



With a busy, budget-conscious student body in mind, Onondaga Community College wanted to reduce the cost of course materials – and make it easier to get them before the first day of class.

The college collaborated with its campus store partner to bring an affordable access program to campus, bundling course materials costs as part of a course charge. Students saved an average of 30% in the first semester, and more than 75% were prepared by the start of classes.

CHALLENGE:

Onondaga Community College (OCC) serves a wide range of students at different ages and stages of their education and professional development. Many are juggling full- or part-time jobs, family responsibilities and other demands that keep them conscious of how they spend their time and their budget. In 2019, more than a third of OCC students (39%) shared that they were attending class without the required course materials – and 25% said that it was because they could not afford them.



How can you do your homework if you don't have
the books necessary? How can you learn the materials?
How can you be successful?

– Dr. Casey Carbill, President, OCC

As one of the first schools in the nation to implement a textbook rental program, OCC was well versed in adopting innovative solutions for course materials. The college sought out a new way to lower costs – while making it easier for their busy students to be prepared for class from Day 1. OCC collaborated with their campus store partner of more than a decade, on an affordable access solution to create greater savings and eliminate hassles.

SOLUTION:

Onondaga's affordable access program provides every student with all their course materials, digital and print, in time for the first day of class. Leveraging economies of scale with top publishers, the campus store partner secures significant savings for students, and a flat-rate, per-credit-hour cost is included with their tuition and fees as a course charge. OCC teamed up with their campus store partner to implement the solution on campus, introducing the Box of Books program in the fall of 2019. After registering for classes, students simply placed their order with the bookstore online. Then, they picked up their printed materials in a box, conveniently pre-packaged, in store.

Students also had the opportunity to purchase a streamlined Chromebook laptop at a reduced rate. Dr. Carbill inspired the additional offer after observing how often she saw students trying to do schoolwork on their phones. With the Chromebook, students could better equip themselves for learning-focused activities, supporting greater success in the classroom.

The Box of Books program was well received by students, who appreciated the savings as well as the simplicity. With everything "in the box" (including Chromebooks) included in tuition and fees, students could use financial aid to pay up front, eliminating the need to wait for disbursements after the first day of class.



The whole thing was pretty simple. I typed in my classes online, it told me the books I needed, I came to the bookstore and they were waiting for me in a box...It took five minutes, and I was in and out.

– Tyler Czyz, OCC Student

RESULTS:

The Box of Books program achieved both of its core objectives in its first semester. **Students saved an average of 30% on their course materials**, and the college saw a noticeable increase in preparation. One faculty member remarked that more students had their materials on the first day of class than any other semester of their career. **"We went from less than half our students having their material by the start of classes to 75 - 80% of students," said Dr. Carbill. "Therefore, this is a success for students."** Ultimately, initiatives like the Box of Books program can support OCC not only as it seeks to bolster student success each semester, but to improve the overall student experience, retention and graduation rates.

