

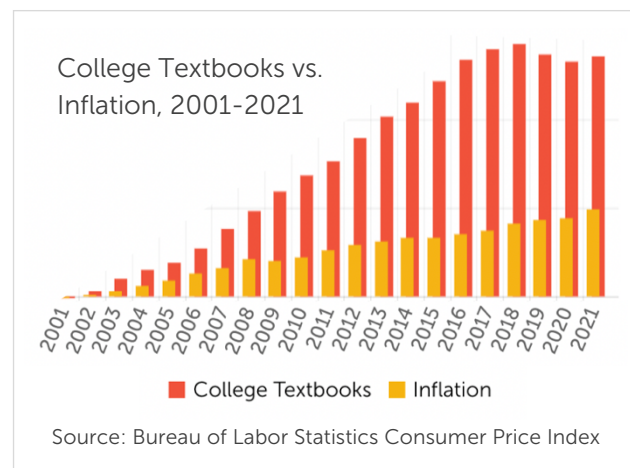
Inclusive Access.org

What is the challenge with high textbook prices?

The cost of college textbooks has skyrocketed over the past 30 years, making it harder to afford a college degree. Two thirds of students say they skip buying some of their textbooks, even though the vast majority of those students believe it could hurt their grades. Campuses across the country are seeking solutions to this problem.

What is Inclusive Access?

Inclusive Access is a textbook sales model that adds the cost of digital course content into students' tuition and fees. Also known as automatic textbook billing, this model goes by a variety of local names including First Day, ACCESS, and Auto Access. While Inclusive Access addresses some of the challenges with high textbook costs, it also creates new challenges for students, faculty, and institutional budgets.



How does the Inclusive Access sales model work?

Inclusive Access typically involves an automatic textbook billing agreement between an institution, its bookstore, and a publisher. Digital course content is delivered to students by the first day of their course, often through a learning management system. Students have a period to "opt out" before they are automatically billed for the content as part of their tuition and fees. Students typically lose access to the content at the end of the course.

What are some of the challenges Inclusive Access creates?

- Discounts can be small and prices can still be unaffordable to some students.
- It is more difficult for students to shop around for cost-saving alternatives.
- Opting out isn't always an option when students lose access to essential materials.
- Most contracts allow prices to rise, and the industry has a history of skyrocketing prices.
- Students are not able to "own" content – only rent it for a short period of time.
- Increasing control at the administrative level can limit academic freedom.
- Shifting costs to tuition and fees creates the potential for runaway costs.

What questions should policymakers ask about Inclusive Access?

1. What methodology is used to calculate student savings for Inclusive Access, and does it consider the price of used books?
2. Are students asked for consent before being charged for Inclusive Access, or are they automatically charged?
3. If a student opts out of Inclusive Access, will they still be able to complete their required coursework?
4. Are students informed about the amount of the Inclusive Access charge at the time they register for courses?
5. Are students informed about the terms of service of digital textbooks at the time they register for courses?
6. What assurances are there from vendors that textbook prices will not skyrocket all over again?
7. What long-term strategy is in place to ensure that Inclusive Access does not become a runaway fee or line item?
8. Are vendors demanding any quotas for the number of students billed that can create negative incentives?
9. What support is in place for students who still cannot afford Inclusive Access materials?
10. Has Inclusive Access been formally consulted with the student government and faculty senate?

What can policymakers do next?

If Inclusive Access is starting to impact students in your state, it is important to ensure these programs are transparent, accountable, and designed to meet student needs. Some states have enacted laws around automatic textbook billing programs, including measures that require institutions to be transparent about Inclusive Access fees or make these programs opt-in. Email policy@inclusiveaccess.org for model legislation and resources.

Who is behind InclusiveAccess.org?

InclusiveAccess.org is a community-driven initiative to raise awareness of the facts about automatic textbook billing. Partners include a range of non-profit organizations and consortia representing students, faculty, higher education institutions, and libraries. Visit our website for more information.

Get the facts.

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