ownership by faculty of their scholarly work.

I am a member of the Coalition's Steering Committee and Negotiations Team. Before the holiday break began, I wanted to provide the campus with an update on the status of our negotiations. It is hard to summarize many hours of meetings so let me know if there are questions: davidhcarlson@tamu.edu. Also, for those interested in more detail, you may access a more complete version of the update [at this link](#).

TLCUA believes that our strength as a Coalition, is that we represent an investment in Elsevier journals of over \$25 million annually. We hoped our negotiations would be an opportunity for real engagement with us as partners; In December, we discerned a modest but, we hoped, important change in tone of the negotiations. We appreciated this change but in terms of substance, we found that the issues remained.

TLCUA is seeking a substantial reduction in cost. Academic Libraries and higher education generally have realized that we have enabled excessive and unsustainable increases from Elsevier over the past several years and that a meaningful reduction is in order: it is time for a reset. Further, the need for cost reduction is particularly acute due to the economic impact of COVID. Every member of TLCUA is reporting some level of budget reductions including reductions in faculty and staff through various combinations of layoffs, furloughs, and hiring freezes.

The early proposals we received from Elsevier contained minimal cost reductions and even the modest efforts were coupled with increases in later years. In the early part of December, this changed and we saw meaningful cost reductions reaching as high as 40% but the costs to us for these reductions were staggering. These issues include the following:

- Loss of perpetual access to all titles.
- Substantial loss of access to content.
- Continuation of cost modeling based on legacy print subscriptions
- Faculty ownership issues unchanged.

My personal characterization of the proposals is that we would give up ninety percent of our access, rights, and benefits while gaining a thirty percent cost reduction.

The Texas A&M Libraries' contract with Elsevier expires on December 31, 2020. It is clear that we will not be able to reach an agreement on a new contract by that date. Elsevier would like us to sign an "interim agreement" that would extend our contract so

that access can be maintained. The Coalition is firmly against this. We believe that it critically weakens our position strategically in negotiations moving forward. Also, while we worked very hard to reach an agreement with Elsevier early in the year, it is our opinion that their representatives have not prioritized our meetings and have not been engaged with our issues in their proposals leading to this end-of-year pressure (and we cannot help but feel this was purposeful and strategic). We have let Elsevier know that we would like to keep talking in January, 2021, but we are unwilling to sign any temporary contract extension. We have indicated that we would accept continuation of access by our campuses while we talk, but we recognize that this is Elsevier's decision not ours. At this time, I do not know what Elsevier will decide in this regard.

I want to end with some good news -- and it is, indeed, very good news. About half of the members of the Coalition have contracts with Elsevier that expire **next** year, 12/31/2020, so their access will continue through 2021 regardless. In a recent survey of Coalition members, those with later contracts unanimously expressed strong and full support for those libraries that may lose access in 2021. They were firm in their commitment to prioritize any of our requests for Elsevier content through InterLibrary Loan. This will ensure prompt delivery of Elsevier articles requested by our faculty. We are grateful to have such partners.

David Carlson
Dean, University Libraries