

Inclusive and Equitable Access Programs: *Promoting Affordability, Convenience, and Student Success*

More than [1,500 institutions](#) nationwide offer affordable access programs to help students save money on textbooks and course materials. These programs are often called “Inclusive Access” or “Equitable Access” and deliver digital and physical course materials to students on the first day of class at a significant discount compared to retail prices. Colleges include the low cost of the access program in students’ accounts, eliminating the need for students to search for materials on their own and ensuring they have all their course materials on the first day of class.

Millions of college students across the country benefit from the cost savings, ease of access, and convenience offered by access programs. However, a misguided regulatory proposal from the U.S. Department of Education (ED) could eliminate these popular programs from college campuses nationwide – and ultimately force college students to pay substantially more for the course materials and textbooks they need to be successful.

Here are the key facts about access programs that you need to know:

ACCESS PROGRAMS SUCCESSFULLY HELPED BRING DOWN SKYROCKETING TEXTBOOK COSTS.

- During the two decades leading up to 2016, the cost of books, course materials, and supplies for college courses increased by [88 percent](#).
- The Obama-Biden administration recognized the need for a better solution and approved regulations to allow institutions to bundle course materials as part of tuition and fees, as long as the materials were offered at competitive below-market rates.
- Since then, *access programs have been credited with helping to bring down student spending on course materials by an astounding [57 percent](#).*

ACCESS PROGRAMS SAVE STUDENTS MONEY ON COURSE MATERIALS.

- According to [independent research](#), the *average student spent \$285 on course materials in the 2022-2023 academic year – that’s a 60% drop from 2007*, when the average student spent more than \$700 on course materials.
- A study of more than *25,000 courses across institution types in Fall 2023 found that access programs saved students nearly \$24 per material, a 30 percent savings* compared to prevailing market pricing for the same faculty required material – i.e., the access program cost of the digital courseware or e-textbook was significantly lower than the retail market price for the exact same digital courseware or e-textbook.
- *In 2022-2023 academic year, total student savings from access programs nationwide is estimated to surpass \$130 million.*

ACCESS PROGRAMS ARE VALUED BY THE MAJORITY OF STUDENTS.

- A survey of more than 100 college campuses with access programs confirmed ***an overwhelming majority of students (91%) found it convenient to have their course materials bundled by the institution and 86% said affordable access programs made them feel better prepared for class.***
- Several student body governments have recognized the value and savings afforded by access programs and formally endorsed these programs at schools like CSU Long Beach and UNC Charlotte.

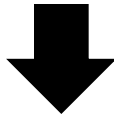
ACCESS PROGRAMS PROMOTE EQUITY FOR STUDENTS.

- Requiring students to opt-in to access programs would result in dramatically increased costs and reduced timely access to books and supplies, ***which will be felt most acutely by economically disadvantaged students including Pell Grant recipients.***
- ***Access programs' opt-out approach treats all students equitably,*** whereas an opt-in approach proposed by the Department will create two classes of students: those who can afford their textbooks at whatever the cost and those students on financial aid who cannot and will be at a greater disadvantage.

ACCESS PROGRAMS CONTRIBUTE TO STUDENT SUCCESS.

- When textbook prices were hitting all-time highs in 2014, a [survey by U.S. PIRG](#) found 65 percent of students decided not to buy a textbook because of the cost, and 94 percent of those students worried it would negatively affect their grades.
- It's simple: when students have the materials they need on or before the first day of class, they perform better in class. A recent [student survey](#) confirmed ***more than three-quarters (83%) of students believe access programs had a positive impact on their academic success.***
- Access programs are especially beneficial to underserved students. Independent [research](#) found ***access programs resulted in substantial increases in course completion rates for at-risk groups, including Black students (up 21 percent) and students over the age of 25 (up 6 percent).***

THE FACTS ARE CLEAR.



Access programs help lower course materials costs, make it easier than ever for students to have all the materials they need on or before Day One of class, and can contribute to better academic outcomes – particularly among nontraditional and disadvantaged students.

Instead of advancing regulations that could have unintended consequences for college costs, ***the Department of Education should work with institutions and course materials providers to advance commonsense modifications to access programs that enhance transparency and protections for students*** without undermining institutions' ability to continue offering these popular, successful, and more affordable programs.