McGraw Hill Affordable Access Case Study

Norfolk State University

Expanding Access and Affordability Through Spartans All Inclusive Learning

Challenge

Students struggled to afford required course materials, contributing to missed coursework and higher DFW rates.

Solution

Affordable Access with Spartans All Inclusive Learning

Results

More than $5 million in student savings, stronger student readiness, and 99%+ program participation.

> **No student is denied access to required course materials on the first day of classes because of an inability to purchase them."**



Dr. Shahrooz Moosavizadeh
Professor of Mathematics and Director of the Spartans All Inclusive Learning Program

The Challenge

For Norfolk State University, the need for an Affordable Access model was rooted in a persistent barrier to student success: many students could not afford the access codes required for online homework and courseware. The challenge was particularly evident in 100- and 200-level mathematics courses, where students who could not purchase required access codes received zeros for approximately 15% of their course grades, contributing to dramatically higher D, F, and W rates. Before the program launched, students often did not obtain required access codes until approximately the ninth week of the semester.

Dr. Shahrooz Moosavizadeh, Director of the Spartans All Inclusive Learning (SAIL) Program and Professor of Mathematics, experienced these challenges firsthand as chair of the Department of Mathematics. The university needed a solution that could ensure students had the materials required to participate fully in their courses without requiring them to overcome financial and logistical barriers on their own.

> **"Students received zeros for approximately 15% of their course grades, and the D, F, and W rates increased dramatically."**



The Solution

Norfolk State University's SAIL program provides students with a simple, predictable way to access the materials they need to succeed. For $25 per credit hour, students receive all required textbooks, lab manuals, and digital textbook versions as part of the program. Materials are delivered on the first day of class, ensuring students are prepared to begin their coursework immediately.

Through SAIL, students save approximately 35% to 50% on the cost of course materials each term, while also benefiting from a highly personalized concierge service designed to make accessing their materials easy and convenient. Students do not have to navigate multiple purchases or determine which materials they need for each course. Instead, the program brings their required resources together in one place and provides personalized support throughout the process.

The program builds on Norfolk State's original First Day Success initiative, which launched with 49 courses in Fall 2018 before expanding to the institution-wide SAIL model in Fall 2022. Today, SAIL serves more than 6,500 students, and more than 99% of students choose to remain enrolled in the program.

> **"Before Fall 2018, fewer than 5% of our undergraduate students had access to their course materials on the first day of class. Today, every participating student has the required textbooks and courseware from day one."**

The Results

Delivering Savings, Convenience, and Greater Readiness

SAIL has generated substantial financial benefits while making it easier for students to obtain the materials they need. During the first year of the program - Fall 2022 through Spring 2023 - Norfolk State students saved $2,539,544 on course materials. In Fall 2023 through Spring 2024, students saved an additional $1,099,382, representing an average savings of 41% on course materials. In 2024–2025, student savings increased to $1,527,531, with students saving an average of 28% on course materials. According to Dr. Moosavizadeh, total savings from Fall 2022 to the present have exceeded $5 million.

$5M+

in total student savings

Since the program lauched in Fall 2022

Student feedback also points to meaningful benefits beyond cost savings. In the first-year 2022–2023 survey, 3,976 students were surveyed, with those who responded reporting strong benefits from the SAIL program. Ninety-two percent said SAIL saved them time shopping for materials because everything was available in one place, while 86% said they were better prepared for the academic term, and 83% reported a positive impact on their academic success. Additionally, 91% found it convenient to have their materials bundled and delivered through the program, and 83% felt the program provided more affordable course materials.

Those positive perceptions have remained strong. In 2023–2024, 89% of students said SAIL saved them time shopping for materials, 84% said they were better prepared, and 84% said they would like to participate in the program in the future. In 2024–2025, 90% reported that the program saved them time, 79% said they were better prepared, 84% reported a positive impact on their academic success, and 80% felt the program helped them achieve better grades. Across the three years, roughly eight to nine out of 10 students consistently described the program as convenient, affordable, and worth recommending.

The program's strong acceptance is reflected in participation as well. More than 99% of returning students continue to participate, with the opt-out rate never exceeding 1%.



Impact on Student Outcomes

Student Survey

	Fall 2022-Spring 2023	Fall 2023-Spring 2024	Fall 2024- Spring 2025
Time savings when obtaining course materials	92%	89%	90%
Convenience of bundled and delivered course materials	91%	89%	88%
Improved preparedness for the academic term	86%	84%	79%
Increased affordability of course materials	83%	81%	91%
Likelihood of future participation	83%	84%	89%
Likelihood of recommending the program to others	89%	81%	91%
	†FDC Student Term Start Survey June 2023 University N = 3,976	†FDC Student Term Start Survey March 2024 University N = 13,574	†FDC Student Term Start Survey April 2025 University N = 135

Student Success and Institutional Impact

The benefits of SAIL extend beyond access and affordability. Norfolk State has seen DFW rates decline across virtually all disciplines, while first-year retention rates have improved significantly over the past four years. The university has also experienced growth in its overall student population, modest improvements in graduation rates, and increased enrollment in STEM, Pre-Nursing, and Nursing programs.

Dr. Moosavizadeh emphasizes that the perspectives of faculty are particularly meaningful when evaluating the program's impact. **“What is far more meaningful to me than increases in freshman retention rates or improvements in grades is the perspective of our professors regarding the impact of the SAIL program on their students,”** he said. Faculty observations, combined with improvements in retention, enrollment, and student outcomes, suggest that removing barriers to course materials can contribute to broader institutional momentum.



Conclusion

Making Course Materials an Enabler, Not a Barrier

Norfolk State University's SAIL program demonstrates how an institution can move beyond traditional approaches to course materials and create a model centered on affordability, immediate access, and student readiness. By incorporating the cost of required materials into a predictable, institution-wide model, Norfolk State has eliminated a barrier that once prevented students from accessing essential course resources and, in some cases, affected their grades and ability to succeed.

The program's evolution from a 49-course First Day Success initiative to an institution-wide model serving more than 6,500 students demonstrates the potential to scale Affordable Access across an entire university.

For other institutions considering an Affordable Access strategy, Norfolk State's experience illustrates the value of addressing both the financial and logistical challenges students face. When required materials are available from the first day of class, students can begin their coursework prepared, rather than spending valuable time navigating access codes, purchasing decisions, or delayed materials.

> **"We welcomed one of our largest incoming freshman classes in more than a decade, and our first-year retention rates have improved significantly. What was once a challenge has become a source of celebration for our administration."**

About Norfolk State University

Norfolk State University, a comprehensive urban public institution, is committed to transforming students' lives through exemplary teaching, research and service. Offering a supportive academic and culturally diverse environment for all, the university empowers its students to turn their aspirations into reality and achieve their full potential as well-rounded resourceful citizens and leaders for the 21st century.

About Dr. Shahrooz Moosavizadeh

Dr. Shahrooz Moosavizadeh is a Professor of Mathematics and Director of the Spartans All Inclusive Learning (SAIL) program at Norfolk State University. With more than 35 years of higher education experience, he has dedicated his career to teaching, public education, and community service. He earned his PhD in Applied and Computational Mathematics from Old Dominion University in 1996 and has served as a principal investigator and coprincipal investigator on grants funded by the Virginia Department of Education and the National Science Foundation. His research expertise includes ordinary and partial differential equations, fluid dynamics, and magnetohydrodynamics.

