The Challenge

Access to course materials is a key contributor to student success, with 86 percent of faculty using required textbooks in almost every class session.1 But when college students are faced with spending $1,200+ for textbooks and supplies during an average school year,2 it’s no surprise that faculty report students often show up for class without important course materials. The result? Student academic performance suffers -- from which courses are taken to the ability to participate in class, complete assignments and achieve a good grade -- which ultimately impacts retention and graduation rates.

Fortunately, Follett Higher Education – which manages course materials delivery for more than 1,100 campuses in all segments of academia throughout North America – is responding to student and institutional pleas to lower course material costs by identifying more affordable and accessible learning tools and customizing delivery systems.

The Solution

One proven solution since 2012 is Follett ACCESS, which enables colleges and universities to deliver course materials directly to the individual student and include the cost as part of tuition or course charges. This simple idea generates tremendous benefits for students, faculty and administrators: from leveraging bulk buying power to generate significant cost savings to boosting student engagement and retention rates. Faculty have the freedom to use any publisher and adopt any materials required, including new, used

and rental textbooks; digital learning materials; Open Education Resources/OER; courseware; lab kits; supplies; and more.

While Follett ACCESS is customizable to meet the needs of institutions and students, one model that is growing in appeal: adopting the program campus-wide to span all levels and courses offered by the institution. This “all-in” model reinvents the entire campus experience by providing each student all course materials affordably and effortlessly on or before the first day of class, leveling the playing field for students and empowering them for academic success.

Following are examples of two institutions that have successfully implemented the “all-in” Follett ACCESS model.

Follett ACCESS in action:
Xavier University

Founded in 1831, Xavier University in Cincinnati is the fourth oldest Jesuit University and the sixth oldest Catholic university in the United States. The start of a recent Xavier semester brought many “firsts” across campus – not only was the 1,500-freshman class the largest in the university’s 190-year history, but for the first time, all freshman students received all required course materials as part of their tuition through “Day One,” the Xavier-branded “all-in” Follett ACCESS program.

The goal of the “Day One” program – to help incoming students feel academically supported, in light of startling statistics that showed 70 percent of Xavier students did not purchase all of their required textbooks and 30 percent failed to purchase any course materials due in part to financial hardship. This innovative program eliminates confusion and stress about where and when to get materials at the best price each semester, and guarantees that all students have the correct version of all course materials on day one.

Jude Kiah, Assistant Vice President for Auxiliary Services at the time the program was implemented, explained that Xavier started to look for an all-access type of solution when administrators noticed that faculty were becoming disenchanted with the reality that students were delaying buying their books or not buying them at all. “With Day One, students no longer have to choose between books and food. If you get into Xavier, your ability to succeed in the classroom will be equal to everyone. This fits in beautifully with our mission – ‘All For One and One For All’ – and I am very proud of how our university has differentiated itself.”

Xavier partnered with Follett for a smooth, hassle free one-day pick up event prior to the start of classes, with many departments – from operations and marketing/communications to campus administration – collaborating to provide each student with a “Day One” multi-purpose crate that included all provisioned course materials and supplies.

“On move-in day, there was one point where we were delivering 420 student orders an hour – that’s seven per minute! It was extremely successful.”

- Jude Kiah
Assistant Vice President for Auxiliary Services at Xavier University at the time the program was implemented

Joint data collected by Xavier University, 2017-18.
Follett ACCESS in action: Southeastern Louisiana University

As the state’s third-largest public university boasting nearly 14,500 students and more than 150 programs of study, Southeastern Louisiana University is passionate about empowering students with a lifelong education.

Since the 1930s, the university very successfully operated its own “all-in” textbook rental program, where required course materials were supplied via a low flat fee per course. But in 2014, when faced with growing demand from faculty for custom books, eBooks and access codes, administrators considered its options for outsourcing this operation and transitioning from its independently managed store.

As Southeastern Louisiana University’s on-campus general merchandise store partner for over 25 years, Follett jumped at the chance to leverage its deep digital supplier/publisher relationships and bulk buying power to help take the university’s course materials program to the next level. The “all-in” Follett ACCESS program fit the bill perfectly, providing Southeastern Louisiana University students with rental and digital course materials on the first day of class, and within the institution’s own Learning Management System (LMS), alleviating the need to manually distribute individual access codes.

“Follett’s more than 150 years of retail and rental program expertise allowed Southeastern Louisiana University to step back from the process with confidence and re-focus efforts to other campus initiatives,” says Follett’s Jason Kahlenbeck, Operations Manager of Academic Programs. “The transition from the institution-managed program to the Follett ACCESS program was seamless to students since Follett was able to leverage an already-familiar system to deliver materials.”

The Results
Delivering required course materials to students as part of tuition or fees is a boon to families, faculty and institutions alike, and has generated some powerful statistics across the 325+ Follett ACCESS campuses. At the top of the list: an estimated 30 percent in average savings to students.\(^4\)

For Southeastern Louisiana University, Follett ACCESS cost savings have been impressive. In FY 2018, Southeastern helped students save $16.6 million compared to the cost of a new book and $11.3 million compared to cost of used books, and the university projects this will rise to $18.6 million and $12.8 million respectively in FY 2022.\(^5\)

“At Southeastern Louisiana University, our core values are excellence and caring,” explains John L. Crain, President of the university.

\(^4\) Follett Internal Data comparing Follett ACCESS course material costs versus cost of students purchasing new course materials outside of the Follett ACCESS program, 2017-18 academic year.
\(^5\) Data collected by Southeastern Louisiana University in 2018.
“Part of our caring approach is doing everything we can to ensure a college education remains affordable. One long-standing example is our textbook rental system that can save a typical freshman $800 per semester. Savings over a four-year academic career can add up to well over $6,000, a significant amount for our students and their families.”

In addition to significant cost savings, bundling all course materials in with tuition or student fees energizes engagement and ultimately fuels student success -- with 74 percent of students agreeing that having their own course materials had an impact on their performance\(^6\) -- and creates a compelling differentiator as institutions vie for students during recruitment efforts.

According to Xavier University’s Kiah: “From an institutional perspective, we believed our Day One program would bring additional students to us, and we were right. More students came to Xavier this fall than ever before, with the majority of students citing the program as one of the top three reasons for enrolling.”

Xavier University students and parents have embraced the “all-in” delivery model. For student Tamara Thomas, the Day One program provided a sense of comfort:

“I did not have to worry about the money situation and it allowed my mom to be stress-free about my books.”

- Tamara Thomas
  Xavier University Student

For Xavier parent Jill C. Rice: “When my son learned that his textbooks would be included, he felt like Xavier appreciated and wanted him… No other school sent this type of message as strongly.”

At Southeastern Louisiana University, Follett has been able to continue as an integral part of the culture, with both students and parents happy to be relieved of the stress surrounding course materials at the beginning of each semester and reassured that the university was the best choice.

Southeastern Louisiana University students often take to Twitter about the textbook rental program, praising it as “…the best thing ever created” and “I respect Southeastern for that textbook rental. Made my college years a lot less difficult.”

According to Ann Barlow, Regional Manager for Follett ACCESS, Southeastern Louisiana has set the benchmark, with other regional schools aspiring towards the same success. “The university has such a good reputation because of its ‘all-in’ program, with other institutions seeing the benefit of offering course materials at one set price, so on the first day of class, students can just come in and start learning and faculty can start teaching.”

“Follett ACCESS – particularly the ‘all-in’ model -- is more than just a program, it is a movement,” concludes Frank Gentile, Vice President of Digital Operations & Customer Success at Follett. “Beyond cost savings and convenience, institutions are seeing a positive impact on recruitment and student outcomes. We are honored to collaborate with our partner institutions to level the playing field for all students, regardless of economic background or social status, and continue our 150-year-old mission to inspire learning and help shape education.”

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