



BOOKSTORE OPERATIONS CASE STUDY

Meeting the Unique Needs of Community Colleges



CHALLENGES

The educational opportunities provided by community colleges are only becoming more important in our evolving higher education landscape. However, many of these schools continue to face longtime industry challenges – including limited budgets and resources. And, while community colleges represent a more affordable, local option, the costs can still be a struggle for students and families.

Reviewing and updating bookstore operations offers community colleges one way to address these challenges. Managed effectively, the campus bookstore can offer a wider range of course materials, including more affordable options, and increase revenue for the school – all while requiring minimal oversight from administrators.

Barnes & Noble College has partnered with over 240 community colleges and community college systems nationwide, including 9 in North Carolina alone. They represent a range of schools, from those with single campuses serving rural communities to systems with multiple locations and facilities serving tens of thousands of students.

Johnston Community College, Lenoir Community College, Sandhills Community College and Wake Technical Community College are among the North Carolina community colleges that have chosen Barnes & Noble College as a reliable, experienced partner. These schools share many common priorities, including expanding affordable course material options; providing a customized retail experience with meaningful customer service; and building stronger relationships between the bookstore and the school.

SOLUTION AND RESULTS

AFFORDABLE OPTIONS

Barnes & Noble College offers a First Day™ inclusive access program to help schools ensure students have all their course materials by the first day of class. A flat-rate per-credit-hour cost is included in students' tuition bills as a course charge, typically resulting in savings of 25% or more for students – and keeping revenue with the school. Johnston Community College (JCC) was an early adopter of the program.

“We worked closely with Barnes & Noble College to bring the First Day program to JCC to ensure students have their course materials, whether they prefer print or digital. The program was seamless, and the cost savings enable more students to attend school – plus it allows for profitability to pay for resources and staff,” said Ken Mitchell, JCC's Associate Vice President of Auxiliary Enterprises.

“Our faculty are very concerned with affordability. They have a choice in selecting their course materials, and they are choosing to use the First Day program,” added Mitchell.

Lenoir Community College (LCC) introduced the program more recently and expects to see participation continue to expand after a warm reception on campus.

“Our students were very accepting of First Day, and our faculty really love it. I could not have asked for the implementation to go any smoother,” said Deborah Sutton, LCC's Senior Vice President of Administrative Services and Chief Operating Officer. “We had bi-weekly implementation meetings to train and prepare. I cannot say this enough: Barnes & Noble College got us all the right resources and helped get the program off to a successful start.”

FACULTY RELATIONSHIPS

Establishing and maintaining strong relationships with faculty is vital to the success of the bookstore. Barnes & Noble College finds opportunities at each school to engage with faculty, hear from them directly and work together more effectively. Making these connections is especially important at schools operating on the scale of Wake Technical Community College (Wake Tech), which has seven bookstore locations serving more than 74,000 students each year.

“Faculty want to protect their students, so forming relationships with faculty, at their level, certainly helps. The bookstore looks to connect with faculty and students, and we're discussing new measures such as forming a faculty/student committee,” said Darrell Williams, Wake Tech's Director of Business Services.

The voice of faculty informs development of all Barnes & Noble College's tools and solutions, including its adoption platform, which is designed to be intuitive and simple to use. Prompt adoption of course materials plays a vital role in a school's ability to offer students affordable options – and protect revenue.

“The adoption platform has been instrumental in faculty selecting and placing their textbook orders so students are able to order their books online and have them delivered on time. That reliability is really important. Barnes & Noble College can handle our large-scale capacity with a high degree of responsiveness to unique higher education challenges,” said Williams.

CUSTOMIZATION AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

Today's campus bookstore must do more than provide course materials. It must deliver a personalized retail experience driven by exceptional customer service. Barnes & Noble College collaborates with each partner to ensure that every aspect of the bookstore is tailored to the school, from course materials and merchandising to store design and marketing.

"The bookstore is a part of our campus. We needed a partner that could deliver a customized, local approach and work with the school to fulfill our unique needs. Our bookstore manager keeps the lines of communication open, and we have a very strong foundation," said Dr. Rebecca Roush, Sandhills Community College's Vice President, Academic Affairs.

Bookstores also are empowered to make decisions and handle customer requests, issues and questions at the local level. Managers and staff can provide faster customer service and greater satisfaction – while reducing the workload for administrators.

"Barnes & Noble College has significantly limited the amount of time that I need to be actively involved in the operations of the bookstore," said Sutton. "Our store manager has the flexibility to make decisions regarding issues and questions. I no longer get student or faculty complaints. They provide excellent customer service."

In a competitive landscape, reliability and attention to detail yield meaningful results and help cement the bookstore's place in the campus community.

"A JCC alumnus recently contacted the school because he had lost his class ring. Our store manager worked with the vendor to get a 1973 replacement ring for this student – and he was thrilled," said Mitchell. "If you don't serve the customer, they'll go to online competitors, but Barnes & Noble College goes above and beyond to serve our customers."



*"By all rights, Barnes & Noble College is part of JCC.
That has made all the difference in the world."*

– Ken Mitchell, Associate Vice President of Auxiliary Enterprises, JCC