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A Decade of Inclusive Access at COPIAH-LINCOLN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Case Study

About Copiah-Lincoln Community College

Copiah-Lincoln Community College (Co-Lin) is an open admissions institution located in rural, Southwest Mississippi. The college was established in 1928 as an out-growth of the agricultural high school. On its three campuses, the college offers academic transfer programs leading to the Associate in Arts Degree, Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs leading to the Associate in Applied Science Degree, and certificate programs. Co-Lin has an annual enrollment of approximately 2,900 students: 41% African-American, 54% Caucasian and 64% female. Ninety-two percent of students receive some type of financial aid in the form of grants, scholarships, and student loans. The main campus in Wesson provides residence halls for 600 students with a substantial waiting list each semester. More than 100 students receive veterans' services.

Key Findings

- Launched Inclusive Access in 2012 in 14 courses
- Expanded to 144 courses across nearly every division
- Students save on average $1400 each per year; a combined $4 million annually
- Retention rates have improved 21 percentage points since inception
- Graduation rates have improved 14 percentage points since inception
- Students now *expect* to have digital resources and first-day access

Challenges and Goals

According to Dr. Stephanie Duguid, Dean of Academic Instruction, Co-Lin's original motivation for implementing the Inclusive Access model was to increase access to course material – at lower costs – and improve success rates for students in developmental courses. Nearly 1,000 students participate in developmental courses annually, and many of them did not acquire the course materials in a timely manner. Instructors reported that few students obtained required course materials by the first day of class, and only 30% had purchased the materials by the end of the first week of the semester. With Inclusive Access, students would automatically receive access to digital course materials by the first day of class at a significantly lower price.

Getting Started

In the Fall 2012 semester, Co-Lin began implementing Inclusive Access in eight developmental and college-level mathematics courses, as well as in developmental reading and writing courses. All students received instant access to course materials by the first day of the semester. Co-Lin partnered with VitalSource to deliver the eBooks and courseware, such as McGraw Hill Connect®, to students via the school's Learning Management System, Canvas. The college labeled the digital material eResources to ensure common language around the program.

As a three-campus school, administrators were careful to ensure that all courses across the three locations receive the same resources. As Inclusive Access was implemented, together with increased use of courseware, administrators took steps to make certain that each division transitioned to the new materials and modes of delivery together.

Early Results

Faculty immediately recognized the benefits of students having the required course materials on the first day of class, allowing them to engage students and assign homework right away, and enabling them to teach additional content or spend more time on challenging objectives. Early outcomes for the 2012 to 2015 cohorts were encouraging:

- Retention rate increased 10 percentage points, from 48% to 58%
- Graduation rate improved eight percentage points, from 36% to 44%
- Developmental Math success rates (grade of A, B or C) were up 17 percentage points

"While we can't claim a causal connection between Inclusive Access and these gains, which we attribute to our dedicated faculty and hard-working students, we believe Inclusive Access contributed," says Dr. Duguid.

Expanding Inclusive Access

As word of the initiative's success spread, additional divisions, including science and the Career and Technical Education (CTE) program, adopted the model. Although Co-Lin began Inclusive Access with only 14 courses, it grew to include 72 courses by 2017, or 59% of the 124 courses offered at the college. As of Spring 2022 – ten years into Inclusive Access – 109 of 149 (73%) Academic courses and 35 CTE courses, spanning 25% of programs, are delivered in Inclusive Access. Furthermore, retention and graduation rates continued to improve, with the latest available IPEDS data for Co-Lin's first-time, full-time cohort showing:

- Retention rate up another 11 percentage points, to 69%
- Graduation rate up another six percentage points, to 50%



While the print version of the textbook I use has gone up more than $75, the digital version through Inclusive Access has remained affordable for my students.

– Mary Warren, Humanities Division Chair, Copiah-Lincoln Community College

Cost Savings

Analyses of course material costs for Co-Lin's students indicate Inclusive Access generates savings of between 51% and 82% off of traditional print/packaged materials. Using pre-Inclusive Access course material costs and extrapolating savings across courses and enrollments, Dr. Duguid estimates that Co-Lin's students collectively save more than $4 million annually on course materials through the Inclusive Access program — Nearly $1400 per student each year.

COVID-19 Response

Like most colleges nationwide, Co-Lin shifted suddenly to totally online instruction in March 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Dr. Duguid, "Because our college already had widespread use of digital resources delivered through the LMS in an Inclusive Access program, our transition was a rather smooth one. Some adjustments had to be made, but the majority of courses were prepared for this shift."

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– Dr. Stephanie Duguid, Dean of Academic Instruction, Copiah-Lincoln Community College



INCLUSIVE ACCESS LESSONS LEARNED

Empower faculty to drive Inclusive Access

Dr. Duguid says Co-Lin decided early on that they would take a faculty-led, student-focused, administration-supported approach to Inclusive Access implementation. “We empowered faculty to lead the effort and request the shift from traditional materials to Inclusive Access. That process allowed faculty to have a voice, develop their own buy-in, have departmental discussions to unite around specific material and identify their own advantages and disadvantages of the program.”

Start small, with eager participants

Faculty teaching developmental courses and college-level mathematics were the driving force behind the initial rollout. Because of their advocacy, these faculty made every effort to ensure a smooth implementation and also were prepared to identify and address potential hurdles.

Set goals and expectations

Co-Lin’s early Inclusive Access goals were to reduce costs and improve access for students in developmental courses. Says Dr. Duguid, “We set out to measurably impact the percentage of students who were ready to engage in course material the first day of each semester. As we expanded the program, we continued to focus on equitable instructional material access and student success in each program and each course transitioning into Inclusive Access.” Co-Lin also acknowledged there would be unexpected hurdles, which helped pave the way to overcoming them with publisher and distribution partners.

Communicate, communicate, communicate!

All stakeholders should have a clear understanding of what Inclusive Access is, how it works, and why and how the college is implementing it. This requires early and frequent communication to inform and support students, faculty, staff, administration, the business office, bookstore, IT, LMS administrators and Enrollment Services. Even after a decade of Inclusive Access, Co-Lin offers regular training on how the materials interact with classes, how to adjust and maneuver assignments, and how to help guide students through the process to access course materials.

Explore eBook/courseware and delivery platforms carefully

With an independent, college-owned bookstore, Co-Lin needed to select a third-party eBook/courseware platform to standardize the Inclusive Access experience across courses and publishers. “We began our Inclusive Access program with a distribution partner that met our initial needs,” says Dr. Duguid, “but as we expanded across more divisions and courses, we shifted to a partner that was a better fit in terms of reliability, scalability, ease of use, reporting and billing. As eResources became more widely used and mobile-friendly, we wanted to leverage as much automation as possible.”

Evaluate IT needs and capacity

It’s important to understand the college’s and students’ Wi-Fi availability, speed and bandwidth, as well as students’ device access. As publishers’ content becomes more mobile friendly, many students are using smart phones to access eResources and complete assignments, but students without an appropriate device will need accommodations to ensure equitable access.

Not all courses are a good fit for Inclusive Access

“While most Co-Lin divisions offer Inclusive Access,” says Dr. Duguid, “we’ve found that some courses cannot make the transition due to copyright issues, lab components or national certification requirements. For example, literature, welding, and a few other CTE courses are unable or unlikely to offer Inclusive Access.”





Conclusion

Inclusive Access was once the "new thing" that met some resistance in 2012. Now, it is *expected*, and it is embedded in the culture of most departments. "Although there are always unexpected challenges along the way, the Co-Lin team, along with our publisher and distribution partners, has built positive relationships to work together for the best interest of the college and our students," says Dr. Duguid, and adds, "When college leaders listen to the faculty about student needs, and maintain focus on student success through equity and access – all while reducing costs – great things can happen."

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IF A SMALL, RURAL COLLEGE IN MISSISSIPPI CAN REDUCE THE TOTAL COST OF RESOURCES BY $4 MILLION, IMAGINE HOW MUCH OTHERS CAN SAVE STUDENTS BY SHIFTING TO INCLUSIVE ACCESS.

– Dr. Stephanie Duguid, Dean of Academic Instruction, Copiah-Lincoln Community College

