

**Joint Faculty Affairs and FSCOT Agenda**  
**May 18, 2021 – 3 to 4 pm**

<https://ksu.zoom.us/j/837797836>

- 1.) Call meeting to order – **Brett DePaola, Co-Chair of FSCOT & Don Saucier, Co-Chair of Faculty Affairs**
- 2.) Consider Resolution Addressing K-State IT Support for TopHat and Other Educational Learning Platforms (see attached)
  - i. Attachment # 1 (Page #2) Proposed Resolution
  - ii. Attachment # 2 (Page #5) SGA Resolution (for context)
  - iii. Action:
    1. Approve Resolution to go to full senate

**Attachment # 1:**

# Resolution Addressing K-State IT Support for TopHat and Other Educational Learning Platforms

BY: FSCOT, Ryan Otto, Be Stoney

WHEREAS, The Kansas State University Faculty Senate Committee on Technology (FSCOT) was asked to seek input and render judgement on whether it would recommend to Kansas State University IT to downgrade, keep at current levels, or enhance contract terms and/or support levels with Tophatmonocle Corp regarding supporting the TopHat educational learning platform on K-State campuses.

WHEREAS, FSCOT supports academic freedom, where faculty are trusted to make decisions on how best to support the pedagogical goals of their courses;

WHEREAS, FSCOT recognizes the importance of Kansas State University's IT to create and sustain a technology environment on K-State campuses that supports faculty's exercise of academic freedom;

WHEREAS, FSCOT understands that educational learning platforms and ecosystems, like TopHat, can and do provide value, often in unique and significant ways, to faculty and students as faculty seek to drive course engagement, create, store and provide access to course content, and provide tools for student assessment;

WHEREAS, FSCOT recognizes the benefits of TopHat for the following reasons:

1. Cost: when students enroll with TopHat, the cost of is not based on per number of classes the students are enrolled, rather the students pay one price and may use the platform across multiple classes.
2. Students have consistent access to their grades, course content, and know which assignment they are missing through integration between the platform and Canvas.
3. Students can access TopHat on a variety of devices.
4. Through TopHat's assessment tools, it offers the opportunity for faculty to learn where students are lacking in learning the material, can ask questions for real time responses from students, and helps align course objectives with learning outcomes.
5. "One of the best engagement platforms used in the classroom. Students are engaged through questions that are written directly before/after the PowerPoint slide. As students respond to questions, the faculty receives real time responses/feedback (anonymously) what students are learning. As a faculty who used TopHat for the first time, I have observed how students are more engaged with class discussions versus the traditional textbook discussions." -Faculty testimonial on the benefits of TopHat.

WHEREAS, FSCOT recognizes the need for faculty to have readily available technology tools to aid in the taking of attendance and a response system to measure and drive engagement in their courses;

WHEREAS, Prices for college textbooks and academic journals have been rising dramatically because students, colleges, and universities are captive markets for those publishers. Captive markets result in higher prices and less diversity for consumers due to the fact the only choices that exist are to purchase what is available or to not purchase at all. Use of higher education learning platforms and content ecosystems, like TopHat, is an emerging area that threatens students, colleges, and universities with platform lock-in, and which may contribute to captive market environments in higher education. Leaning further into a captive market environment by institutionally supporting education learning platforms and content ecosystems exacerbates rather than lessens the underlying causes of the textbook affordability crisis;

WHEREAS, FSCOT recognizes the importance of being strategic in working to lowering costs incurred by K-State students through the course of their education. Institutionally supporting education learning platforms and content ecosystems, especially supporting one platform over another, presents challenges to the goal of strategically working to lower costs to students;

WHEREAS, Digital content paid for by students such as required materials and readings for courses, accessed through an educational learning platform like TopHat is likely not owned by those student consumers, merely rented or licensed to them. In contrast, physical course materials and readings may be purchased and owned by a consumer, in perpetuity. Purchased, licensed digital content therefore provides less value to student consumers in certain circumstances;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

Section 1: FSCOT supports the freedom for faculty to use TopHat, or other educational learning platforms they deem useful, in support of the pedagogical goals of their courses.

Section 2: For those faculty who choose to use TopHat within their courses they are highly encouraged to do the following in order to maximize the tool's value to student users:

1. Take every effort to be trained in TopHat and to be effective users of the tool to its fullest extent.
2. Ensure TopHat's integration with K-State's learning management system, CANVAS, in transporting grades, attendance, and assignments for their courses.
3. Where warranted, consult with the Student Access Center and work to ensure content stored and delivered through the TopHat Platform meets required standards for accessibility.

Section 3: In support of those faculty who choose to use TopHat within their courses, FSCOT supports and requests University IT to engage in the following:

1. Where necessary and to a reasonable degree, dedicate resources and enter into agreements with appropriate parties to support training for interested faculty on how to use the TopHat platform.
2. Maintain the integration of K-State's LMS, Canvas, with the TopHat platform.

3. Maintain the same no-cost contract terms (active as of 2021-05-12) with Tophatmonocle Corp regarding support for the TopHat platform on the K-State campus. FSCOT recommends against enhancement of contract terms.

Section 4: The TopHat platform is one of many current and emerging educational technology tools used in K-State classrooms. FSCOT supports and encourages University IT, where possible and practical, to maintain a technology environment that supports faculty's exercise of academic freedom, exploration, and use of various educational technology tools which may meet the current and future needs of K-State faculty and students.

Section 5: FSCOT supports the Kansas State University Student Governing Association's (KSU SGA) resolution 19/20/63, Opposition to TopHat and Other Costly Educational Platforms.

Section 6: FSCOT encourages faculty, where possible and practical, to explore if free, low-cost, or already available technology tools could be used to replace or supplement more expensive tools that have comparable uses.

Section 7: FSCOT strongly encourages faculty who have employed free, low-cost, or already available technology tools to aid in the taking of attendance, provide student assessment, and/or drive engagement in their courses to engage with the Teaching & Learning Center and University IT to support knowledge sharing and to aid in the goal of driving down course related costs to students.

Section 8: Upon passage and signatures by FSCOT co-chairs and committee members, a copy of this resolution shall be sent to Faculty Senate,

Attachment # 2:

CERTIFIED LEGISLATION • CERTIFIED LEGISLATION • CERTIFIED LEGISLATION • CERTIFIED LEGISLATION

1 **RESOLUTION 19/20/63**

**OPPOSITION TO TOPHAT AND OTHER COSTLY  
EDUCATIONAL PLATFORMS**

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3  
4 **BY:** Andrew Booze, Creighton Glasscock, Hannah Heatherman, Alexandra Hornung, Mathew  
5 Orzechowski, Sadie Polson, and Justin Watkins

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7 **WHEREAS,** The Kansas State University Student Governing Association (KSU SGA) has a history of  
8 working to decrease the costs of textbooks for students, such as through supporting the  
9 Open/Alternative Textbook Initiative;

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11 **WHEREAS,** Many professors make use of educational software platforms in their courses, including  
12 products such as TopHat, iClickers, McGraw-Hill Connect, and WileyPlus;

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14 **WHEREAS,** KSU SGA conducted a survey from October 16 to November 22, 2019 in order to  
15 quantify student opinions about these platforms, which received 152 responses;

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17 **WHEREAS,** 91.4 percent of respondents have been required to purchase educational software during  
18 their time at KSU, and many have been required to purchase multiple products;

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20 **WHEREAS,** These platforms are often not listed in the “My Class Schedule” portion of KSIS’s  
21 Student Center or in the online course schedule or catalog, preventing students from  
22 knowing which programs they will need until they start their classes;

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24 **WHEREAS,** Signing up for these platforms requires students to agree to extensive End User License  
25 Agreements and give the companies providing these products their personal data, in some  
26 cases including location data;

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28 **WHEREAS,** Unlike textbooks, it is not possible to save money by renting or buying a used version of  
29 these platforms;

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31 **WHEREAS,** For 63.6 percent of purchasers, these products cost \$75 or more per semester;

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33 **WHEREAS,** These products are often only used for small portions of the course’s grade, yet make up  
34 the majority of the course’s cost for educational materials;

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36 **WHEREAS,** For example, 41.9 percent of purchasers stated that these platforms were only used for  
37 attendance “often” or “always”, despite that attendance is typically a minority of the  
38 grade for a course;

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40 **WHEREAS,** These products often do not cost the professor mandating their use any money but cost  
41 the students who are required to use them to take the course instead;

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43 **WHEREAS,** These platforms often duplicate many of the features of Canvas, such as quizzes,  
44 modules, and file sharing;

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46 **WHEREAS,** Canvas is available to students for free and is already used in almost all university  
47 coursework; and

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49 **WHEREAS,** Only four percent of purchasers liked these products better than Canvas and only five  
50 percent of purchasers believe that these products are worth the money they have spent.

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52 **BE IT RESOLVED THAT:**

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54 **SECTION 1.** Kansas State University Student Governing Association (KSU SGA) opposes the use of  
55 TopHat, iClickers, and other educational platforms that pose costs to students in college  
56 courses unless they are absolutely necessary to fulfill the learning objectives of the  
57 course.  
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59 **SECTION 2.** KSU SGA enumerates the following reasons for this disapproval:  
60 1. These products are expensive, especially for students who already struggle with  
61 affording college.  
62 2. The expenses posed by these products are more unpredictable than textbooks  
63 because students often have no way to know which programs a class uses until  
64 they start that class.  
65 3. Except for iClicker devices, it is impossible to save money by purchasing used  
66 versions of these products.  
67 4. These platforms require students to agree to multiple End User License  
68 Agreements with third parties and provide personal data to participate in a class.  
69 5. Students overwhelmingly dislike the requirement to purchase these products to  
70 participate in classes.  
71 6. Students overwhelmingly prefer to use Canvas, which is provided to them for  
72 free by the university, for their coursework.  
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74 **SECTION 3.** KSU SGA encourages professors to utilize all features of Canvas to their fullest extent  
75 before turning to other educational platforms.  
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77 **SECTION 4.** KSU SGA encourages Faculty Senate and University Administration to embrace and  
78 incentivize the use of Canvas and take other measures to reduce the cost and  
79 unpredictability of these platforms to students.  
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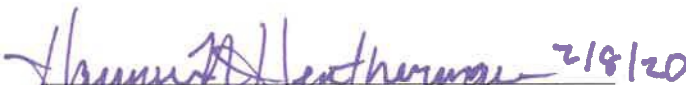
81 **SECTION 5.** KSU SGA rededicates itself to finding ways to encourage the use of free or low-cost  
82 educational products.  
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84 **SECTION 6.** Upon passage by the Student Senate and signature of the Student Body President, a copy  
85 of this resolution shall be sent to College of Agriculture Dean Dr. Ernie Minton, College  
86 of Architecture, Planning and Design Dean Tim de Noble, College of Arts and Sciences  
87 Dean Dr. Amit Chakrabarti, College of Business Administration Dean Dr. Kevin  
88 Gwinner, College of Education Dean Debbie Mercer, College of Engineering Interim  
89 Dean Dr. Gary Clark, College of Health and Human Sciences Dean Dr. John Buckwalter,  
90 College of Veterinary Medicine Dean Dr. Bonnie Rush, Graduate School Dean Dr. Carol  
91 Shanklin, Faculty Senate President Tanya González, Chief Information Officer Gary  
92 Pratt, Vice President for Student Life and Dean of Students Dr. Thomas Lane, Vice  
93 Provost for Student Success Jeannie Brown Leonard, University Provost Charles Taber,  
94 and University President Richard B. Myers.  
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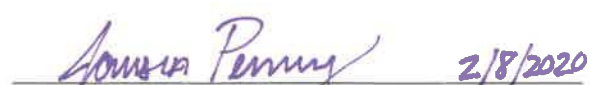
**Resolution 19/20/63 passed by voice vote on February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020.**

I certify this resolution is true and correct

I hereby approve this resolution.

  
Hannah Heatherman, Speaker of the Student Senate Date 2/8/20



  
Jansen Penny, Student Body President Date 2/8/2020