

Fast-Tracking **the Future**

How a Global Pandemic Accelerated the Move to Inclusive Access for Cloud County Community College

Shortly after joining Cloud County Community College as the Director of Auxiliary Services, Caesar Wood took a hard look at the bookstore's course materials process and started exploring the possibility of streamlining delivery through the Inclusive Access (IA) model. Working closely with Bookstore Manager Brent Cox, the pair spent several months researching and getting stakeholders on board for the program. Caesar and Brent were set to do a small IA pilot for Summer 2020, however, like many of the best plans, COVID-19 threw a wrench into things.

With so much uncertainty around the return to campus and how the college would ensure an accessible and engaging virtual learning experience for its students, Caesar saw IA as a viable solution. Ultimately, the campus decided to go all-in on IA for the summer term, delivering 100% of course materials digitally.

RedShelf sat down with Caesar to talk through his process for bringing IA to campus, the impacts of going 100% digital this past summer, and what he sees as the future of digital amid higher ed's many unknowns.

RedShelf: Thanks for taking some time to virtually chat with us today! We're excited to hear what your campus has been up to over these last few crazy months.

Caesar Wood: Of course!

RedShelf: So it may be hard to imagine a time pre-pandemic, but I know you started exploring Inclusive Access just about a year ago.

Caesar Wood: Yes, Brent and I started looking at Inclusive Access last September after meeting RedShelf at the Mid States Conference. We did a lot of research, starting with taking a deep dive into our current course materials process from start to finish. We wanted a fresh look at everything from receiving faculty adoptions, to ordering inventory, to dealing with the rental and buyback process. From this deep dive, we realized there were a lot of issues, especially when it came to time and resources, and knew there had to be a better solution. We then dove into better understanding the model and its benefits, even calling several RedShelf IA campus partners to hear about their programs.

RedShelf: So you definitely did your homework! What ultimately attracted you to this model?

Caesar Wood: There were three main reasons for us, first and foremost being student affordability. Tuition and fees aren't decreasing anytime soon, but we knew we could significantly reduce the cost of course materials. The second driver was being able to improve our margins by reducing physical inventory and not having to deal with the sunk cost of dead inventory sitting on our shelves. Lastly, the guarantee of first-day access for students sets them up for academic success and removes the fear of facing low inventory or backorders at the bookstore.

Advertorial



Caesar Wood

Director of Auxiliary Services
Cloud County Community College



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RedShelf: After doing your research and deciding to move forward with the program, what was your strategy for winning campus stakeholder buy-in?

Caesar Wood: This was a process really focused on building trust and understanding everyone's perspective. I went to my boss, the VP of Administrative Services, to pitch the model and focused on the business case and the positive impact eBooks would have on profit margins. I knew it was important to get academic buy-in so I worked with the academic deans and vice presidents and focused on the student savings and first-day access benefits. I was simultaneously meeting with individual key veteran faculty members to get them on board and listen to their initial concerns. When it came time to pitch the idea to the larger group of faculty, already having several IA faculty "champions" in support of the program really helped generate buy-in and excitement.

RedShelf: So after getting the necessary stakeholder buy-in, you were planning to do a three-course pilot in Summer 2020, but COVID-19 disrupted those plans.

Caesar Wood: We decided on April 1 that our summer semester would be moved to online instruction and immediately started preparing. It quickly became obvious that Inclusive Access would be the most viable solution for course materials delivery. In early May we decided to change our three-course pilot to a campus-wide rollout to ensure our students had access to their materials, even when virtual. Summer semester started June 1 so we had less than three weeks to get everything ready for launch.

RedShelf: So it was go time! What'd it take to transition from prepping for a three-course pilot to delivering digital to 100% of summer courses in a matter of weeks?

Caesar Wood: We couldn't have done it without RedShelf. Even before the pandemic, the team visited our campus to meet with stakeholders to ensure there wouldn't be any hiccups. Prepping for this summer, the team was super responsive and attentive to help us get everything from the technical integrations to the billing and accounting set up in record time. Their customer support was unparalleled and I often felt like I was the only campus they were dealing with, which I know is far from the case. You just don't see that oftentimes in a partnership.

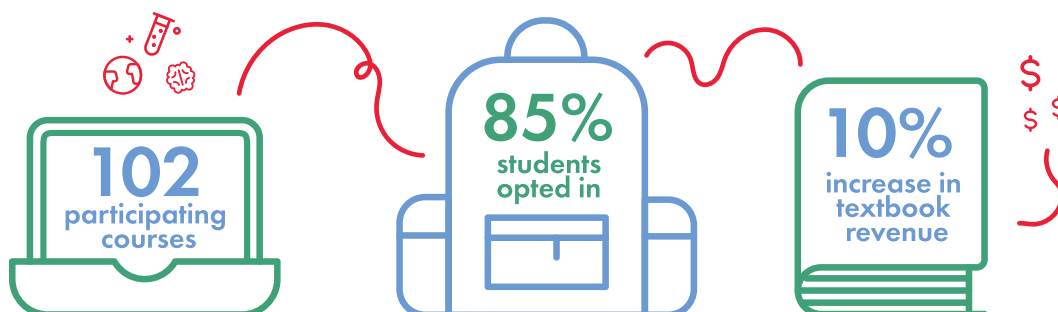
RedShelf: Happy to hear we could help support your campus even under a time crunch! So, how did the launch of Inclusive Access go for the campus?

Caesar Wood: Eighty-five percent of students remained opted into the program and we received extremely positive feedback from both students and faculty. On the business side, we hit our margins and were able to reduce the stock we had in the bookstore. All around, it was an extremely successful launch and we've decided to continue the program this fall with nearly 230 courses delivering their materials through Inclusive Access.

RedShelf: Looking ahead to this fall and beyond, what do you hope to accomplish with Inclusive Access?

Caesar Wood: In the near term, we'll be conducting student and faculty surveys to get feedback and will also look at our own data to continue improving and iterating on the program. While COVID-19 definitely expedited this process for us, I really do see this being a sustainable course materials model for Cloud County Community College. Now more than ever, I believe the way of the future will be through digital, and Inclusive Access will be helping us lead the way.

Summer Term 2020



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