

JOINING FORCES: PARTNERING FOR GROWTH AND IMPACT

TOTAL ENROLLMENT	STUDENT INFORMATION SYSTEM	LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM	POINT-OF-SALE SYSTEM
7,500	COLLEAGUE	BLACKBOARD	BOOKLOG

In the summer of 2016, the team at the Sea Devil Store at Cape Fear Community College in Wilmington, NC launched an Inclusive Access (IA) program in an effort to improve course materials affordability. The program rolled out with three courses totaling 11 sections—the store decided to begin with computer classes, which were selected because they primarily used courseware and online homework platforms. By transitioning these courses to Inclusive Access, the store could ease the student confusion that often accompanies digital access codes by providing access within the LMS while also negotiating lower prices.

After receiving positive feedback from instructors involved with the pilot, Store Manager Jamie Spaulding knew it was time to grow the program in order to help more students have seamless access to their course materials at a lower cost. Initially planning to manage the program on their own, Spaulding and the Sea Devil Store team quickly realized they needed to find a partner who could help them continue on a larger scale.

THE MISSING PIECE

Ready to expand their program, Spaulding identified the two biggest pain points for her store: communication to students and the accuracy of billing. In order to tackle these challenges, Spaulding turned to Verba | VitalSource. “In addition to streamlining everything, the tools were very user-friendly,” says Spaulding. “The program was now not only simpler, it just made sense.

Verba was the piece of the puzzle that was missing.” Along with simplifying their process, Spaulding also appreciates the level of service she experienced from the store’s new partner. “The whole team at Verba has been overwhelmingly supportive when it comes to anything we need,” she says. “The support was a huge deciding factor for us—anytime we pick up the phone, they make magic happen.”

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Using Verba’s full suite of tools, the Sea Devil Store was able to automate delivery of content to students in IA courses, simplify the opt-out process, facilitate communication with both students and campus stakeholders, and get faculty buy-in to help grow their program. While some faculty members were cautious of the program at first, those who participated in the pilot helped garner interest in IA among instructors who were on the fence. “The fact that it was just so easy to use and they didn’t have to do anything different really put

their minds at ease,” says Spaulding. “Easy for not just them, but also for their students. We’ve become more user-friendly—no matter who our user is.”

The ease of use played a major role in how the program took off. Once instructors experienced the program’s simplicity, they helped spread the word about IA and the bookstore’s role in supporting the new initiative. “Verba has done a very good job at making us look amazing,” says Spaulding. “Our perception on campus is something that I’ve always recognized as a barrier for us. These tools are really helping us break those barriers down and show that we’re here as a service, just like instructors are providing when they teach. We’re playing on the same team—our goal is to get these kids through college.”

DRIVING CAMPUS AFFORDABILITY

The Sea Devil Store was a pioneer in North Carolina when it came to using an opt-out model, as many campuses use opt-in models instead. By setting up their program this way, the team was able to benefit more students and eliminate any confusion around course materials requirements. But even though students are able to opt out, very few choose to do so. In fact, the program has an opt-out rate of around 2%, showing just how many students like the convenience of having their digital materials available to them from the first day of class. On campus, Spaulding has seen firsthand just how much students appreciate the program. She says, “Students love being told that they already made their purchase at registration. They get everything they need to be successful from day one.”

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For those who do opt out, the process is simple and efficient for both sides thanks to Verba. The automation provided by Verba Connect™ frees up time for the campus store’s staff to focus on other daily tasks. Since they no longer need to be so hands-on with IA, the staff can spend time improving services and communicating with instructors rather than managing the minutiae of the program.

As of spring 2019, the program has expanded to 34 courses and 246 sections, with approximately 4,000 students using IA in at least one course. Since launching, the program has saved students around \$840,000, with an incredible \$201,000 in savings just from the spring 2019 semester. “That’s life-changing,” says Spaulding. “The program is designed for everyone to win, and I really think that we wouldn’t be as successful with it if we didn’t have these tools.”