

Board Resolution on Burden Free Instructional Materials

Resolution of the Board of Governors California Community Colleges Number 2023-18

WHEREAS, the California Community Colleges are committed to make higher education affordable for all learners. Costing just \$46 per unit, the California Community Colleges offer the lowest tuition in the nation; and

WHEREAS, non-tuition expenses of attending college, including instructional materials (textbooks, supplemental materials and supplies), food, housing, and other living expenses continue to increase and create significant barriers for California community college students to enroll, persist and complete; and

WHEREAS, student financial stability is a core social determinant of educational success and directly impacts student access and success. Every student needs a baseline level of financial stability to meaningfully engage in learning and complete their educational goals; and

WHEREAS, in 2022, the top reasons impacting enrollment decisions for both prospective and previously enrolled California community college students were financially related (over 30%), including not being able to afford college and needing to focus on work; and

WHEREAS, in 2019, 35% of California college students reported that they did not have enough money to pay for instructional materials; and

WHEREAS, the pandemic highlighted the inequities and digital divide that exist within our system, with many students, particularly students from marginalized communities, struggling to access learning opportunities due to the lack of reliable internet or functional laptops; and

WHEREAS, students' timely access to necessary instructional materials should not be optional and should not create inequitable burdens on students that lack the financial resources. Supporting an intentional student-centered approach that prioritizes unconditional belonging by reducing and ultimately eliminating instructional material costs for all students requires a holistic strategy grounded in shifting burdens from students to institutions; and

WHEREAS, the Student Senate for California Community Colleges has consistently advocated for removing the educational barriers caused by the rising costs of instructional materials in its resolutions; and

WHEREAS, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges ("ASCCC") has adopted a number of resolutions about reducing the cost of textbooks and encouraging local adoption of open educational resources ("OER") as a sustainable solution to reduce the cost of instructional materials; and

WHEREAS, the Governor and State Legislature have made significant investments to support the California community college system toward reduction of instructional material costs, including one-time \$5 million in 2016 to establish the Zero-Textbook-Cost

Degree Grant Program (“ZTC Program”), one-time \$6 million in 2018 to support the development, adoption and expansion of high quality OER through the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges Open Educational Resources Initiative; and an additional one-time \$115 million in 2021 to expand the ZTC Program; and

WHEREAS, the Governor and State Legislature have also prioritized their support for student financial stability through increased and continued investments in innovative student financial aid, basic needs, housing, and other student support programs; and

WHEREAS, acknowledging that access to necessary instructional materials is critical for equitable student access and success and that the existing structure is inequitable and undermines student success, in January 2023, the Chancellor’s Office launched the Burden Free Instructional Materials Taskforce, which comprises systemwide representatives, open educational resources partners, and students, and developed a set of recommendations to address structural changes and system supports that will facilitate the creation of sustainable solutions that reduce and ultimately eliminate instructional material costs for all students; and now; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED that the Board of Governors commits to strengthen student financial stability, equitable student engagement and success by prioritizing the reduction and ultimately elimination of instructional material costs and the alleviation of student financial, administrative and psychological burdens related to acquiring required instructional materials before they begin the term; and, be it further

RESOLVED that the Chancellor’s Office shall work, in partnership with statewide participatory governance partners, to study implementation of the Burden Free Instructional Materials Taskforce recommendations, prioritizing actions that aim to remove barriers that unduly limit students’ ability to access timely and affordable instructional materials, establish a robust and sustained OER support infrastructure, and strengthen data collection capacity to better support local innovations towards reducing instructional material costs; and, be it further

RESOLVED that the Board of Governors directs the Chancellor’s Office to, in partnership with statewide participatory governance partners such as the ASCCC, bring before the Board recommendations to build on the efforts of the ZTC Program implementation and ensure sustainable no-cost or low-cost textbook solutions for general education courses for every California community college student before they begin the term.

Vote Count: 13-0
Date: July 24, 2023

Amy Costa

Amy M. Costa, President
Board of Governors California Community Colleges

Board of Governors, California Community Colleges July 24, 2023 Meeting

Item 4.4: Board of Governors Resolution on Instructional Material Affordability