

# COURSE MATERIALS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

HOW AFFORDABLE-ACCESS PROGRAMS SAVE STUDENTS  
MONEY AND PRODUCE POSITIVE LEARNING OUTCOMES



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report offers a rigorous, independent analysis of the benefits of affordable-access programs for course materials, which have been widely available to students since 2016. It concludes that these programs save students money and improve student success, especially if they are structured as opt-out models, which students, faculty, and administrators prefer. Numerous peer-reviewed studies, national surveys of postsecondary students and faculty, and conversations with institutional decision-makers have contributed to this report's findings.

**Background:** It is a fact that the overall cost of higher education in the United States has risen sharply over the past two decades,<sup>1</sup> creating general affordability challenges for students at both public and private higher-education institutions.

Within this upward trend, course materials are a key exception because they are *more* affordable than they were a decade ago. This remarkable bright spot is thanks to the innovative affordable-access programs created through the collaboration of higher-education institutions, publishers, and provisioning providers, bolstered by formal support from the federal government.

Of particular importance is a 2015 federal regulation that authorizes institutions of higher learning to directly apply certain financial aid dollars toward the cost of course materials. Under the regulation, an institution must have an arrangement with a publisher that (A) ensures that books or supplies are available “below competitive market rates,” (B) provides students with books and supplies by the seventh class day, and (C) has a policy by which students may opt out of the program.<sup>2</sup>

As described further in this report, the regulation and resulting programs have been a success story not only for cost efficiencies and timely access but also for student preparedness and outcomes. Also true is that, collectively, students enrolled in these programs have access to a vast body of course materials that typically reflect rigorous content development and review processes.

In 2024, the Department of Education (ED) revisited the 2015 regulation through a rulemaking that included public comments and testimony from stakeholders. In declining to make changes to the regulation at this time, it acknowledged the need to gather more data to better understand the impact of these programs.<sup>3</sup> This report supports that conclusion by providing an evidence-based analysis of current policy and program benefits. It should also be helpful to institutions as they evaluate and adopt affordable-access programs.

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1. College Board. (2004, 2024). Trends in college pricing (2004, 2024 editions). College Board

2. 34 C.F.R. § 668.164(c)(2)(2015). A higher-education institution will globally elect either an opt-in or opt-out model, frequently giving instructors the discretion to participate or decline and permitting students to exercise payment options through tuition billing and payment systems. In practice, these models go by various names, including affordable-access, equitable-access, inclusive-access, universal-access, and first-day or day-one access programs

3. Program Integrity and Institutional Quality: State Authorization, Cash Management, Accreditation and Related Issues, 89 Fed. Reg. 104937, 104938 (proposed Dec. 26, 2024) (to be codified at 34 C.F.R. pts. 600, 602, 668) (announcing the termination of its inquiry and referencing public feedback)

## **FINDING: OPT-OUT AFFORDABLE-ACCESS MODELS SAVE STUDENTS MONEY**

Opt-out models ensure that course materials are offered at below market rates. Compared to the average digital list price for instructional materials, pricing offered through inclusive-access (IA) programs has saved students an average of 36% per course; the average digital list price for course materials per class was \$91, while the average price for course materials per course for students in an IA program was \$58.<sup>4</sup> Opt-out affordable-access models have also placed downward pricing pressure on the entire market. After these access models were regulated by the ED in 2015, the compound annual growth rate<sup>5</sup> of the cost of course materials dropped from 6.1% to 0.3%.

## **FINDING: OPT-OUT AFFORDABLE-ACCESS MODELS IMPROVE STUDENT OUTCOMES**

Opt-out models ensure that students have easy access to course materials on or before their first day of class, improving academic preparation, participation, and outcomes. Peer-reviewed studies at community colleges demonstrate the statistically significant impact that opt-out affordable-access models have on student outcomes. At Onondaga Community College and Technical College of the Lowcountry, students enrolled in opt-out equitable-access (EA) programs were 27% more likely to earn a passing letter grade and 60% less likely to withdraw from their course.<sup>6</sup> These outcomes were even more notable for Black and multiracial students, who were 54% and 50% more likely to pass their courses, respectively, after the college implemented an opt-out EA program.

## **FINDING: INSTITUTIONAL STAKEHOLDERS PREFER OPT-OUT AFFORDABLE-ACCESS MODELS AND HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT OPT-IN**

Most higher-education stakeholders—administrators, faculty, and students—favorably perceive their affordable-access models. Administrators' top reasons for embracing IA and EA models are reducing costs for students (67% and 82%, respectively) and ensuring day-one access (58% and 56%). Almost all institutions (99%) that are leveraging affordable-access models have structured them as opt-out models. Driving the nearly unanimous decision to adopt an opt-out affordable-access program, administrators interviewed for this report expressed concern that lower student participation rates in opt-in models would result in a loss of these cost savings and day-one access benefits for a substantial portion of their student population.

These concerns are supported by analysis of instructional materials participation data under IA and traditional procurement models. Participation rates are lower in opt-in models than in opt-out (36% vs. 96%, respectively). Additionally, administrators report that first-year students—particularly first-generation students—are most likely to struggle under opt-in models. First-year and first-generation students often begin college without understanding the need to purchase course materials or mistakenly procure the wrong version and are severely disadvantaged relative to peers with access to the correct resources on day one. For example, as described on page 26 of this report, at North Carolina State the opt-in program frustrated students and faculty to the point that student government advocated for a change to opt-out.

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4. Analyzed from 2020-24 course materials distributor pricing data. Further details are provided in Appendix C of this report

5. Compound annual growth rate (CAGR) is the mean annual percentage growth rate of a dataset over a defined period

6. Moore, M. (2022, July 27). *Equitable access: A participant v. non-participant course completion rate analysis from 2-year institutions*

# SECTION 1: DEFINITIONS AND CONTEXT

*“The only cost in higher education that has decreased over the last few years is for textbooks, and it’s because of these access models. Tuition and costs for insurance, housing, and everything else have gone up, but not for textbooks.”*

– Assistant Director of Course Materials, Public Four-Year University

## COURSE MATERIALS ACCESS MODELS

Higher-education institutions have the option to implement one of several access models to provide students with course materials. These models provide varying levels of guaranteed day-one access to materials.

Throughout this report, the following terms are used to describe the models:

### STANDARD ACCESS

Programs in which students bear the responsibility for purchasing instructional materials

#### TRADITIONAL MODEL

Students find and purchase materials for each course out of pocket from their choice of vendor (e.g., institution bookstore, publisher website, third-party online vendor).

Materials are offered in print and/or digital format.

Students who seek to use financial aid to pay for course materials must wait for financial aid to be provided before purchasing materials.

### AFFORDABLE ACCESS

Programs in which institutions and publishers provide students with instructional materials before course start at below competitive market rates

#### INCLUSIVE ACCESS (IA)

Students pay a fee for **each course**, receiving all required course materials per course for one price.

Materials are primarily offered in a digital format, though print options are often available through publishers.

The fee for course materials is typically added to student accounts, and financial aid can directly cover costs.

#### EQUITABLE ACCESS (EA)

Students pay a fee for required course materials for **all courses each term**.

Materials are offered in a digital or print format.

The fee for course materials is typically added to student accounts, and financial aid can directly cover costs.

While these three models are most common across institutions, there are other emerging models that also provide students with affordable access to course materials. For example, some institutions have implemented a cascading affordable-access model, through which students enroll in an EA program but have the flexibility to pay for materials through the program by course rather than by term. These alternative models are not analyzed in this report given low adoption rates today, though they do demonstrate how educators and publishers are continuously evolving opt-out access models to further increase affordability and flexibility for students.

Other institutions have adopted open educational resources in certain courses that can be used, adapted, and redistributed by anyone. While these resources are often marketed as a “free” substitute for commercial materials, students may still incur costs to access them.

Defined below are two methods enabling students to participate in affordable-access programs; however, nearly all institutions operate an opt-out model.<sup>7</sup>

### OPT-OUT

An access model in which students are given the option to “opt out” of the course material access program in favor of finding the materials on their own. When participating in this model, students **always** have access to their materials on the first day of class.

### OPT-IN

An access model in which students are given the option to “opt in” to the program. When participating in this model, students **may not** have access to their materials on the first day of class.

A comparison of the methods is discussed in detail below. One foundational difference between opt-in and opt-out models is the responsibility borne by the student to choose to participate. Under an opt-in model, students must proactively take additional steps with their institution to obtain course materials at the beginning of the term, whereas, under an opt-out model, students conveniently receive the materials on the first day of class when they are enrolled in an affordable-access course.

## HISTORY OF AFFORDABLE-ACCESS PROGRAMS AND IMPACT ON PRICES

### COLLEGE TEXTBOOK PRICES INCREASED STEADILY PRIOR TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AFFORDABLE-ACCESS PROGRAMS AND HAVE SINCE STABILIZED

Digital access programs were novel and unregulated by the ED in 2009 when Indiana University became the first school to offer a version of an affordable-access model. The adoption of similar programs at flagship institutions over the next several years—including Western Kentucky University (2013), the University of Missouri (2014), and the University of California-Davis (2014)—guaranteed day-one access and saved students millions of dollars per year compared to the cost of purchasing new textbooks under a traditional procurement model.<sup>8</sup> These programs removed upfront, out-of-pocket expenses for students by enabling institutions to bill the cost of course materials to student accounts and therefore directly apply financial aid to cover this cost for eligible students.

In 2015, the ED formally allowed and set guidelines for affordable-access models.<sup>9</sup> These additional regulations have had a significant and positive impact on publishers’ and institutions’ ability to provide course materials at affordable prices. Prior to these regulations, textbook prices were rising steadily—and more rapidly than inflation. Since the rule went into effect on July 1, 2016, prices have been stable, with a nearly negligible increase of 0.3% compared to overall inflation of 3.2%. Moreover, the National Association of College Stores (NACS) has reported that student spending on course materials has undergone a dramatic 39% decline during the last 10 years.<sup>10</sup>

7. In opt-in models, students are typically not guaranteed access to their materials until they actively opt in. Until they opt in, students may have free trial-period access to some course materials. Often these free trials allow students to view some content and/or activities, but the majority remain hidden or behind a paywall

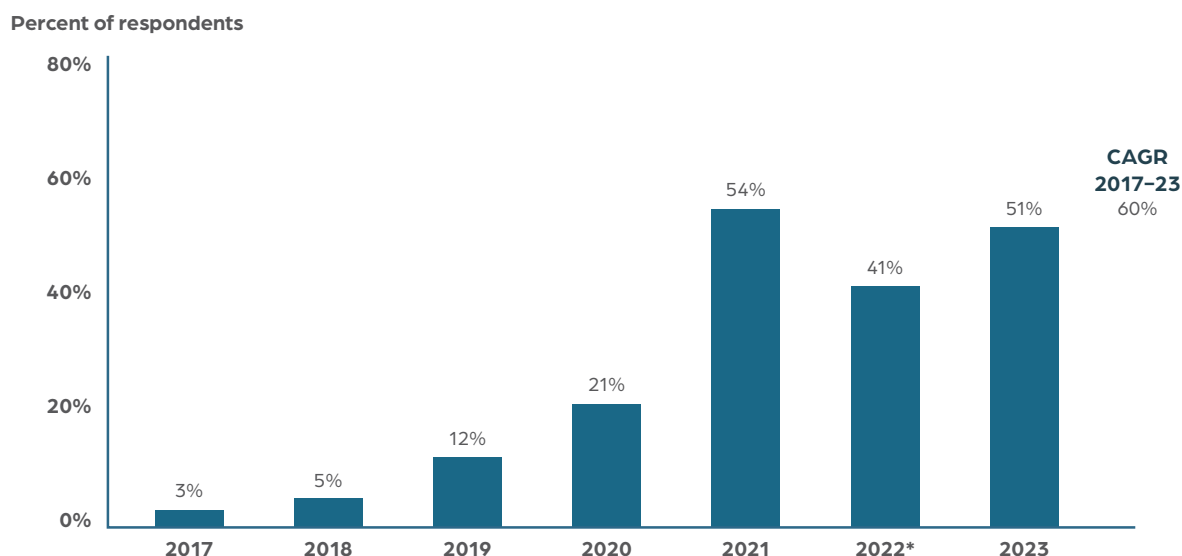
8. University of Missouri students saved more than \$5 million, and UC-Davis students saved nearly \$7 million, between 2014 and 2017. These dollar figures were calculated by comparing the average cost of materials under IA/EA to the full price of new print textbooks

9. 34 C.F.R. § 668.164(c)(2)

10. OnCampus Research from academic years 2014-15 to 2023-24; OnCampus Research. (2025). *Student Watch: Attitudes and behaviors toward course materials, 2024*. National Association of College Stores

The demonstrated impact of these programs on affordability and access has driven adoption across institutions. Since ED guidance took effect in 2016, the adoption of affordable-access models has accelerated (Figure 1), demonstrating the significant groundswell these models have garnered among administrators and faculty. The percentage of faculty surveyed by NACS who had participated in an IA program increased from 3% in 2017 to more than 50% in 2023, and a majority of those who had never participated (70%) expressed interest in participating in the future.

### Faculty reported participation in IA, 2017-23



**Figure 1:** Faculty reporting that they have participated in IA programs, 2017-23; National Association of College Stores Faculty Watch Survey. The Faculty Watch Survey is an annual survey of faculty from a nationally representative cohort of schools based in the US. \*The decrease in participation rate in 2022 may be due to a change in the composition of the survey sample; since the Faculty Watch Survey is contingent on the schools that complete the survey, a drop in 2022 may be because the institutions that participated that year were underrepresenting IA in the market

## SECTION 2: INCREASED AFFORDABILITY THROUGH AFFORDABLE-ACCESS MODELS

***“We save students about \$46 million per year with our [opt-out] affordable-access program.”***

*– Senior Vice Provost of Academic Services, Public Two-Year University*

Students who receive course materials through opt-out affordable-access programs spend significantly less on course materials than students purchasing materials at the digital list price.

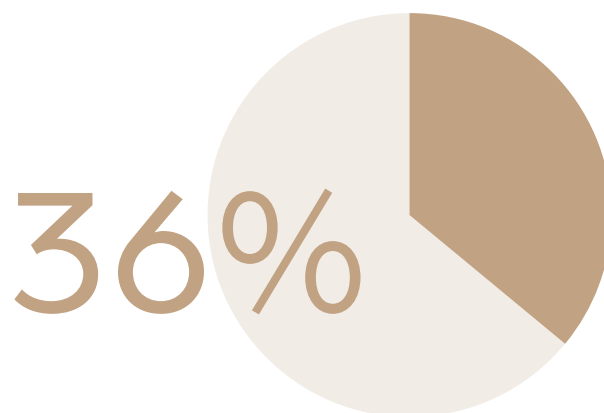
### STUDENTS SAVE SUBSTANTIALLY THROUGH AFFORDABLE ACCESS

Students participating in IA programs save an average of 36% per class.<sup>11</sup> This reflects a total savings of more than \$470 million for the students enrolled in affordable-access programs at the 1,088 institutions analyzed.<sup>12</sup>

11. Represents the difference between the average IA price and digital list price among IA participants

12. Savings reported throughout this section are derived from a database of 1,088 US-based institutions that have contracted with Barnes & Noble College, Follett, RedShelf, or VitalSource. Further detail on this database is provided in Appendix C of this report

## Average savings on IA course materials per student per course



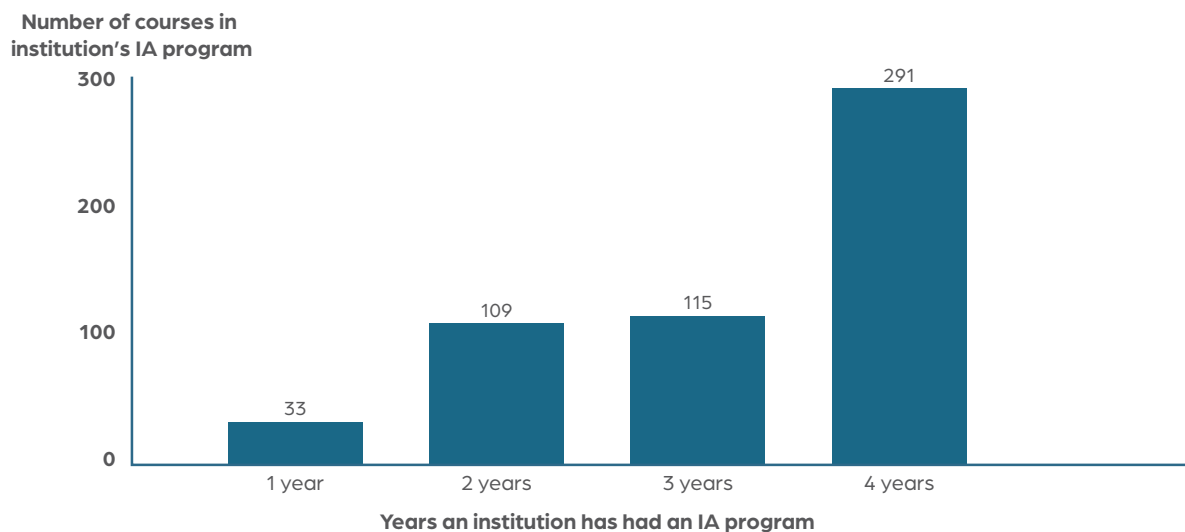
**Figure 2:** Average savings per student on IA course materials (percent discount on digital list price); course materials distributor data

### INSTITUTIONS EXPAND THEIR AFFORDABLE-ACCESS PROGRAMS AFTER ADOPTION

Among the institutions analyzed, there was a strong tendency for institutions to expand their affordable-access programs over time. The number of IA courses offered per institution increased substantially each additional year after the IA program was implemented, increasing from an average of 33 courses in the first year of implementation to almost 300 three years later. These findings suggest that faculty and administrators are inclined to rapidly enroll more courses in the IA program as the benefits for students become apparent.

### Growth in IA programs by years of adoption

Grouped by number of years an institution has had IA program in place



**Figure 3:** Relationship between the number of years an institution has had an IA model and the number of IA courses at the institution; course materials distributor data



## SECTION 3: IMPACT OF DAY-ONE ACCESS

***“Not having course materials is hurting our students academically, especially our first-generation students and students from underserved communities.”***

*– Provost, Private Four-Year University*

### **OPT-OUT AFFORDABLE-ACCESS MODELS INCREASE TIMELY ACCESS TO COURSE MATERIALS**

Having access to course materials on or before the first day of a course is essential for academic success, as timely access enables students to fully participate and complete assignments from day one. However, due to the rising costs of tuition and fees, it is often challenging for students to purchase course materials on time if they must purchase them out of pocket without the benefit of applying their financial aid dollars.

This challenge is especially pronounced for students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds. In a traditional procurement model, socioeconomically disadvantaged students often purchase course materials well after the course starts, purchase the wrong materials, or find they are unable to afford them at all. A 2024 study<sup>13</sup> of more than 16,000 students found that 28% of students at four-year institutions and 18% at two-year institutions did not obtain at least one course resource during the 2023-24 academic year.

*Supporting commentary from institutional administration:*

- “We have an abysmally low purchase rate on non-inclusive access texts, which means we have a lot of instructors who are struggling to get their students through course content because students don’t have the book.”  
*– Provost, Private Four-Year University*
- “As freshmen, students don’t recognize that they need textbooks to be prepared for college. So, we see much higher attrition.”  
*– Dean, Public Four-Year University*

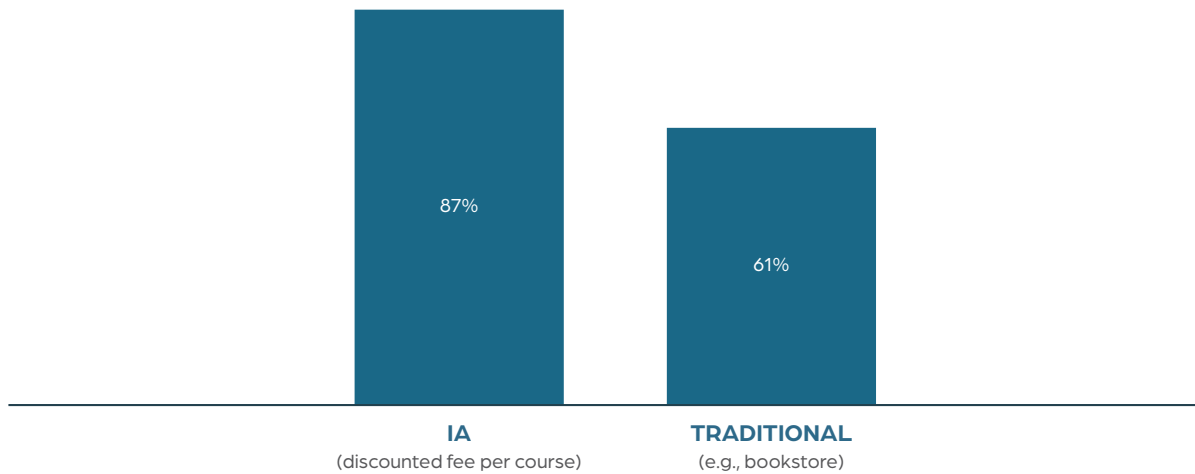
### **OPT-OUT AFFORDABLE-ACCESS MODELS ENSURE THAT STUDENTS HAVE MATERIALS BY THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS**

Under affordable-access models, more students have day-one access to course materials than under traditional procurement models. In *Time for Class*, a Tyton Partners survey of over 1,500 higher-education instructors, 87% reported that all or nearly all students in an IA program received their materials on the first day of class, compared to only 61% who reported this access for all or nearly all students in a traditional procurement model. Under the traditional model, students must complete the time-consuming process of independently researching and comparing prices for course materials across platforms. Without institutional support, this process can delay access to course materials or result in students not purchasing them.

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13. OnCampus Research. (2025). *Student Watch: Attitudes and behaviors toward course materials, 2024*. National Association of College Stores.

## Percentage of higher-education instructors who perceive all or nearly all students (75%+) to have day-one access\* by primary access model\*\*



**Figure 4:** Percentage of instructors who perceive at least 75% of students to have day-one access, by primary access model; Tyton Partners Time for Class Survey, 2024; \*Survey questions: “What percent of your students have access to materials on the first day of class in your largest course?”; \*\*“What is the primary course material access model used in your course?”; n=1,575

*Supporting commentary from institutional administration:*

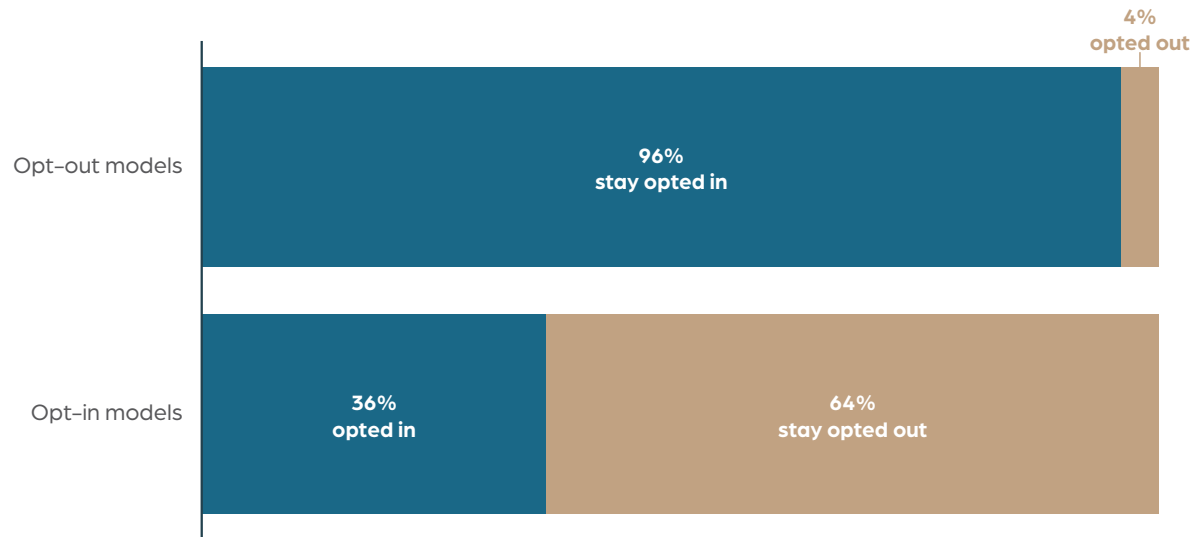
- “[Through opt-out IA] all students start with all the resources that they need to be successful by the first day of class.”  
– Provost, Private Four-Year University

### OPT-IN AFFORDABLE-ACCESS MODELS HAVE LOW PARTICIPATION RATES, LEADING TO LIMITED DAY-ONE ACCESS

Institutions that have implemented an opt-in model are more likely to experience low student participation and thus more limited day-one access to course materials than institutions that have implemented an opt-out model. Under an opt-out model, students are enrolled in the affordable-access program during course registration, and all students gain access to the appropriate course materials before or on the first day of class. Under an opt-in model, students are not directly enrolled in an affordable-access program, leading to lower participation rates.

Data from course materials distributors demonstrates that the average participation rate in opt-out programs is 96% compared to just 36% in opt-in programs. Institutional administrators attribute low participation under opt-in models to human behavior—the more convenient choice will be the most common. They emphasize that regardless of how often they inform students about the benefits of these programs, students typically forget about or avoid opting in. Students may also mistakenly believe that they can find cheaper versions of their course materials elsewhere or go without materials entirely. This mindset often leads students to purchase incorrect textbooks or be unable to access necessary courseware to complete assignments.

## Average student participation rate under opt-out vs. opt-in models



**Figure 5:** Participation rates for opt-out and opt-in affordable-access models; participation rates for typical opt-out and opt-in model based on course material distributor data and calculated by dividing the number of students participating in IA programs by the number of students enrolled in IA courses and averaged across institutions

The most concerning implication of an institution adopting an opt-in model is the impact on first-generation students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, who benefit the most from these programs but are the least likely to opt in. While the opt-out models help close opportunity gaps and promote more options for racially minoritized students through direct enrollment, opt-in enables these gaps to persist.

*Supporting commentary from institutional administrators:*

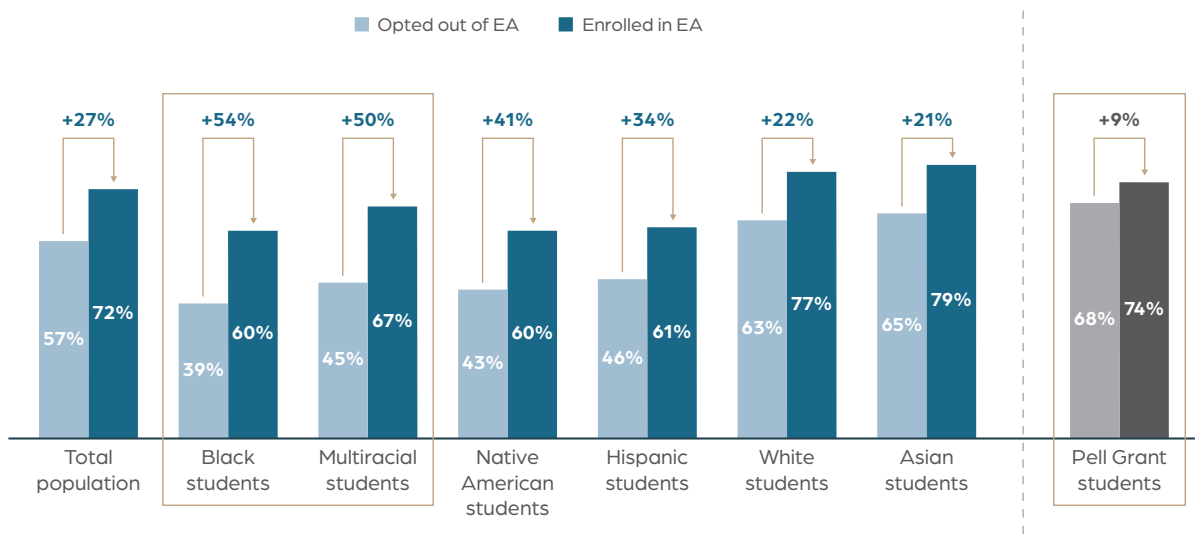
- “You’d go from a 99% adoption rate in an opt-out model to maybe 40-50% adoption rate using opt-in. What’s scarier is that 40-50% is made up of all your cash-carrying students, not your high federal aid students. These federal aid students are the most likely to leave and least likely to persist in their courses.”  
– *Provost, Private Four-Year University*
- “I would much rather hear from a student a week or so later saying I forgot to opt out than have students lose their access and not have materials from day one in an opt-in model. It’s a question of human behavior. If you move to an opt-in model, no matter how good your marketing is, many students are not going to take the step to opt in, even when it’s in their own interest.”  
– *Associate Director of Marketing Communication and Special Projects, Public Four-Year HSI*
- “I can almost say with certainty that there would be less participation in an opt-in model versus an opt-out model. I think that the number of students purchasing course materials would revert back to pre-IA participation rates if we used an opt-in model.”  
– *Course Materials Director, Public Four-Year HSI*

## DAY-ONE ACCESS UNDER OPT-OUT AFFORDABLE-ACCESS MODELS IMPROVES COURSE COMPLETION RATES, ESPECIALLY FOR RACIALLY MINORITIZED AND SOCIOECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS

Day-one access to course materials through opt-out affordable-access models has a significant impact on academic success. At Onondaga Community College and Technical College of the Lowcountry, for example, a 2022 study<sup>14</sup> found that participation in an opt-out EA model increased course completion rates (receiving a letter grade of D or above) with statistical significance. Students who remained in EA programs experienced a relative increase of 27%<sup>15</sup> in course completion rates and a relative decrease of 60% in withdrawal rates compared to those who opted out. Similarly, at Waukesha County Technical College, the implementation of an opt-out IA program led to a relative increase of 6% for students earning a letter grade of D or better.<sup>16</sup>

Day-one access especially benefits racially minoritized student groups, particularly Black and multiracial students. At Onondaga Community College and Technical College of the Lowcountry, Black and multiracial students achieved the highest academic gains from participating in their institution's opt-out EA model, with course completion rates increasing 54% and 50%, respectively. Black students at Waukesha County Technical College also demonstrated significant academic gains from opt-out affordable-access enrollment: The percentage of Black students earning a grade of C or above in their courses increased by over 21% after an IA program was introduced. Student participation in opt-out affordable-access programs at these institutions has accelerated student success.

### Course completion rate\* differences\*\* for students who enrolled vs. opted out of EA, by race and Pell Grant status



**Figure 6:** Course completion rate differences by race and Pell Grant status; Michael Moore's EA study, July 2022: \*Completion is defined as earning a grade of D or better, answer choice "Other" excluded from chart, n=23,415; \*\*All differences are statistically significant between students enrolled in EA and not enrolled in EA,  $p=0.001$ ,  $p<0.5$  (enrolled in EA vs. unenrolled in EA)

14. Moore, M. (2022, July 27). *Equitable access: A participant v. non-participant course completion rate analysis from 2-year institutions*

15. "Relative" increase was calculated after observing course completion increase from 57% to 72% for students in an EA program, showing a net increase of 15% and a relative increase of 27%

16. Moore, M., & Piazza, B. (2022, March 23). *Inclusive access course materials: An analysis of Waukesha County Technical College's inclusive access program*

*Supporting commentary from institutional administration:*

- “Inclusive access is critical for students from underprivileged groups for the simple reason that if they have access to a textbook right before they start a course, and it’s affordable, their chance for success is much higher.”  
– Dean, Public Four-Year University

## SECTION 4: PERCEPTIONS AMONG INSTITUTIONAL STAKEHOLDERS

***“I believe in opt-out inclusive access because it’s a win-win. Students save on course materials . . . and institutions get rid of a solvable attrition concern and have confidence that these students start their course with the right resources.”***

– Provost, Private Four-Year University

### **USERS OF OPT-OUT AFFORDABLE-ACCESS PROGRAMS, REGARDLESS OF INSTITUTIONAL ROLE, ARE HIGHLY SATISFIED WITH COST SAVINGS AND EASE OF USE**

All levels of stakeholders at institutions—students, faculty, and administrators—recognize that opt-out affordable-access models provide students with day-one access to cheaper course materials, reducing upfront, out-of-pocket costs. As a result, most participants in affordable-access models are highly satisfied and do not wish to switch to an opt-in or traditional model.

### **STUDENTS PREFER TO ACQUIRE COURSE MATERIALS THROUGH AFFORDABLE-ACCESS MODELS**

Students prefer affordable-access models more than traditional-access models. According to a Tyton Partners survey, 61% of students favor affordable-access models, more than buying (13%), renting (11%), or borrowing (10%) course materials.<sup>17</sup> Students enrolled in IA models report high satisfaction, with 84% of students enrolled in IA programs feeling satisfied or neutral about their user experience.<sup>18</sup> Students who are satisfied with their IA user experience most frequently cite the convenience of not shopping for materials (80%), day-one access (78%), and knowing that all the course materials are correct (71%) as key benefits.

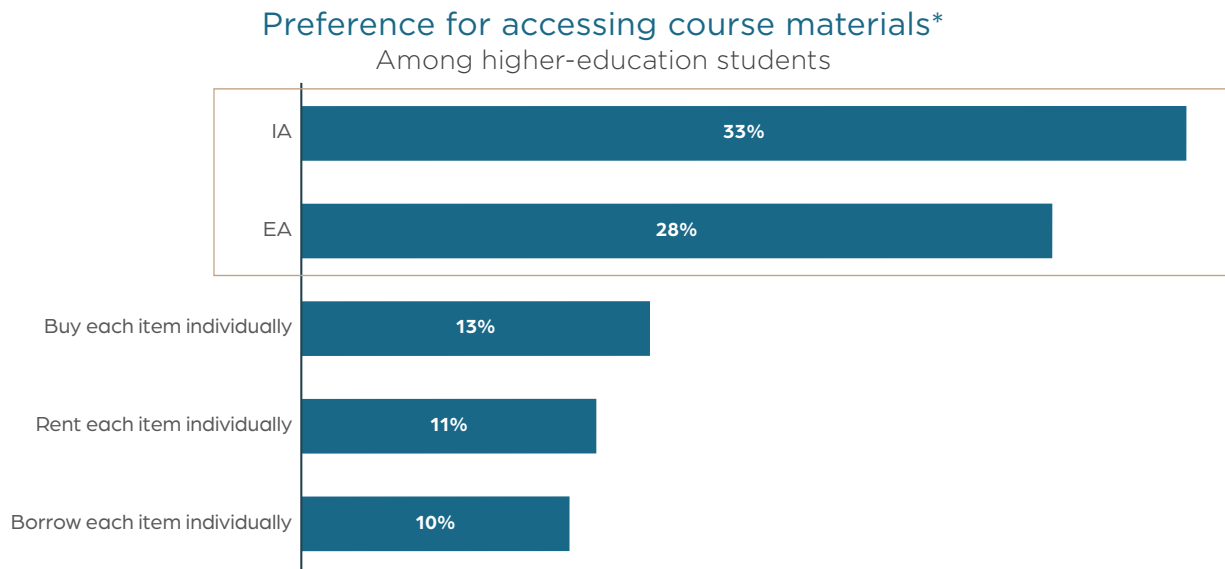
Additional data from a Barnes & Noble College survey reveals the positive academic benefits students experience from day-one access: 84% of students report feeling better prepared for their courses when enrolled in affordable-access programs, and 81% indicate that these programs positively impacted their academic success.<sup>19</sup> Student preference for affordable-access models stems from these programs’ ability to supply students with improved day-one access to course materials compared to traditional-access models, leading to stronger academic outcomes.

17. Tyton Partners. (2024). *Time for Class*

18. OnCampus Research. (2025). *Student Watch: Attitudes and behaviors toward course materials, 2024*. National Association of College Stores

19. Barnes & Noble College Insights. (2024). *First Day® Complete student success survey*. Barnes & Noble College

Even with most students supporting affordable-access models, many institutions can likely do more to ensure that students fully understand the benefits of participation and can seamlessly opt out, if desired. Institutions adopting affordable-access models must thoroughly market the historical or anticipated cost savings, the process for opting out, and the implications of participation in the program (or lack thereof).



**Figure 7:** Top reasons for using affordable access among higher-education administrators; Tyton Partners Time for Class Survey, 2024; \*Survey question: “What best describes how you would most prefer to acquire digital course materials? Select only one.”, n=798, answer choices “Other,” “Don’t know,” and “None of the above” excluded from chart

*Supporting commentary from institutional administration:*

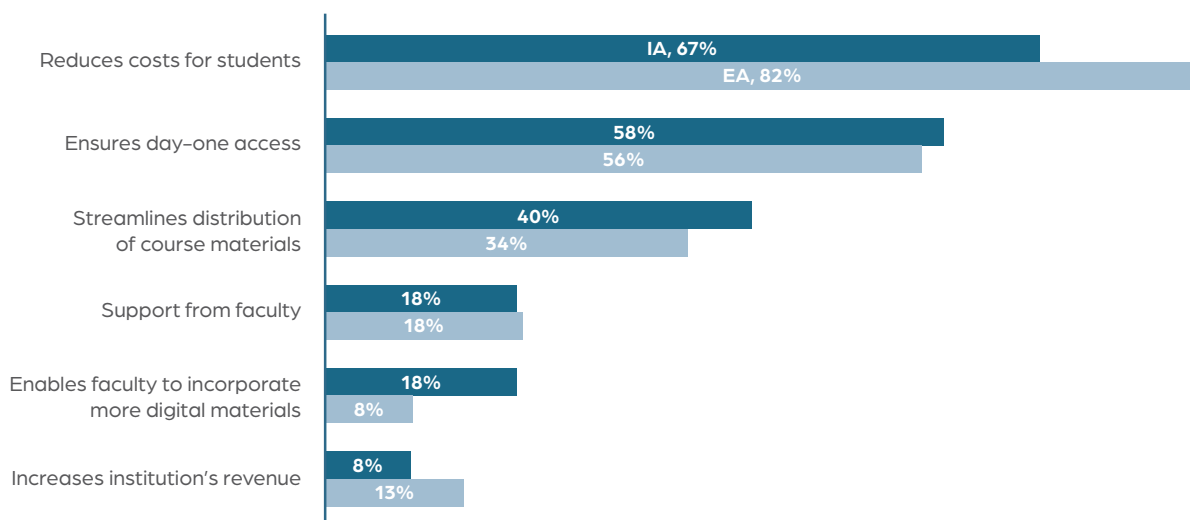
- “Students will email me asking, ‘Can you tell me how I can get into an [affordable] access class?’ . . . Both our faculty and students love it. . . . We see in our survey that our students show continued interest in the program and continue to participate because they receive course materials up to two weeks early and save money on course materials.”  
– Associate Vice President of Academic Operations, Public Four-Year University

## ADMINISTRATORS AND FACULTY PREFER AFFORDABLE-ACCESS MODELS BECAUSE OF THE COST SAVINGS PASSED ON TO STUDENTS

Most higher-education administrators and faculty strongly agree on the benefits of using affordable-access models. In a Tyton Partners survey of institutions primarily using opt-out models, administrators cited the top reasons for adopting affordable-access models as reducing course materials costs for students (67% for IA/82% for EA) and ensuring day-one access (58% for IA/56% for EA). Most administrators reported that affordable-access models ensure day-one access to students, compared to only 26% across all model types.

## Top reasons for using affordable-access models\*

Among higher-education administrators



**Figure 8:** Top reasons for using affordable access among higher-education administrators; Tyton Partners Time for Class Survey, 2024; \*Survey question: “What are the primary reasons your institution uses inclusive/equitable access? Select the top three.”, n=91, answer choices with <10% excluded from chart; \*\*Differences are statistically significant between respondents,  $z=-5.7$ ,  $p<0.00001$  (IA vs. all models),  $z=-4.6$ ,  $p<0.00001$  (EA vs. all models)

Faculty demonstrate similarly strong support for affordable-access models. In the same survey, 75% of faculty indicated wanting their institution to maintain or increase affordable-access model usage.<sup>20</sup> This desire for continued usage is driven by a recognition of the benefits of these models. More than half of faculty reported feeling optimistic about IA’s affordability (53%) and day-one access benefits (57%) for students.

*Supporting commentary from institutional administration:*

- “The faculty bought into this concept of an [opt-out] IA model because they believe that most of our students will benefit from textbooks that are reasonably priced.”  
– Dean, Public Four-Year University

## OPT-IN AFFORDABLE-ACCESS MODELS INCREASE ADMINISTRATIVE WORKLOAD COMPARED TO OPT-OUT MODELS

All administrators interviewed at institutions using an opt-out affordable-access model expressed concerns about transitioning to an opt-in model due to the potential administrative complexities, among other concerns. Administrators view opt-in as “massively more complicated”<sup>21</sup> to manage than opt-out because it requires the institution to provide material access individually to every student who opts in rather than only removing access for the few who typically opt out. For example, in a class of 200 students, an opt-out model might require participation status changes for eight or fewer students, processed all at once at the add/drop deadline. An opt-in model for the same class could involve dozens and dozens of access changes at different points in time, a significant burden when multiplied across all opt-in courses at an institution that would require additional administrative resources to process.

20. Faculty were asked their preference for maintaining or increasing usage of affordable-access models in the next three academic years

21. Quote from a provost at a private four-year university

## OPT-OUT MODELS STREAMLINE THE PROCESS OF APPLYING FINANCIAL AID TO STUDENT ACCOUNTS, REDUCING OUT-OF-POCKET EXPENSES

Opt-out affordable-access models are easier for administrators to integrate with financial aid benefits than opt-in models. Thirty-one percent of students rely on financial aid to pay for course materials, with students from racially minoritized backgrounds and first-generation students being the most likely to depend on this aid.<sup>22</sup> Under an opt-out model, course materials costs are added directly to student accounts, enabling institutions to seamlessly apply financial aid to these costs. This key efficiency ensures that socioeconomically disadvantaged students have access to course materials without having to pay out-of-pocket.

In contrast, the opt-in model's manual enrollment process complicates how institutions are able to apply financial aid. Administrators must manually verify each student's participation in the program after they choose to enroll. These additional steps can lead to delays or missed opportunities in students receiving their course materials, especially for those reliant on financial aid. Since no technology currently automates the opt-in process, most institutions would need to expand their academic affairs, faculty affairs, and information technology teams to handle the increased workload under opt-in models. A few institutions that spoke with Tyton Partners said that they would likely stop using affordable access entirely if they were asked to switch to an opt-in model.

*Supporting commentary from institutional administration:*

- “The reality is, if we switch to opt-in, I think the administration of that program is massively more complicated. . . . The number of students that are likely to actively opt out of participating in the program is minimal [compared to the number of students who will choose to opt in].”  
– *Provost, Private Four-Year University*
- “If we were to go down the opt-in route, we would have to reimagine our entire program. . . . Right now, we are sitting on nearly 18,000 enrollments as of last week. How would you manage those 18,000 enrollments of students waiting to opt in? When would we charge them?”  
– *Associate Vice President of Academic Operations, Public Four-Year University*
- “Before IA, students could shop the best prices at bookstores.com, but they had to have the money to buy those books because their financial aid wouldn't be dispersed for a couple of weeks after the term started.”  
– *Associate Vice President of Academic Operations, Public Four-Year University*

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## CONCLUSION

Thanks to innovative, affordable-access programs, the cost of course materials is a relative success in the context of college affordability, where tuition and other expenses have risen sharply for years. Course materials are in fact more affordable than they were a decade ago. These programs also ensure that students will have access to course materials by their first day of class, a factor that is statistically impactful to their academic success.

Affordable-access programs are a partnership among higher-education institutions, publishers, and provisioning providers, who have worked together since 2016 to develop a variety of models that best serve students. They depend on critical regulatory support from the federal government, especially a 2015 ED regulation that permits the application of financial aid dollars to affordable-access course materials, for both opt-in and opt-out models, the latter of which are widely preferred by faculty and students.

Opt-out affordable-access models are one of the best tools institutions provide to students to ensure that they feel equipped to excel. Opt-out models save students money and garner higher student participation than opt-in models do (96% vs. 36%, respectively), ensuring that more students have the correct course materials by day one. This timely access has a statistically significant impact on course completion and pass rates. Students also prefer to participate in opt-out models because they pay less than they would if purchasing materials independently, and effortlessly receive the right materials needed to be academically successful.

As administrators continue striving to improve student outcomes and course materials affordability, they will seek to maintain the profound positive impact their opt-out affordable-access programs have had on their student populations.

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# APPENDIX A: IMPLEMENTATION LESSONS FROM AFFORDABLE-ACCESS INSTITUTIONS

To assess how affordable-access models have been implemented at institutions and their resulting impact on students, Tyton Partners interviewed administrators at the 11 institutions listed below. Commentary from these interviews is interspersed throughout the report.

<b>INSTITUTION</b>	<b>AFFORDABLE-ACCESS MODEL</b>
<b>Colorado State University – Fort Collins</b>	Opt-out IA
<b>Crowder College</b>	Hybrid traditional and IA model with bundled courseware components
<b>Dallas College</b>	Opt-out EA
<b>Florida State College at Jacksonville</b>	Opt-out IA
<b>North Carolina A&amp;T State University</b>	Opt-out EA
<b>North Carolina State University</b>	Opt-in IA
<b>Rocky Mountain College of Art and Design</b>	Opt-out IA
<b>San Diego State University</b>	Opt-out EA
<b>Tusculum University</b>	Opt-out IA
<b>University of Central Florida</b>	Opt-in IA
<b>William Paterson University</b>	Opt-out IA





## KEY FINDINGS ACROSS INSTITUTIONS

In this section, we profile Dallas College, Florida State College at Jacksonville, North Carolina A&T State University, and North Carolina State University. These institutions represent a diverse range of institution types, including two-year and four-year universities, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), and Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) using opt-in and opt-out affordable-access models. The case studies below highlight the holistic impact that affordable-access models have had on faculty and students, especially those from socioeconomically disadvantaged or racially minoritized backgrounds. The goal of these case studies is to add depth and context to the aggregate data shared throughout the report.

## ADMINISTRATORS EMPHASIZE THAT OPT-OUT MODELS DRIVE STUDENT SUCCESS

Higher-education decision-makers have chosen to adopt opt-out affordable-access models over opt-in models after determining that opt-out models are easier to manage and more likely to enhance student academic success. In interviews with administrators at these institutions, Tyton Partners captured the following:

- Procurement of course materials increased by 51%, on average, after institutions transitioned from a traditional model to an opt-out affordable-access model.
- Students saved approximately \$650 per year, on average, on course materials under opt-out models.
- Day-one access to course materials increased, yielding a diverse array of positive student outcomes: lower course-withdrawal rates, increased course-completion rates, and increased student preparedness.

	DALLAS COLLEGE 	FSCJ Florida State College at Jacksonville 	NC A&T 	NC STATE 
<b>Total undergraduate enrollment</b> <sup>23</sup>	64K students	20K students	12K students	26K students
<b>Affordable-access model type</b>	Opt-out EA	Opt-out IA	Opt-out EA	Opt-in IA
<b>Year program was implemented</b>	2019	2021	2021	2017 <sup>24</sup>
<b>Top reason for implementation</b>	Increase day-one access to course materials for its large population of Hispanic students	Increase cost savings and textbook affordability for students reliant on financial aid	Increase course preparedness for all students, especially students with disabilities	Increase day-one access to correct course materials for all students
<b>Participation rate prior to affordable-access model</b>	Data not available	25-30%	60-70%	30-40%
<b>Participation rate post-affordable-access model</b>	96%	97%	98%	29% <sup>25</sup>
<b>Average cost savings per student per year</b>	\$835	\$81	\$604 <sup>26</sup>	\$165
<b>Average cost savings across the institution per year</b>	\$46 million	\$2 million	\$7 million	\$1 million

23. Enrollment represents total undergraduate enrollment based on the latest available IPEDS data from fall 2022

24. NC State announced that it will be moving to an opt-out model in spring 2025

25. NC State has projected that the participation rate will double under its new opt-out model, from approximately 30% to 60%

26. Estimate is based on annual cost savings totaling \$7 million across the institution and 11,600 students enrolled in First Day Complete, and an average course load of eight courses per year

## CASE STUDY 1: DALLAS COLLEGE

*Interview conducted with Dr. Greg Morris, Senior Vice Provost of Academic Services*

**Institution overview:** Dallas College, a Hispanic-Serving Institution, is a network of seven community colleges located in Dallas County, Texas. It offers a range of associate's degrees, certificates, and other continuing education programs to its 60,000 students.

INSTITUTION TYPE	STATE	ENROLLMENT <sup>27</sup>	DEMOGRAPHICS <sup>28</sup>	MINORITY-SERVING INSTITUTION <sup>29</sup>
Public two-year university	Texas	64,156	% Pell-eligible: 24% % first-generation: 38%	HBCU: No (19% Black) HSI: Yes (48% Hispanic)

**Context for adoption of affordable-access model: High costs were preventing students, especially socioeconomically disadvantaged students, from purchasing course materials.**

Before EA was implemented at Dallas College, fewer than 30% of students, on average, had all their required instructional materials by the first day of class, with the “vast majority saying they couldn’t afford them.” Hispanic and first-generation students were particularly unlikely to purchase course materials due to a lack of familial “support in navigating” the purchasing process. High costs and difficulty navigating the course-materials buying landscape led to an increase in early course withdrawal rates at Dallas College.

**Impact of model adoption: Dallas College adopted an opt-out EA model, leading to dramatic cost savings and decreased withdrawal rates.**

Dallas College adopted an opt-out EA model called IncludedED in 2019, which directly enrolls students into the program. Each semester, all students in EA courses receive an email with instructions on how to opt out through the Dallas College learning management systems. If students choose to opt out, Dallas College provides video instructions to guide them through the opt-out process.

After implementing opt-out EA, students began saving over \$800 per year, on average,<sup>30</sup> allowing all participating students to have immediate access to required course materials. Dr. Morris also noted that IncludedED contributed to Dallas College reducing course withdrawals by 3% from 2019 to 2024.

*Supporting commentary:*

- “We’ve seen a 3% decrease in students withdrawing from courses in the first 12 class days because of day-one access. In the last four or five years, we’ve also seen about a 10% increase in completion rates.”  
– *Senior Vice Provost of Academic Services, Dallas College*

27. Enrollment represents total undergraduate enrollment based on the latest available IPEDS data from fall 2022

28. Percent Pell-eligible is based on the latest available IPEDS data from AY 2021-22; percent first-generation was sourced from the Dallas College website, dated fall 2022

29. Enrollment percentages by race are based on the latest available IPEDS data from fall 2022

30. Student savings were derived from calculating the difference between the average cost of course materials before EA and the cost of EA course materials

**Model adoption perceptions: Faculty and students have broadly embraced the opt-out EA program.**

After five years of using IncludED, Dallas College faculty and students are fully invested in the program. Nearly 75% of students at Dallas College agree that having access to textbooks helps them earn a better grade in a class. Dallas College’s EA program also gives faculty “complete freedom to adopt whatever course materials they want with whatever publisher they want.”

**Perspective on opt-in affordable-access models: Administrators believe a potential switch to opt-in EA would lower participation rates.**

Dallas College is committed to maintaining its affordable-access program for students. Administrators have considered the need to switch to opt-in and expressed concerns about the potential for student participation rates to drop. If there was a need to switch away from its opt-out model, Dallas College would be prepared to adopt the necessary procedures to remain in compliance while, at the same time, ensuring that students are robustly informed about the cost savings of programs like IncludED as part of their education experience.

## CASE STUDY 2: FLORIDA STATE COLLEGE AT JACKSONVILLE

*Interview conducted with Dr. Richard Turner, Associate Vice President of Academic Operations*

**Institution overview:** Florida State College at Jacksonville (FSCJ) is a public four-year college offering bachelor’s and associate degrees to over 20,000 students. It is the sixth-largest college out of 28 colleges in the Florida College System.

INSTITUTION TYPE	STATE	ENROLLMENT <sup>31</sup>	DEMOGRAPHICS <sup>32</sup>	MINORITY-SERVING INSTITUTION <sup>33</sup>
Public four-year university	Florida	20,363	% Pell-eligible: 34% % first-generation: 30%	HBCU: No (26% Black) HSI: No (9% Hispanic)

**Context for adoption of affordable-access model: FSCJ wanted to improve day-one access for all students.**

Prior to adopting an affordable-access model in 2021, many students at FSCJ did not purchase course materials by the first day of class. Instead, students would “get three weeks through a class without their books. . . . This was sometimes in a seven-week course, and they would fail the course.” After learning about the positive academic impact that affordable access had at the University of California, Davis, administrators believed that such a model would “ensure that students had access to the correct textbooks on day one.”

31. Enrollment represents total undergraduate enrollment based on the latest available IPEDS data from fall 2022

32. Percent Pell-eligible is based on the latest available IPEDS data from AY 2021-22; percent first-generation was sourced from FSCJ administrators for AY 2023-24

33. Enrollment percentages by race are based on the latest available IPEDS data from fall 2022

**Impact of model adoption: FSCJ transitioned from a traditional model to an opt-out IA program, leading to improved day-one access and class preparedness.**

ACCESS uses proactive enrollment, which has increased student participation rates and led to a majority of students accessing course materials before the first day of class (57%). As a result of early access to course materials, 66% of faculty report that students in the program are better prepared for class.

Students directly enrolled in the ACCESS program can opt out during the institution's add/drop period. During this time, students are reminded of their ACCESS status and given instructions on how to opt out. These reminders and instructions are provided during class, through notes posted on their learning management system, and by email.

**Model adoption perceptions: Faculty and students want to continue to participate in ACCESS.**

Day-one access has led to high satisfaction among students and faculty. Eighty-two percent of students prefer the direct billing provided by ACCESS, and over 90% of faculty and students want to continue using ACCESS.<sup>34</sup>

**Perspective on opt-in affordable-access models: FSCJ believes that a switch to opt-in would reduce participation rates and academic success.**

FSCJ administrators initially considered adopting an opt-in model but ultimately chose opt-out, believing an opt-in model would be more difficult to manage and result in lower student participation. FSCJ administrators believe that under an opt-in model, students would forget to opt in, resulting in a “significant impact on student success” and lowering participation rates from 98% to an estimated 80%.

*Supporting commentary:*

- “Under opt-in, students will lose access to materials after the window has already gone for them to change their status. Transitioning to an opt-in model will cause a whole lot of things to change for students, and it will have a significant impact on student success.”  
– Associate Vice President of Academic Operations, Florida State College at Jacksonville

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34. Data sourced from a fall 2022 survey of students in which 82% of students selected that their preference was “Having the cost of my course materials/books built into the cost of class.” The remaining students indicated they “do not like having the cost of course materials/books built into the class” (8%) or had “no preference” (10%)

## CASE STUDY 3: NORTH CAROLINA A&T STATE UNIVERSITY

*Interview conducted with Dr. Nakeshia Williams, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, and Angela Peterson, Associate Vice Chancellor for Campus Enterprises*

**Institution overview:** North Carolina A&T State University (NC A&T) is a public HBCU in Greensboro, North Carolina, that primarily awards bachelor's degrees to nearly 12,000 students. It is one of 16 public universities in the public university system for North Carolina.

INSTITUTION TYPE	STATE	ENROLLMENT <sup>35</sup>	DEMOGRAPHICS <sup>36</sup>	MINORITY-SERVING INSTITUTION <sup>37</sup>
Public four-year university	North Carolina	11,833	% Pell-eligible: 52% % first-generation: 22%	HBCU: Yes (81% Black) HSI: No (4% Hispanic)

### **Context for adoption of affordable-access model: Students were arriving to class without the correct course materials.**

Under a traditional model at NC A&T, 30-40% of students did not buy materials from the campus bookstore, which led to students “not having the correct materials for their courses and not being prepared for their courses.”

### **Impact of model adoption: NC A&T adopted an opt-out EA model, improving access to correct course materials and course readiness for all students.**

NC A&T adopted an opt-out EA model called First Day Complete in 2021. All students at the institution are enrolled in the program during course registration, and all students are notified by email on how to opt out.

Under this opt-out EA program, over 98% of students receive day-one access to course materials. Day-one access “increases student engagement with the course as well as with the instructors and also, by default, success in the course” for all students. NC A&T administrators observed that students with disabilities especially benefited from the opt-out EA program: “It gives students with disabilities more time to prepare for class . . . and helps them to connect with our support services on campus earlier.”

### **Model adoption perceptions: Faculty and students believe in the cost-saving benefits of the EA model.**

Faculty and students support the Aggie Textbook Access Program because the program increases affordability while reducing the barriers to student success. Students appreciate and “understand the huge savings” associated with the Aggie Textbook Access Program. Faculty believe that the opt-out EA is a “huge benefit to students in terms of reducing barriers to their success and affordability.” As a result, faculty see the program as a “lift for our community.”

35. Enrollment represents total undergraduate enrollment based on the latest available IPEDS data from fall 2022

36. Percent Pell-eligible is based on the latest available IPEDS data from AY 2021-22; percent first-generation was sourced from NC A&T administrators from AY 2023-24

37. Enrollment percentages by race are based on latest available IPEDS data from fall 2022



**Perspective on opt-in affordable-access models: Significant marketing would be required for NC A&T to maintain its high participation rates under an opt-in model.**

Administrators at NC A&T believe that significantly more marketing would be necessary to maintain high participation rates under an opt-in model. While they are aware of the opt-in model used by NC State, they are skeptical that it would be as effective at their institution. NC A&T believes that its student population, which is more likely to come from socioeconomically disadvantaged households, benefits more from an opt-out program.

*Supporting commentary:*

- “[If we were to switch to opt-in], we would have to intensify marketing. We would have to do more storytelling, meaning getting the word out to our students and parents to take advantage of the program.”  
– Associate Vice Chancellor for Campus Enterprises, North Carolina A&T State University

## CASE STUDY 4: NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY

*Interview conducted with Anthony Sanders, Associate Director of the NC State Bookstores*

**Institution Overview:** North Carolina State University (NC State) is a public research university in Raleigh, North Carolina, offering a range of awards to nearly 37,000 students. It is one of 16 public universities in the public university system for North Carolina.

INSTITUTION TYPE	STATE	ENROLLMENT <sup>38</sup>	DEMOGRAPHICS <sup>39</sup>	MINORITY-SERVING INSTITUTION <sup>40</sup>
Public four-year university	North Carolina	36,700	% Pell-eligible: 19% % first-generation: 16%	HBCU: No (6% Black) HSI: No (7% Hispanic)

**Context for adoption of affordable-access model: Student participation rates in NC State sales channels were declining.**

NC State noticed a decline in course materials sell-through rates starting in the early 2010s. As many as 75-80% of students were purchasing course materials through NC State’s campus bookstore in 2011. By 2016, this figure had dropped to 30-40%. This was attributed to the increasing popularity of platforms like Chegg and Amazon for sourcing course materials. The drop in sell-through corresponded with a decrease in students purchasing the correct course materials and a negative impact on student outcomes.

38. Enrollment represents total undergraduate enrollment based on the latest available IPEDS data from fall 2022

39. Percent Pell-eligible is based on the latest available IPEDS data from AY 2021-22; percent first-generation was sourced from NC State administrators from spring 2024

40. Enrollment percentages by race are based on the latest available IPEDS data from fall 2022

*Supporting commentary:*

- “Students think they can find the right materials elsewhere or they can share them. But if you leave it in students’ hands, they aren’t savvy enough to know how to purchase the right materials, and they are not going to have the necessary learning outcomes.”  
– Associate Director of the NC State Bookstores, North Carolina State University

**Impact of model adoption: NC State adopted an opt-in IA model, which did not improve student participation rates despite robust marketing.**

In 2017, NC State adopted an opt-in IA model called All-In with the hope that an affordable-access program would improve day-one access to the correct course materials. NC State adopted an opt-in model because state legislation at the time had broad limitations on what could be charged as a “mandatory fee,” which swept in certain non-mandatory options.

While there were some improved savings for participating students, the overall participation rate remained below expectations at 29%, even with robust marketing efforts. As an illustrative example of the continued challenges in driving participation, the participation rates for one of NC State’s most popular courses and an early affordable-access participant, Intro to Business Processes, was only 21% during AY 2022-23.

*Supporting commentary:*

- “Why would we expect students to behave differently when they’ve always been given what they need to achieve success in high school? . . . In college, we provide students with housing and a meal plan. Why don’t we do anything to help them out with purchasing course materials?”  
– Associate Director of the NC State Bookstores, North Carolina State University
- “Students do not read email, and they do not look at marketing. We send push notifications, emails, and have faculty speak with students. It doesn’t reach them.”  
– Associate Director of the NC State Bookstores, North Carolina State University

**Model adoption perceptions: Students and faculty are frustrated with opt-in.**

Despite robust marketing efforts—including multiple emails, marketing campaigns, and instructor reminders—students regularly choose not to opt in to All-In and then become frustrated when they lose access to materials at the end of the opt-in deadline. When students don’t opt in, challenges arise for students and faculty because students are not able to complete assignments. Often, students pay higher course materials prices in opt-in because they make the decision to purchase course materials after the add-drop deadline, when discounted prices are no longer offered. Due to growing frustration with the opt-in model, the student government at NC State has publicly voiced its support for a transition to an opt-out affordable-access model.

**Perspective on opt-out affordable-access models: Due to low participation rates through its opt-in model, NC State is moving to an opt-out model in the spring of 2025.**

In the spring of 2024, NC State gained approval from the state legislature to change its affordable-access model to an opt-out model. NC State projects that this switch to an opt-out model will double total student savings from \$1.1 million during AY 2023-24 to \$2.2 million during AY 2024-25, with total savings expected to increase further in subsequent academic years. In addition, NC State believes that an opt-out model will “stabilize program participation rates from 29% to an estimated 60%, which is a conservative estimate.”

## APPENDIX B: ABOUT TYTON PARTNERS

Tyton Partners is the leading provider of investment banking and strategy consulting services to the global education sector. With offices in New York City and Boston, the firm has an experienced team of bankers and consultants who deliver a unique spectrum of services from mergers and acquisitions and capital markets access to strategy development that helps companies, organizations, and investors navigate the complexities of the education, media, and information markets. Tyton Partners leverages a deep foundation of operational and advisory experience and an unparalleled level of global relationships to make its clients' aspirations a reality and to catalyze innovation in the sector. Learn more at [tytonpartners.com](https://tytonpartners.com).

## APPENDIX C: METHODOLOGY

This report offers highlights of the firm's research, derived from a rigorous analysis of course materials pricing data and student, instructor, and administrator perceptions of affordable-access models in higher education. Tyton Partners leveraged the following resources to assess the impact of affordable-access programs at higher-education institutions:

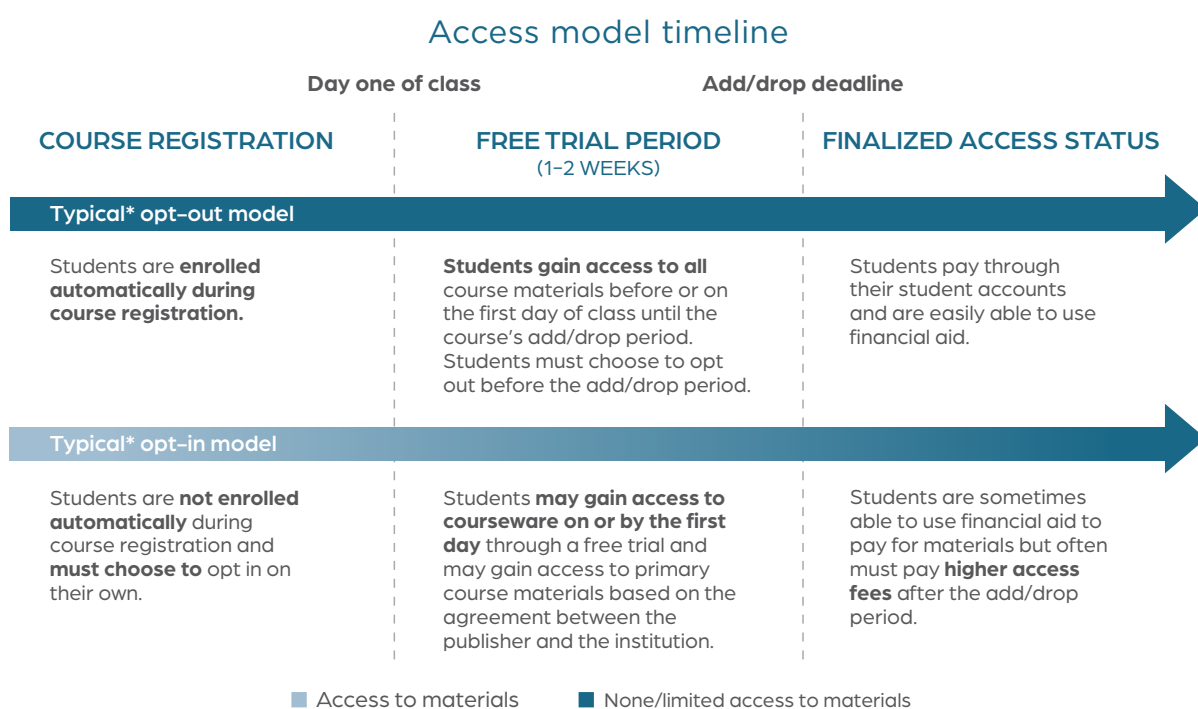
- **Time for Class (2024):** A Tyton Partners annual survey that gathers quantitative perception and day-one access data from over 1,500 students, 1,800 instructors, and 300 administrators.
- **Higher-education decision-maker interviews (2024):** Tyton Partners conducted qualitative interviews with 11 higher-education institutions to assess the impact of affordable-access models. Institutions selected for interviews were chosen to provide a variety of perspectives across institution types, enrollment sizes, and locations.
- **Course materials distributor data (2020-24):** Barnes & Noble College, Follett, RedShelf, and VitalSource provided access to anonymized course materials pricing data from more than 540,000 courses at 1,088 institutions. This data included both the digital list price and IA price per course, with revenue collected typically distributed among higher-education institution bookstores, publishers, and provisioning providers. Digital list price represents the average price IA program participants would have paid if not enrolled in the program; IA price reflects the average price paid by IA program participants. Tyton Partners completed the analysis of this data to ensure data integrity, statistical significance of results, and institution and publisher anonymity.
- **Student and Faculty Watch Reports (2023, 2024):** An NACS annual survey of over 1,000 faculty and 16,000 students capturing perceptions of cost and affordability of course materials as well as the adoption of access models.
- **Research studies (2022):** Academic research conducted by Michael Moore at three colleges examining the academic impact of affordable-access models on over 30,000 students:
  - **Onondaga Community College and the Technical College of the Lowcountry:** This study measured the effect of EA status on course completion and withdrawal rates for two populations of students between 2020 and 2021: those who opted out of EA and those who stayed enrolled in EA in courses at Onondaga Community College (OCC) and Technical College of the Lowcountry (TCL). Both populations were demographically similar to the total student populations at OCC and TCL in terms of gender, race, age, and Pell Grant status, thus reducing the risk of confounding factors in this research study.
  - **Waukesha County Technical College:** This study measured the effect of IA status on course completion and withdrawal rates for two populations of students between 2015 and 2019: those enrolled in courses before IA was used and after IA was used at Waukesha County Technical College (WCTC). Both populations were demographically similar to the total student population at WCTC in terms of gender, race, and age, thus reducing the risk of confounding factors in this research study.

This report and all findings within it are the sole product of Tyton Partners. We undertook this research at the request of the Association of American Publishers, a nonprofit trade association in Washington, DC.

## APPENDIX D: ADDITIONAL DEFINITIONS AND CONTEXT

**Course materials:** Educational resources essential for higher-education courses, including print and digital textbooks, courseware, lab kits, and other materials. Increasingly, course materials include interactive and adaptive digital content.

**Day-one access:** Student ability to open and/or download course materials, either through their learning management system or equivalent institutional platform, by the first day of class. In instances where the course materials are print textbooks, these materials are delivered to students by the first day of class. The typical timeline for day-one access for opt-out and opt-in models is illustrated below:



*Figure D1: Access model timelines for typical opt-out and opt-in models; Tyton Partners interviews and analysis; \*Some institutions may have exceptions based on their unique circumstance and contracts with distributors*

**Digital list price:** The cost to purchase course materials online outside of an affordable-access model.

**Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU):** An institution of higher learning that was established before the Civil Rights Act of 1964 with the mission of educating Black Americans. Tyton Partners leveraged designations from IPEDS to categorize institutions as HBCUs.

**Hispanic-Servicing Institution (HSI):** An institution of higher learning where at least 25% of the total undergraduate full-time equivalent (FTE) student enrollment identifies as Hispanic or Latino. Tyton Partners leveraged designation from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center to categorize institutions as HSIs.

**Provisioning provider:** An entity responsible for the dissemination and delivery of course materials. Provisioning providers help institutions manage access to textbooks and courseware, especially in the case of digital course materials, by providing the technical infrastructure required to track student access and usage.

**Publisher:** An entity responsible for the development and production of educational course materials. Publishers oversee the editorial process, including content creation, review, and design. Additionally, they negotiate with authors, printers, and retailers to manage costs and ensure affordability.

**Racially minoritized:** Students from racial and ethnic groups that have been underrepresented in US higher-education enrollment, including students from Black, Hispanic and Latino, Native American and Pacific Islander, and Asian American backgrounds.

**Socioeconomically disadvantaged:** Individuals or groups that may have less access to financial, educational, social, and health resources. This may lead to these individuals or groups living in less favorable social and economic circumstances than others.