

Course Materials Costs: College Stores as Solution Providers

Members of the National Association of College Stores are finding innovative solutions for many of the challenges related to course materials affordability. Here are just a few examples.

Used Books

One of the most significant ways college stores help students reduce the cost of course materials is by offering lower-cost used books. At The Cornell Store at **Cornell University**, used books now comprise nearly 40% of the store's textbook inventory, thanks to its robust textbook buyback program and successful efforts to encourage timely faculty textbook adoption. Nearly 50% of the books at University Bookstore at the **Texas State University-San Marcos** are used, and both stores also offer a selection of low-cost e-books.

Rental Programs

The option to rent instead of purchasing required textbooks is increasingly being offered to students at college stores across the country. The award-winning textbook rental program within California's **San Mateo County Community College** system has saved students \$1.2 million since 2005 and inspired money-saving rental programs at other colleges nationwide.

Textbook Buyback

The number of used books a college store can offer is directly related to the number of books it can purchase back from students who have completed a course. Students at the **University of Connecticut** can simply log on to the UConn Co-op's real-time web site to find out how many more copies of their textbook the store is buying and at what price.

The Cornell Store at **Cornell University** makes it especially easy for students to get cash back for textbooks they no longer need by sending personalized e-mails to students and setting up buyback stations directly outside exam locations. Expanded buyback locations helped the store return nearly \$1.1 million to students in 2007-08 through the buyback program.



Faculty Education

The U-Shop at **Villanova University** has created an educational "Ten Things You Can Do to Lower Textbook Costs" presentation to encourage faculty participation in keeping course materials affordable through timely textbook adoption and other means.

Facilitating Timely Textbook Adoptions Textbook adoption is critical to a store's used book inventory, so the Titan Shops Bookstore at **California State University-Fullerton** rewards academic departments for timely textbook submissions. If a department submits 100% of its requisitions by the campus deadline, it receives \$500 in store credit plus a \$250 scholarship to award to students in the department.

Offering faculty quick and easy online textbook adoption via a custom-built IT infrastructure has helped The University Bookstore at **Georgia State University** boost its inventory of used books and reduce paper transactions. The store typically has \$1 million worth of used books available for students every semester.

Textbook Reservations

The 8,000 students at **Ashland University** can now reserve used textbooks in advance of an upcoming term, ensuring that they get a lower-priced copy before supplies sell out. The textbook reservation system has been widely embraced by Ashland students, with approximately half of undergraduates using it.

Textbook Discounts

The University Store at the **University of Arkansas** applies a standard 10% discount to all textbook purchases the day before classes start for every term. Savings from new book discounts to students over the last two years are estimated to exceed \$500,000.

Students at the **Villanova University** U-Shop also enjoy a 5% discount on everything they purchase in the store when they pay with their campus debit card.

Custom Course Packs

The **Ashland University** Bookstore partners with faculty to produce custom course packs featuring select portions from texts, journals, and other sources. Students are saving as much as 50% by having to purchase fewer required materials while getting full value from only those materials that will actually be used in class.

Rebates

University Book Store at the **University of Washington** issues annual 10% rebates to customers on nearly all purchases made at the store. It typically returns over \$1 million per year through this customer-centric program. Student members of the UConn Co-op at the **University of Connecticut** also are eligible to receive patronage rebates.

Rewards Programs

At the **University of Arkansas**, enrollment is free in the University Bookstore's Choose the Lowest Cost and Sign Up to Save (CLASS) program, which rewards students with special discounts, Customer Appreciation sales, and personalized email notifications about textbook buyback offers. CLASS participants receive an additional 10% discount on all new and used books during special sales days, an estimated savings to students of \$120,000 over the past two years.

Book Scholarships

Since it began awarding dozens of \$600 course materials grants each school year, the University Book Store at **University of Washington** has distributed over \$750,000 in grants to students to cover the cost of course materials.

The University Bookstore at **Texas State University-San Marcos** also awards book scholarships, giving 10% of its annual net profits to the Associated Student Government (ASG) to distribute to students in the form of \$300 scholarships. Over a recent three-year period, more than \$100,000 went toward these scholarships.

Tax Credits for Course Materials Purchases

To help students and families take advantage of the new American Opportunity Tax Credit for course material purchases, the web site of the University Bookstore at the **University of Arkansas** offers a fact sheet and the ability for students to print out documentation on all qualified purchases for tax filing convenience.

Buyer Education

Incorporating an informative store tour into the new student orientation program at the **University of Connecticut** is one way the UConn Co-op is helping new students and their parents learn about money-saving options when it comes to purchasing course materials.

Price Guarantees

The Titan Shops Bookstore at **California State University-Fullerton**, offers students a Lowest Price Guarantee (LPG) and refunds 125% of the difference if students find a book they've purchased from the store at a lower price elsewhere.

Support for Student Book Exchanges

The University Bookstore at the **University of Arkansas** collaborated with students to develop an online "Hog Auction" site where students can buy and sell their books without any store involvement. The Illini Union Bookstore at the **University of Illinois** also partners with the student-run Illini Book Exchange (IBX) and provides an area within the store for student buyers and sellers to safely meet and conduct their transactions.

NACS members are committed to course materials affordability.

Course materials affordability is a complex issue whose solution requires collaboration between all stakeholders – publishers, college stores, faculty, and students.

NACS stands ready to provide all segments of the industry with the information, data, statistics, and expertise necessary to address the issue so that all students can have access to an affordable, quality education. For more information, go to **www.nacs.org**.

