



2024 REPORT

Advancing Equity in Access, Support and Success through Burden-Free Instructional Materials

California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office | Sonya Christian, Chancellor

ADVANCING EQUITY IN ACCESS, SUPPORT, AND SUCCESS THROUGH BURDEN-FREE INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

Prepared By

California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office

The Burden-free Instructional Materials Task Force

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INTRODUCTION

“I always have an anxiety attack the first week of class because I know the process I have to go through to buy my books. I borrow money, work late to pick up extra hours to afford my books, try to buy used throughout the internet (most don’t carry the version required by class), or obtain a short term high interest loan to afford the books.”¹

“It’s not just about how much a textbook costs or the expensive supplies needed for a healthcare program; it’s about teaching and learning and the accessibility of every program offered, so that students have what they need to learn and be successful before the class starts.”
-Task force member

California community colleges have a long-standing policy of full and open access, with intentionality in ensuring that higher education is available and affordable for everyone. While existing infrastructure successfully delivers comparatively low tuition rates, generous tuition waivers, and some financial aid, these measures are outmatched by ever-increasing non-tuition expenses. In particular, the burden of instructional materials required for course and program participation—textbooks, supplemental materials, and supplies—weighs heavily on students, particularly on the most marginalized, exacerbating inequality in access, persistence, and graduation. The resulting lack of affordability undermines the system’s mission and threatens students’ financial stability and success.

UNDERSTANDING INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

According to the California Code of Regulations Title 5 §59402, required instructional materials are defined as “any materials which a student must procure or possess as a condition of registration, enrollment or entry into a class; or any such material which is necessary to achieve the required objectives of a course.” This includes a broad range of items, including textbooks, access codes for accessing online homework systems and other digital resources, career-specific resources such as knives and brushes, and supplies such as goggles, paint and calculators.

In 2021-2022 the California Student Aid Commission conducted a Student Expenses and Resources Survey and learned that, across the state’s public colleges and universities, undergraduates spend an average of \$938 per year on instructional materials, including \$486 on books, \$137 on educational supplies, \$173 on course materials and \$142 on computer-related expenses, excluding the cost of a personal computer. Instructional material requirements widely vary across major programs within the California community colleges, with Career Technical Education programs often costing more for students due to the need for industry-standard uniforms (such as a \$900 fire suit for a Fire Fighting Academy), occupational tools and/or third-party licensing/certifications. Even homework systems,

1 https://sccc.org/file_download/inline/eb48acb1-57a0-4e4c-9368-02ed41482a48

required for submitting assignments online, can cost students \$200 or more per course.¹ The price of textbooks, which have outpaced inflation rates, have surged by a staggering 178% since 2000.² These increases also extend to related materials and supplies (e.g., for homework, related assignments and exams).

At the same time, more than one-third of students surveyed struggled to afford college.³ Moreover, a separate survey conducted in spring 2023 by the RP Group revealed that two-thirds of the nearly 67,000 California community college student respondents experienced basic needs insecurity. Nearly 25% were homeless, 58% were housing insecure and 47% were food insecure.⁴ Some students forgo purchasing instructional materials, diminishing the quality of their education, causing academic stress, and ultimately contributing to non-completion. In contrast, when instructional materials are made more affordable, students are more likely to use those materials, especially during the early weeks of a term when engagement in learning is especially important for retention.⁵ The financial savings accrued by students from affordable instructional materials are often redirected to alleviate other pressing student concerns such as housing and food expenses.⁶

The issue of instructional material costs is intensified by several systemic challenges that disproportionately burden students. First, a lack of transparency shrouds the true cost of instructional materials. Students may be aware of the \$46 per unit enrollment fee upon registration, but they often encounter hidden fees, unclear pricing structures and unpredictable expenses well into the course, making it challenging for them to make informed decisions about their educational investments. Moreover, market consolidation further exacerbates the problem. A limited number of publishers dominate the educational materials market, reducing competition and allowing for higher pricing. This lack of diversity in the marketplace limits affordable options for students and amplifies the financial strain they face in obtaining necessary course materials.⁷ Additionally, practices such as “bundling” compel students to purchase new editions of textbooks to obtain access codes for digital resources. This bundling strategy not only drives up costs but also limits students’ ability to choose more cost-effective alternatives, hindering their access to necessary instructional materials. Collectively, these issues create a significant barrier to students’ access to affordable instructional materials.

1 https://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/concern/technical_reports/bc386s476?locale=en

2 <https://edsources.org/2022/lets-help-struggling-students-rather-than-benefiting-textbook-publishers/678418?fbclid=IwAR3lvOjo8zLGVBJTWg3SYMoTr6-WrNk5Izu6VjITPWNEfAnE3LosU9KeWas>

3 https://www.csac.ca.gov/sites/main/files/file-attachments/sears_initial_insights_2022.pdf?1668526145

4 https://rpgroup.org/Portals/0/Documents/Projects/StatewideCaliforniaCommunityCollegeSurveys/RealCollegeCA_BasicNeedsAmongCCCStudents_Sept2023.pdf?ver=2023-09-29-074927-427

5 Zhao, Y., Satyanarayana, A., & Cooney, C. (2020). Impact of open educational resources (OER) on student academic performance and retention rates in undergraduate engineering departments. Brandle, S., Katz, S., Hays, A., Beth, A., Cooney, C., DiSanto, J., Miles, L., Morrison, A. (2019). But what do the students think: Results of the CUNY cross-campus zero-textbook cost student survey. *Open Praxis*, 11(1), 85–101. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5944/openpraxis.11.1.932>

6 Martin, T.M., Belikov, O.M., Hilton III, J., Wiley, D., Fischer, L. (2017). Analysis of student and faculty perceptions of textbook costs in higher education. *Open Praxis*, 9(1), 79–91. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5944/openpraxis.9.1.432>

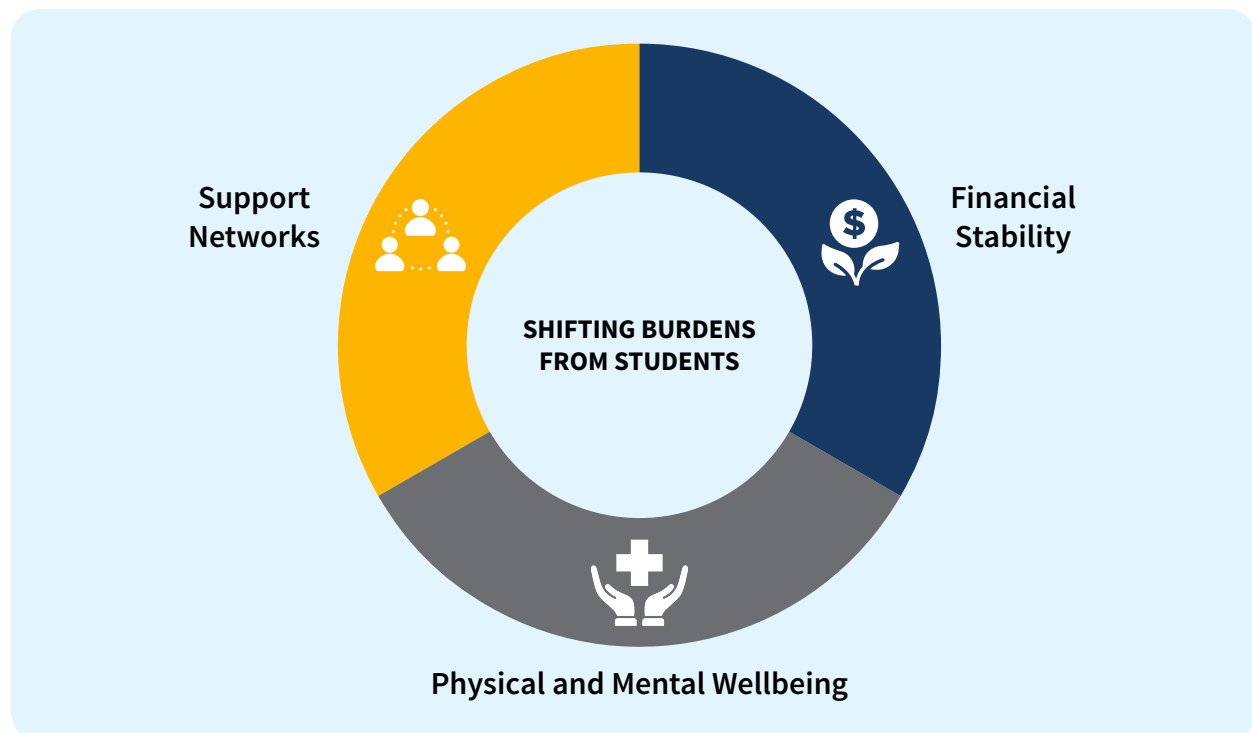
7 <https://pirg.org/media-center/students-to-doj-major-textbook-publisher-merger-will-hurt-students/>

FINANCIAL STABILITY AND COMPOUNDING BURDENS

The burden of acquiring instructional materials undermines the financial stability of too many students and their households. Financial stability is a core social determinant for success and a critical component of a student-centered support ecosystem. Financial stress also compromises students' health and well-being and threatens their academic performance (see Figure 1).¹ That means that efforts to increase financial stability are key institutional strategies for achieving educational goals.

Current structures surrounding instructional materials reflect an outdated right-to-fail era culture and offer little institutional accountability for the financial, administrative, and psychological burdens imposed on and experienced by students. While existing system-wide policy and practice attempts to minimize the financial barriers and stressors associated with college enrollment, there has not been sufficient focus on equitable student experience throughout the process of acquiring instructional items needed for effective course participation and success.

Figure 1. STUDENT-CENTERED SUPPORT ECOSYSTEM
Changing the Paradigm: Social Determinants of Success



1 Andrews, B. D., Rehr, T., & Regan, E. P. (2022). The Link Between Financial Stress, Financial Precarity, and Educational Outcomes at Community Colleges. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 1-17.

Cadaret, M. C., & Bennett, S. R. (2019). College students' reported financial stress and its relationship to psychological distress. *Journal of College Counseling*, 22(3), 225-239.

Martin, E. C., & Dwyer, R. E. (2021). Financial stress, race, and student debt during the great recession. *Social Currents*, 8(5), 424-445.

Peltz, J. S., Bodenlos, J. S., Kingery, J. N., & Rogge, R. D. (2021). The role of financial strain in college students' work hours, sleep, and mental health. *Journal of American college health*, 69(6), 577-584.

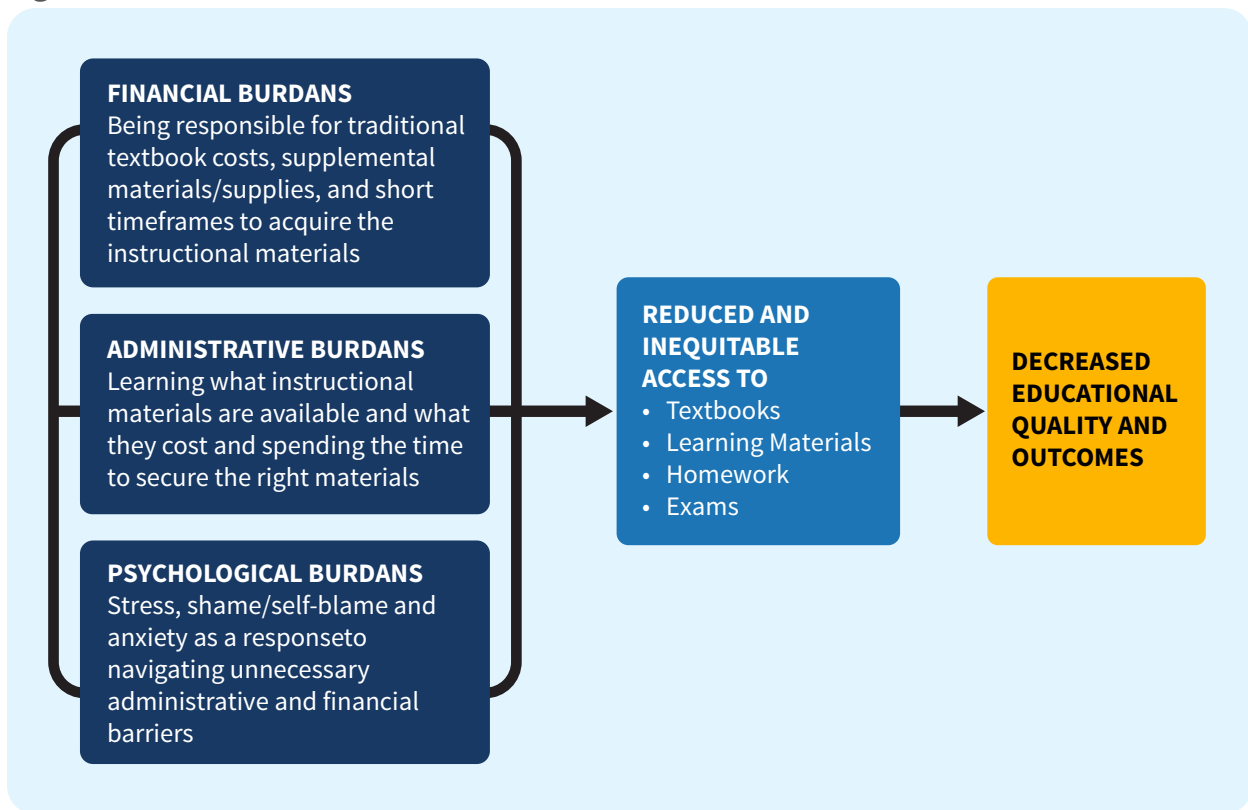
Goldrick-Rab, S. (2016). *Paying the Price: College Costs, Financial Aid, and the Betrayal of the American Dream*. University of Chicago Press.

The high and varying costs of instructional materials not only impose substantial financial burden but also compound administrative and psychological burdens on students lacking financial resources. These challenges exacerbate the existing inequities within the higher education system, presenting a stark contrast to the experiences of students with ample financial means (see Figure 2). For example:

- Financial Burden
 - Traditional textbooks can be expensive, placing a significant financial burden on students. Frequent updates and new editions of textbooks can make it challenging for students to buy used or borrow materials.
 - Supplemental materials and supplies can also be costly, contributing to the overall cost of instructional materials.
 - Students may not find out about some of these costs until after classes begin, creating a challenge in budgeting and financial planning.
- Administrative Burden
 - Navigating through necessary paperwork (e.g., financial documents, required course textbook information, program eligibility forms, and enrollment paperwork) can be a challenging process that is often required to secure direct aid for instructional materials. The complexity of this process, coupled with the difficulty in locating the necessary documentation, results in a substantial administrative burden associated with acquiring instructional materials.
 - Mandatory attendance at appointments and scheduled meetings throughout the term, such as counseling or workshops, is necessary to establish and maintain program enrollment and eligibility for textbook support. This requirement adds another layer to the administrative burden, demanding students' time and commitment to fulfill these obligations.
 - Common practices among students, such as searching for low-cost textbook options through third party resales, libraries or student services programs and soliciting fellow students for used books or to borrow books during the class, serve as practical strategies to alleviate the financial burden associated with acquiring instructional materials. However, these efforts contribute to the overall administrative burden students experience.
- Psychological Burden
 - Applying for and participating in aid-associated support programs can lead to a sense of loss of personal power or autonomy, contributing to negative emotions and a sense of not belonging in college, actively discouraging persistence. Students may feel shamed, stigmatized or isolated.

- Dealing with administrative processes intensifies the stresses and frustrations students experience. This adds to the psychological toll and serves as a significant barrier to academic success and overall well-being.
- A delay in receiving financial assistance for non-tuition expenses until after classes begin forces students start classes without the required instructional materials. This often leads to increased stress and anxiety, causing students to fall behind in coursework and potentially hindering academic success. The resulting impact on students' confidence further impedes their educational success, creating a detrimental cycle of psychological burden associated with acquiring instructional materials.

Figure 2. How the Burdens of Instructional Materials Reduces Student Success



Fortunately, there is much that can be done to reduce burdens on students. As Open Educational Resources (OER) practitioners and experts, Dr. Gary Michelson and Dr. Michelle Pilati, recently pointed out, “while we may not be able to control the cost of gas, rent, and food, we can make a difference in how much students pay for textbooks.”¹ In the last couple of years, student spending on instructional materials is down almost 20% thanks to greater conscientiousness about those costs, more utilization of online and rental textbook options, and state-supported zero-cost textbook and open educational resource initiatives.²

1 <https://edsource.org/2022/lets-help-struggling-students-rather-than-benefiting-textbook-publishers/678418?fbclid=IwAR3lvOjo8zLGVBjTWg3SYMoTr6-WrNk5Izu6VjITPWNEfAnE3LosU9KeWas>

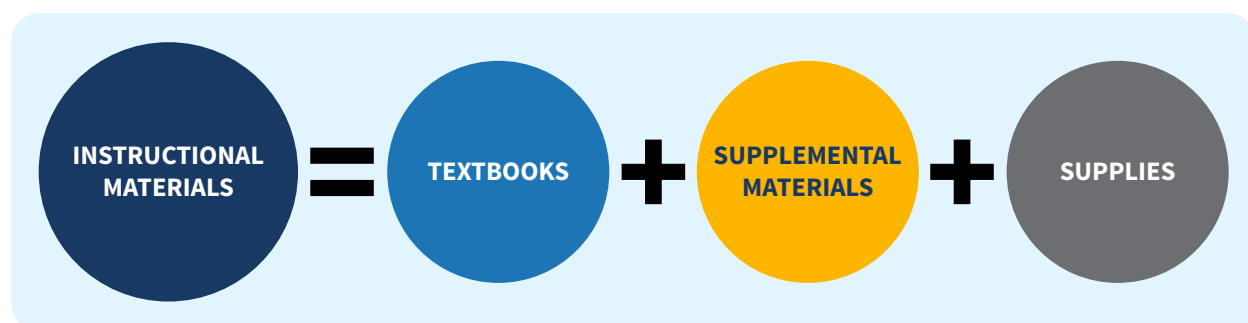
2 https://www.csac.ca.gov/sites/main/files/file-attachments/sears_initial_insights_2022.pdf?1668526145

Making instructional materials truly affordable requires several interventions and practices. First, it requires offering no-cost, or at least low-cost, options with sustainable approaches that center students as learners rather than consumers from whom profit should be extracted. Broadening considerations and accommodations for students with disabilities is also critical. Further, this work requires providing timely and complete information upfront, at the time of registration, so that students understand the total cost of a course before they register. Payment must be easy, and students need to have choices and agency when it comes to obtaining materials. Financial aid practices must also be aligned to facilitate that payment. Now is the time to build on that progress and further alleviate the burden of instructional materials to achieve the system’s mission.

TERMINOLOGY

The following concepts and terms are critical to the work of reducing the burden of instructional materials and were used by the task force to shape the recommendations in the next section:

“Instructional Materials” refers to all of the required materials for a course, including textbooks, supplemental materials and supplies.



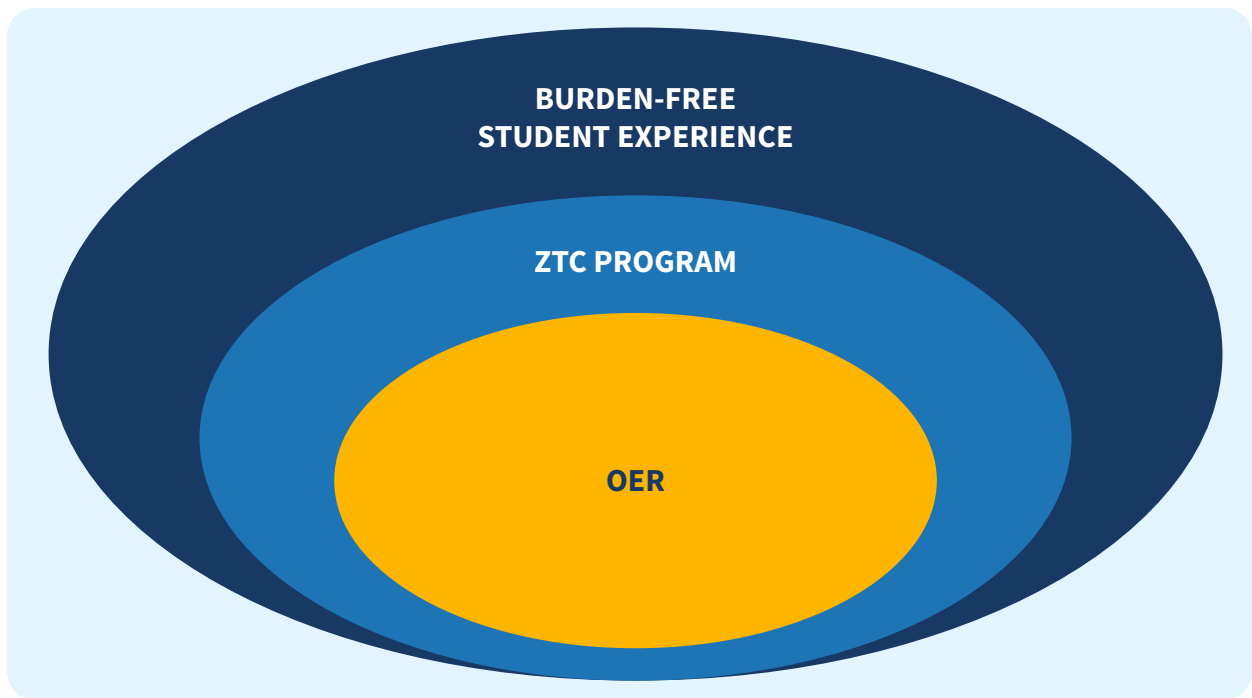
“Burden-free student experience” means the alleviation of financial, administrative, and psychological burdens that students are currently grapple with, fostering an environment where they can focus on learning and, ultimately, thrive in college. This creates a foundation for unconditional belonging, ensuring that every student feels supported and empowered throughout their educational journey.

“**Zero-Textbook-Cost Degree Grant program**” (**ZTC Program**) represents a major investment by the Governor and the Legislature to “reduce the overall cost of education for students and decrease the time it takes students to complete degree programs offered by community colleges.”¹ The ZTC Program provides \$115 million in one-time funding to support community college districts to develop and implement “zero-textbook-cost degrees” and develop open educational resources for courses. “Zero-textbook-cost degrees” means “community college associate degrees or career technical education certificates earned entirely by completing courses that eliminate conventional textbook costs by using alternative instructional materials and methodologies, including open educational resources.”²

1 CA Education Code § 78050-78052

2 CA Education Code § 78052(5)

“Open educational resources” (OER) means high-quality teaching, learning and research resources that reside in the public domain or have been released pursuant to an intellectual property license that permits their free use and repurposing by others and may include other resources that are legally available and free of cost to students. Open educational resources include, but are not limited to, full courses, course materials, modules, textbooks, faculty-created content, streaming videos, tests, software, and any other tools, materials or techniques used to support access to knowledge.¹ (CA Education Code 78052). OER is the core strategy for the effective and impactful implementation of the ZTC Program. It also stands out as the most cost effective and sustainable solution to minimize and eradicate textbook costs, thereby reducing burdens for students. Moreover, OER fosters a more just system and promoting diversity, equity and inclusion by decolonizing the curriculum, enhancing opportunities for open authoring and publishing, and engaging students in new ways—including as content creators, decision-makers and even teachers. It is important to note that, while crucial, OER alone is not sufficient to eliminate all instructional material burdens.



¹ CA Education Code § 78052

THE TASK FORCE CHARGE

In 2023 the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (Chancellor's Office) launched a statewide Equitable Student Experience Burden-free Instructional Materials Task Force (Task Force) with a vision that when a course begins, students have everything needed for that course, including all instructional materials at no cost. The Task Force was charged with making system-level recommendations, including short and long-term strategies for shifting toward burden-free instructional items for every student at every college, leading to more students achieving educational, career and economic mobility.

The Chancellor's Office then convened the Task Force to evaluate the existing infrastructure in place that guides instructional material choices and provide recommendations to structural changes that will facilitate the creation of sustainable solutions that reduce textbook costs for students in the long term. It received five charges:

- (a) Inform the development of a systemwide approach to alleviate the administrative, financial, and psychological burdens of accessing textbooks that students currently experience.
- (b) Provide recommendations on baseline policies and regulations that strengthen equitable access to required instructional materials.
- (c) Provide guidance on maximizing, leveraging or adjusting existing system resources to support a student-centered, zero-cost textbook priority.
- (d) Provide recommendations for establishing a robust and sustained open educational resource support infrastructure.
- (e) Inform strategies for state-level support and resources needed to enhance campus efforts to adopt zero textbook cost policies and practices.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Task Force developed the following recommendations, addressing the tenets of the task force charge and elevating actions that will responsibly and expeditiously expand instructional material affordability for all students.

THE CALIFORNIA STATE LEGISLATURE SHOULD:

1. Revise the 50% law to count faculty directly advancing the adoption and scaling of OER efforts towards the “salaries of classroom instructors” line.

THE CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES BOARD OF GOVERNORS SHOULD:

2. Adopt a resolution to strengthen equitable student learning and experience by prioritizing the reduction and elimination of instructional materials costs.

THE CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE CHANCELLOR’S OFFICE, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH KEY STATEWIDE STAKEHOLDERS, SHOULD:

3. Engage in joint advocacy for ongoing funding to support and sustain a system priority of burden free instructional materials, which includes updating OER content, enhancing professional development and facilitating technology procurement.
4. Ensure students have easy visibility into the full instructional material costs prior to registration, including:
 - a. Draft guidance memos to support systemwide implementation of existing Federal and state statutes mandating the transparency of instructional materials ; and
 - b. Provide a system level low-cost textbook section designation at \$30 to increase transparency; and
 - c. Conduct a thorough review to assess the need for Title 5 regulations to address any gaps in the existing framework.
5. Assess the need for and deploy technical assistance priorities to colleges, districts, and regions to support local achievement of cost-reduction goals. This includes:
 - a. Help faculty and staff access, curate, and license OER including topics such as permissible licensing, copyright, accessibility parameters, and Universal Design for Learning.
 - b. Provide graphic design support for the preparation of high-quality materials that are visually diverse, reflecting the continuum of students in California.
 - c. Provide guidance and professional development to support institutions in understanding, aligning and leveraging existing local resources to accelerate action plans towards zero instructional material costs campuswide.

6. Identify resources and timeline to collect systemwide data, leveraging the data elements in the California Community Colleges Management Information System, to support continuous improvement towards adoption of OER at scale and the achievement of reduced instructional material cost goals. Important initial data points include:
 - a. Number and percentage of course sections that are zero cost.
 - b. Number and percentage of course sections that have achieved zero cost status by strategy.
7. Develop new regulations, revise current regulations, and/or draft guidance to address the following:
 - a. Mandate colleges provide annual updates to their respective Board of Trustees on the local level progress towards zero instructional material costs.
 - b. Prohibit institutional practices that automatically charge students for textbooks as outlined in the Student Fee Handbook.¹ Discourage any practices that limit student choice in accessing instructional materials.
 - c. Shift the burden of ensuring reliable internet access from students to institutions to support students' full participation in the coursework.
 - d. Require print for textbooks or course materials as an option, as digital only does not facilitate the full participation of students who may need accommodations.
8. Review and update the Student Fee Handbook to reflect the system's commitment to burden-free instructional materials and explicitly prohibit practices that create unnecessary burdens for students.
9. Launch a comprehensive review of student support and instructional program funding and allowable expenditures and provide recommendations to maximize funding flexibility to directly support students in acquiring instructional materials.
10. Remove student burdens by ensuring timely financial aid disbursement to cover the costs of instructional materials.
11. Establish College Buys procurement opportunities to reduce the cost of course supplies.

Develop new, and leverage and mature existing systemwide mechanisms for curating, sharing and deploying effective strategies/practices/advocacy related to adoption and sustainability including:

¹ <https://www.cccco.edu/-/media/CCCCO-Website/College-Finance-and-Facilities/Student-Fees/2023-Student-Fee-Handbook-06302023.pdf?la=en&hash=E649352697B80D14C2755C1FAEAF36CE70DE04B>

- a. professional development
 - b. liaisons
 - c. networks
 - d. communities of practice
 - e. discipline-specific peer sharing
12. Incentivize the adoption of OER by establishing a systemwide OER platform and identifying resources to support it. Minimum requirements include:
- a. Allows faculty to create, host, share and modify teaching and learning materials (e.g., textbooks, homework, presentations, question banks and worksheets) with an emphasis on interoperability, security, modification/customization, accessibility and scalability.
 - b. Allows users to print openly licensed materials at a low-cost.
 - c. Provides predictive analytics to enable effective teaching and learning.
 - d. Provides system-level data and transparent public-facing data dashboard about repository usage and OER adoptions.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT AND COLLEGE LEADERS SHOULD:

- 13. Develop local goals and action plans, with clear expectations and timelines, to reduce and eventually eliminate instructional materials costs by 2030. The goals and action plans need to be supported by state and local enabling conditions, including implementation of regulations with fidelity, resource strategies, adequate data infrastructure and a robust professional development / peer-to-peer learning ecosystem.
- 14. Ensure the compliance of federal and state statutes and regulations related to instructional materials transparency.¹ Implement additional student-centered policies and practices to ensure students have visibility to the full instructional material costs prior to registration.
- 15. Foster the expansion of sustainable resources by promoting open pedagogy and OER adoption by prioritizing open-licensing and showcasing approaches to involving students in resource development.
- 16. Collect local data to support continuous improvement towards adoption of OER and the achievement of reduced instructional material cost goals (e.g., instructional materials costs by certificate and degree programs).

¹ [Cal. Code Regs. tit. 5 § 59400-59408](#); [CA Ed Code 78050 - 78052](#)

17. Support the evolution of campus bookstores and strengthen their roles in scaling OER and removing student burdens related to acquiring required instructional materials.
18. Effectively use resources allocated in the state budget in order to strengthen local level coordination of the OER infrastructure and support campus-level OER coordinators to help faculty and staff with the transition (development, adoption and use) to OER.
19. Endorse the value of adopting OER and practices that reduce and eliminate instructional materials costs in faculty tenure and sabbatical review.

TASK FORCE MEMBERS

Co-chairs:

Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC) Open Educational Resources (OER) Initiative

Michelle Pilati

ASCCC and OER Representative, project Director and faculty

Sierra College

James Todd

Chief Student Services Officers Representative, Assistant Superintendent, Vice President Of Student Services

Members:

Sierra College

Rebecca Bocchicchio

Chief Information Officers Representative, Vice President of Instruction

Association of Chief Business Officials, Ohlone Community College District

Christopher Dela Rosa

Chief Business Officers Representative, Vice President, Administrative and Technology Services

Bakersfield College

Lisa Harding

ASCCC Representative, Professor of Nursing

University of California at David

Delmar Larsen

Founder and Director of LibreTexts; Professor of Chemistry

Student Senate for California Community Colleges

Marco Martinez

SSCCC Representative, (Former) Vice President

Chabot College

Cristina Moon

ASCCC Representative, OER/Zero Textbook Cost Coordinator & Spanish Instructor

East Los Angeles College

Cynthia Orozco

Librarian & OER Representative, OER & Equity Librarian

Council of Chief Librarians, Santa Rosa Junior College

Mary-Catherine Oxford

Council of Chief Librarian Representative

San Mateo County Community College District

Lisa Petrides

CCLC Trustee Representative, President, Board of Trustees

West Hills College Lemoore
James Preston
President

Board of Governors
Roy Shahbazian
(Former) Member

Student Senate for California Community Colleges, Mission College
Jerry Vakshlyak
SSCCC Representative, (Former) Legislative Affairs Director, Region IV

Butte College
Suzanne Wakim
ASCCC Representative, DE, SLO, OER Coordinator, Biology Faculty

Evergreen Valley College & @One
Patricia James
Part-time Faculty Member & Consultant

Subject Matter Experts

Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education
Liliana Diaz Solodukhin

Policy Analyst, Policy Analysis & Research

Community College Consortium for Open Educational Resources at Open Education Global
Una Daly
Director

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Marty Alvarado
(Former) Executive Vice Chancellor

Equitable Student Learning, Experience and Impact Office
Rebecca Ruan-O'Shaughnessy
Vice Chancellor

Equitable Student Learning, Experience and Impact Office
Michael R. Quiaoit
(Former) Dean

Equitable Student Learning, Experience and Impact Office
Heather McClenahan
Specialist

Equitable Student Learning, Experience and Impact Office
Michael Tran
Associate Governmental Program Analyst

Task Force Facilitators

JFF served as Task Force facilitators.
Barbara Endel, PhD, Senior Advisor
Matt Longo, Senior Program Manager
Lucretia Murphy, J.D., PhD, Vice President

TASK FORCE PROCESS, TIMELINE, AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“If we fail to examine all parts of the campus to promote an equitable student burden-free experience, then we fail to advance the system’s vision for student success...”

-Task Force Co-Chairs

The Chancellor’s Office established a 15-member Task Force, representing a diversity of stakeholders: librarians, faculty, OER and instructional materials procurement staff, campus executive leaders, as well as subject matter experts from OER-related organizations were recruited as members of the task force. The Task Force convened five comprehensive meetings over an eight-month period from Fall, 2022 to Summer, 2023.

To meet the charge of systemic structural changes to facilitate burden free instructional materials for the long term, the Task Force had two co-chairs: one appointed by the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges Open Educational Resources Initiative, Michelle Pilati, project director/ faculty member, and the other appointed by the Chief Student Services Officers Association, James Todd, the assistant superintendent and vice president of student services at Sierra College.

To move the charge forward and facilitate the development of recommendations and regulations, the Chancellor’s Office assembled a team, under the direction of Vice Chancellor Rebecca Ruan-O’Shaughnessy. The Chancellor’s Office partnered with Jobs for the Future (JFF), a national non-profit, to facilitate the Task Force.

This report and recommendations are the result of a robust process of engaging the many voices expressing a deep desire for fundamentally centering students to address equity and access barriers they face with the rising costs of textbooks and supplies, collectively referred to as “instructional materials.” Diverse stakeholders from across the community college system served on the Task Force, including core student and faculty associations, presidents, library services and Open Educational Resources organizations.

In addition, several national and California-based subject matter experts representing cutting innovative student burden-free experiences, shared their research and resources to inform Task Force discussions. We are especially thankful for the tremendous contributions of the two student Task Force members.

This report would not be possible without the groundwork built over several years by the Student Senate for California Community Colleges and the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, especially the Open Educational Resources Initiative (OERI). The Community College Consortium for Open Educational Resources and Open Education Global have focused on innovative ways to identify and mitigate not just textbook costs, but all instructional costs (such as supplies, equipment) students must cover. These organizations are leaders supporting cross-sector strategic partnerships, policy, and student and faculty adoption and advocacy.

This report was also informed by research from four regional compacts – Midwestern Higher Education Compact, New England Board of Higher Education, Southern Regional Education

Board, and Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) and Subject Matter Expert, Dr. Liliana Diaz.

The process and structure of the Task Force’s work on this report occurred during four phases (see Figure 2):

1. Discovery phase with student burden-free no cost, low-cost and OER research, literature review, and California community colleges regulatory and statute analysis, and approximately 15 subject matter expert interviews within California, with experts from across the country representing cutting innovative student burden-free experiences, were conducted in parallel with the recruitment of Task Force members.
2. Task Force Recruitment and Formation phase as 15 Task Force members, including two students, were identified across the continuum of primary stakeholder and participatory governance organizations (i.e., Student Senate, Academic Senate, Board of Trustees, Library and Digital Services, state and local procurement staff, and presidents accepted the invitation to serve on the Task Force).
3. Task Force Background Materials, Research and Resources phase. JFF prepared a comprehensive Briefing Book for Task Force members, synthesizing California’s information and evidence base and showcasing exemplary policies and practices from across the country and within the state. A briefing book was provided and updated for every meeting for reference.
4. Recommendations Development phase over the course of four all-day meetings, and an additional virtual meeting. The draft recommendations were vetted with the Task Force and co-chairs and presented to the Chancellor’s Office for discussion with the Consultation Council. The final recommendations were prepared by the Chancellor’s Office for the Board of Governor’s July 2023 meeting. The timeline is presented below.

In addition, following release of this report the Proposed Regulations phase will occur and be developed in partnership with interested associations and stakeholder groups. The proposed regulations will be prepared by the Chancellor’s Office and scheduled for first and second readings in fall 2024.

Board Resolution Instructional Material Affordability

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 financial 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 State Legislature has made significant investment 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

A11Y 7/18/23

(“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 State Legislature has also prioritized its support for student financial stability through its 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 M. Costa, President
Board of Governors California Community Colleges

RESOURCES

California Community Colleges Course Fee Guidelines, Regulations, and Laws:

- PowerPoint presentation for FACCC Advocacy and Policy Conference – March 6, 2022 [Creating Equitable Opportunities: Policy Approaches to Ensuring Cost Transparency and Textbook Affordability](#)
- California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, Legal Affairs – June 1, 2023 [Student Fee Handbook](#)
- California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office – January 2013 [Guidelines for Required Instructional Materials in the California Community Colleges](#)
- California Education Code 78050 - 78052
- [California Code of Regulations tit. 5 § 59400-59408](#)

Current Zero Textbook Cost (ZTC) Program Resources:

- [Zero Textbook Cost Program – Overview and Guidance](#)
- [Vision 2030](#)
- [California Education Code 78052](#)
- [Board of Governors Meeting – July 2023](#)
- [Glossary of Terms](#)
- [Academic Senate for California Community Colleges Open Educational Resources Initiative: Student Impact Videos](#)
- [Average Cost of College Textbooks Infographics 2022](#)
- [College Affordability: Requirements, Regulations, and Laws](#)

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