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BOOKSTORE PARTNERSHIP

Bookshop Santa Cruz to manage Cabrillo store for 3 months

Interim deal aims to help chart return to solvency, plan for future

By **TOVIN LAPAN**
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APTOS — Bookshop Santa Cruz has weathered many storms in the book-selling business through the decades.

The successful, locally owned shop in downtown Santa Cruz, opened in 1966, has adjusted strategies to better meet customer demands in the digital age and watched this year as its biggest competitor, Borders, down the street on Pacific Avenue, closed. Now, Bookshop Santa Cruz, and its owner Casey Coonerty Protti, will take on a new challenge.

Cabrillo College announced Monday that Bookshop Santa Cruz will manage the campus bookstore for the next three months and offer suggestions on improving the bottom line.

"Bookshop Santa Cruz was one of the first we thought of," said Vice President of Administrative Services Victoria Lewis, who added that the college approached many bookstores in the area. "It's been in business for quite a long time, it's beloved in the community and we thought it would be a great idea to develop a relationship with them."



SHMUEL THALER/SENTINEL

Casey Coonerty Protti works at the Bookshop Santa Cruz information desk on Monday.

SEE **BOOKS** ON B3

BOOKS

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The interim deal would last until December, at which time Protti is expected to offer a series of suggestions for Cabrillo College Bookstore's future operations.

"I'm really excited about the partnership," Protti said. "The book-selling industry is very challenging right now, and

anytime you can form a collaboration between two independent stores facing similar challenges it can lead to more innovation."

Robin Ellis, who was the bookstore manager, resigned effective Monday. Lewis said Ellis informed the administration of her resignation in late August.

"The goal was really to find a bookstore with retail experience to help assess our bookstore and provide inter-

im management and stabilize operations so we can come up with longer term solutions," Lewis said.

Ellis, who worked with a business adviser this summer to compile a 19-page business analysis and recommendation report for the struggling store, could not be reached for comment.

The Cabrillo Bookstore has reduced hours as the fall term began and will be closed on Fridays starting Sept. 23 to help close a budget deficit largely created by steep declines in textbook sales.

One full-time employee was laid off from the bookstore, and other employees will take a 20 percent reduction in hours due to the Friday closings. Two unfilled positions were eliminated.

All together, the reductions add up to an estimated savings of \$252,000 a year, or a 32 percent reduction in salary expenses.

Ellis' annual salary was just under \$77,000, but she would have been subject to the 20 percent reduction in salary and benefits had she not resigned. Cabrillo administration said that while the final details of the contract with Bookshop Santa Cruz have yet to be completed, they expect the contract cost to be roughly equal to three months of compensation for the book-

store manager.

The bookstore pays for operating costs including more than \$256,000 in reimbursement to the college for administrative fees including rent, Cabrillo employee expenses and other operating expenses.

Expenditures at the bookstore have increased, from \$729,000 in 2005-06 to a projected \$1 million in 2011-12, while sales have declined — revenue from new and used textbooks has dropped 28 percent in the same period.

This term, bookstore services at the Watsonville campus were reduced to just a few days during the first few weeks of class.

The college's current food service contract with Taher prohibits the bookstore from selling food independently, but that contract is up for renewal in June 2012. Ideas for increasing revenue at the store include adding a cafe and starting a print-on-demand service.

Lewis said officials are looking for a "holistic" approach to providing affordable course materials, duplication services and food service to the campus. The administration expects to work with students and various campus committees in fashioning a plan for the bookstore's future by July 2012.