

Campus Stores Create Rapid Shift in Course Materials Delivery by Scaling Access and Affordability for Students

Campus stores are the heart of the institutions they serve. The pandemic, and the disruption that followed, shed light on the nimbleness and strategic ability of campus stores across the country to ensure students had access to their required course materials wherever they were learning. The quick response and strategic shift led to a significant change in how campus stores delivered and students purchased course materials during the Spring 2021 term in comparison to Spring 2020, with digital taking a leading role.

During our biannual review of anonymous data aggregated from thousands of transactions occurring through Verba tools that support campus stores, we can look at the state of the campus store industry and the habits of the students they serve. In our Spring 2021 review, we found that digital course materials helped campus stores increase access and affordability while supporting the larger academic mission of driving student success.

KEY FINDINGS INCLUDE:

- **Campus stores saved students over \$18 million in just one term with Inclusive Access.**

Inclusive Access (IA) programs led by campus stores saved students over \$18 million in the Spring 2021 term alone compared to the digital list price (DLP) of the same digital item outside of an IA program. That savings increased by 52% from the previous spring term and represents an even more significant savings when compared to the print equivalent.

- **Students continued to support and purchase from their campus store.**

We found that 82% of students chose to purchase from their campus store even when other offers were presented through tools that serve up a price transparent shopping experience.

- **Digital was the number one course materials variant.**

In 2021, digital took the lead with 32% of the course materials market share in student purchases, outpacing used and rental textbooks.

- **Etextbooks took on a bigger role in Inclusive Access programs, increasing student savings.**

Standalone etextbooks became 37% of the total units delivered through day-one access programs, up from 28%, while etextbook pricing led across-the-board declines in student pricing, averaging 25% less than DLP through IA.

- **Opted in Students were 17% less likely to drop a course with Equitable Access model.**

At the University of California - Davis, where we partnered to launch a first-of-its-kind Equitable Access program, students who remained opted in to the program were 17% less likely to drop a course than those students that opted out of the EA program in Fall 2020.

Jon Bibo, CEO of the Independent College Bookstore Association, shared his insights on this topic in a recent conversation: “During a time when the coronavirus pandemic caused incredible disruption to everyone’s personal and professional lives, independent college stores did what they do best—they adapted to focus their efforts on finding new ways to serve their institutions, faculty, students, and staff. This included helping to accelerate the evolution to digital course materials with a focus on affordability and access, while preserving academic freedom for faculty. Independent college stores also demonstrated innovation with expansion of eCommerce offerings and a variety of new services emphasizing safety and convenience. During a very challenging time, independent college stores showed incredible commitment by once again putting service ahead of profit.”

The evolution and agility of campus stores in the last year positioned them to remain aligned with their institutions’ mission and goals and to expand access and affordability for their students. “The last year presented many challenges and created tough obstacles for campus stores to navigate. The creativity, perseverance, and ability to adapt quickly enabled campus stores to meet the needs of students and faculty. Our team is proud of the results the independent campus stores continue to deliver to the institutions they serve,” shared Jared Pearlman, Vice President, Institutions, for VitalSource.

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