

Colorado Community College System Digital Textbook Model Summary and Implementation Checklist

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The Colorado Community College System (CCCS) has taken on one of the biggest challenges affecting students' ability to pay for college: rising textbook costs. In response to a 2005 GAO study, which found that the cost of textbooks was 72% of average tuition and fees at two-year public institutions, CCCS set out to ease the textbook burden on students. In 2006 it began a small pilot program to offer digital textbooks as part of tuition and course fees. The goals were to lower costs while putting rich, interactive course materials all in one place for students. Two years later, in April 2008, Colorado Governor Bill Ritter signed into law a bill aimed at bringing greater transparency to the cost of college textbooks. This legislation was initiated by a group of student organizations who were frustrated with high textbook prices combined with the lack of information about required books when signing up for a course. The new law provided greater transparency in terms of price and edition changes, but ultimately did little to control the textbook cost burden on students. The CCCS digital textbook program has had a major impact on textbook costs, now reaching 13,000 students per semester.

Key features of the CCCS digital textbook model include:

- **Flat Fee for eBook and digital content.** CCCS offers eBooks and related digital materials to students for a flat rate of \$52, regardless of subject area or course. The charge is added to the students' tuition invoice, and is non-refundable unless the student drops the course before census date.
- **Low-cost print version of book available for optional purchase.** Students may print whatever sections of the eBook they desire, or, if they wish to have the textbook entirely in hard copy form, they can purchase a custom low-cost, loose leaf print version via participating bookstores. This print version of the book is entirely optional, and usually runs students under \$50. Even if students buy the optional print book, they are paying around \$100 total, which is still quite a bit less than what they would be paying for a regular textbook. In some of our courses (e.g., Biology), a single textbook can run up to \$225, so this is a significant savings.
- **Access to ancillary digital products are included in model.** This includes publishers' premium websites, which typically require students to purchase an access code. For example, Wiley Plus and MyLabs access are included with the eBook fee.

Foundations for successful implementation of this model:

- ✓ Standardize textbook adoption at the course level.
 - Simplicity of internal business model: every section of a given course carries the fee.
 - This model works for publishers because they are getting 100% sell-through (i.e., every student must purchase), and the greater the volume, the greater the discount.
- ✓ Seek out faculty leaders who are willing to pilot test the model.
- ✓ College business officers should be included in discussions early in the process.
- ✓ Evaluate effectiveness and satisfaction. Seek feedback. Talk with all stakeholders about what is and is not working.
- ✓ There needs to be a long-term commitment to moving in this direction, on both the college's part and the publisher's part. CCCS has been building these relationships for six years now, and it continues to improve.
- ✓ Maintain openness to new ideas, new models. The landscape is constantly changing.