

Strategic Plan Update: Spring 2024

Two main challenges and possible solutions regarding digital course materials:

1. Faculty are resistant to change to digital since it increases the cost of course materials to students.

Lake Land College is in a unique position when approaching digital course materials since we offer a rental service that doesn't charge per textbook, but rather a fee based on credit hour. At most colleges and universities, students purchase each textbook, often costing them several hundred dollars for all their course materials for the semester. In those instances, moving to digital course materials makes sense because it is a cost savings compared to purchasing each textbook or even paying a per-rental price. However, with Lake Land's rental program, digital courseware is viewed as a consumable course material and charged to the student; we do have e-books that are classified as rentals, but that is the text-only and doesn't include the additional resources that are included with the digital courseware.

Because of this, faculty are hesitant to move to digital courseware if they are currently using a rental textbook because they do not want to impose more costs to their students.

POSSIBLE SOLUTION: Utilize the current course fee structure to build an EA (exclusive access) model. Courses would be classified into the course fee levels based on the course material being used. Using this model, the current course material fee that is charged per credit hour would likely need removed from the service fee. Then level 1 course fee could be for courses that use rentals only; level 2 course fee for a rental and lab manual; level 3 course fee for courses using a digital courseware; etc. This would mean the only items students would need to pay for in the bookstore would be supplies such as kits for specific programs and other supplies for specific courses. This would drastically cut down on the number of students who would need to secure funds to purchase items prior to classes beginning with the majority of course materials being billed with tuition. I do recognize these course levels would need to be increased from their current amounts. **(currently researching this by comparing the courses in each level with their current course materials to see if there is a correlation that can be used.)**

Another possible solution would be to increase the course material fee and that increase would cover all physical and digital rentals, workbooks, lab manuals, note sets, and digital courseware. This model would not include program and course specific kits and supplies, but students who did not have kits or supplies would not be charged anything additional when picking up their course materials. The concern with model is courses that use zero or one course material will be charged at the same rate as courses that use multiple course materials; it would be a similar concern with the current billing process. Some faculty have expressed concerns that courses that do not have a bookstore course material or have only consumable course materials are still billed the course material fee; they feel those courses shouldn't have that charge since historically it was for the rental program.

2. Many students live in rural areas or face other obstacles with reliable internet connections at their home.

Lake Land College has a large rural population and reliable and affordable internet isn't a luxury that all students have access to in their homes. This creates issues as course materials move to digital delivery. While many e-books can be read offline if they are downloaded, courseware does require an internet connection to complete assignments, quizzes, tests, and use the other online resources.

As a solution to this challenge during the pandemic, the College obtained individual mi-fi's that students are able to rent for no charge. This is still an option but on a limited basis.

POSSIBLE SOLUTION: Expand the current mi-fi rental program to offer more availability and an easier rental process. Allow for longer than semester-based rentals for students who plan to attend multiple semesters and allow students to rent the device for up to a two-year period. Possibly check into a partnership with Verizon for a discounted rate with the increased need.

Another possible solution would be to establish a technology program that provides laptops; this could be done with Chromebooks that have a data plan connected to the device, which would provide internet access on the Chromebook regardless of location or another laptop and mi-fi that are packaged together. This could be facilitated in several ways, here are some examples of programs done at other higher education institutions that have been in place for a while:

- Dakota State University: All full-time incoming freshman are provided a new laptop that has licensed software installed; this is the student's laptop to use and once the student reaches a set number of credits, they have the option to purchase the laptop at a pre-established price or opt out and return the laptop when they graduate/transfer/withdrawal. The laptops have warranty protection and replacement batteries are offered. Loss/stolen/negligent damages are student responsibility.
- University of Minnesota Crookston: New students are provided a laptop that has needed software installed. Students who will not be enrolling in the following semester are to return the laptop by the last day of finals. Students who fail to return their laptop are first billed a late fee; if not returned after the late fee is assessed then the full amount of the laptop is charged to the student. Students who are registering for the following semester are able to keep their laptop. Students assume responsibility for lost/stolen/negligent damages.
- Wake Forrest University: Students are provided the opportunity to purchase a laptop at a discount price that is bundled with software, warranty, additional protection and support. Students who qualify for financial aid and certain scholarships are provided a technology waiver, which covers the cost of a standard laptop. I wasn't able to find where the funds came from to offset the technology waivers.
- Chatham University: First-year students are given a MacBook, protective case, and backpack; this is also available to some transfer students based on credit hours. Students pay a technology fee each semester that ultimately covers the cost of the MacBook and the student keeps the MacBook upon graduation.

Program model options for digital course materials:

1. Exclusive Access (EA)

- This model is the most closely based on the current rental program. Students would pay a course material fee that is billed with tuition and have access to all their course materials (textbooks/e-books and courseware)
 - Possible additional cost for the students if supplies are required.
 - We would likely need to increase the course material fee from what it is now.
- This model is typically digital first, with print only used when digital isn't available; this is how the digital providers are able to negotiate better pricing with the higher usage of digital course materials. While not required to have digital first for an EA model, it would prevent better pricing.
- All students would have first-day access to all their course materials; if all are digital, students would have access within Canvas and a trip to the bookstore wouldn't be required.
- This model should also be implemented using the course level structure, if that was determined to be the best solution.

2. Inclusive Access (IA)

- This is similar to EA but would be for programs or individual courses instead of the entire campus being digital first like an EA model.
- Would be more challenging than EA to secure the best pricing since we would have fewer courses using digital course materials.
- This model usually allows students to select the delivery method of the course material, i.e. print, digital, or combination of both.
 - This presents a challenge for the bookstore for late enrollments and section adds; more challenging to stock the correct amount of inventory. This model works better at a four-year university where there are less late adds.

Partner options for digital delivery and integration into Canvas:

1. Redshelf - Our current digital course material partner

- They are more IA focused over EA, but are growing their EA technology and are very easy to work with to create a custom model/program for our institution.
- Have been good to work with over the years; no real complaints or issues overall.
- Have new dashboard technology; it is currently being rolled out to institutions with a larger digital usage than we currently have but will eventually be released for us. This will drastically improve the bookstore's process and cut down on the semester prep time.
- They work with all major publishers and several smaller publishers to negotiate pricing and delivery the digital content. To date, there hasn't been a publisher that we have use in digital format that they haven't been able to work with for delivery and pricing.
- Since they work with multiple publishers, this allows full academic freedom for faculty with digital course material selection.

2. Bibli-U

- Provides digital access from multiple publishers for courseware and e-books.
- A newer provider of digital content but appears to be growing rapidly.
- They recently acquired Texas Book Company, allowing them to provide more offerings of course materials.
- Demo showed what appeared to be an easy platform and adoption process.

3. Verba VitalSource

- Offers EA, IA and subscription based partnerships
- This would be very similar to RedShelf; Verba VitalSource and RedShelf are direct competitors now.
- They appear to offer more online dashboard options than RedShelf currently does, but I've only seen demos nor have I seen or used the new RedShelf dashboard since it's currently only launched to institutions with higher digital courseware usage.

Subscription delivery options:

1. Cengage Unlimited (CU) institutional model

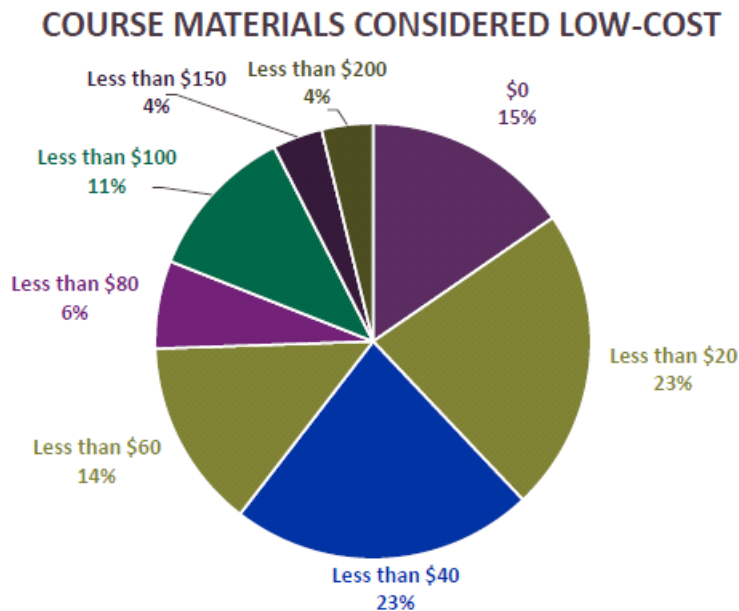
- All students would have full access to all Cengage products; includes career services, study materials, college prep, etc. along with course materials and e-books. College would pay a subscription fee based on enrollment.
- Cengage states that it expands academic freedom because faculty can use courseware, flashcards, and other resources from CU while still using textbook from another publisher.
 - I think this can be true as long as it's communicated to faculty that this isn't being forced on them to select a Cengage material but can still be used even when selecting another publisher, if they wish.

- Could partner with career services, tutoring and testing and district high schools to provide those staff access to use the additional resources and tools to assist students.
- Have the option to offset cost for dual credit students and charge them less for the access.
Example: many colleges charge the dual credit students \$25 for the access.
- Would still need to partner with a digital course material provider for digital material delivery from other publishers.

What students consider affordable:

A recent survey conducted by Consortium of Academic Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI) given to higher education students within various institutions in the state of Illinois asked students what they considered low-cost for course materials. Of the respondents, 60% of students said \$0 - \$40 is what they consider low-cost:

Finding 3. 60% of students considered costs of \$0 to less than \$40 to be low cost for the course materials in one course.



2023 Illinois Course Materials Survey: Student Perspective Report

Lake Land College Bookstore average costs for consumable course materials - using Spring 2024 data:

- Average of all consumables: \$97.09
- Average of workbooks/lab manual/note sets: \$67.60
- Average of digital course materials: \$92.55
- Average of all supplies: \$233.44
 - This average isn't the best representation since it includes supplies that range from under \$10 all the way to the dental kit over \$3000.

Based on this data, our what our students pay for consumable course materials isn't what they consider low-cost. Granted, this isn't every student since we have our rental program and the majority of the college's course materials use rentals (82.7% of course materials currently do not have additional charge to students), but still shows the reality of the cost of course materials in relation to what students can afford.