Inclusive Access & Equitable Access

Automatically Connecting Students to Lower Cost Course Materials

How Course Materials Simplicity, Timeliness and Affordability Impact the Student Experience

The course materials market continues to evolve as students demand greater accessibility and affordability. At the same time we are seeing an increase in the kinds of print and digital resources available, as well as different models and channels students use to access those resources. The market is changing and schools, their course materials partners, and publishers are actively responding.

For students, the simpler the better. Today's students want:

1. Streamlined access to course materials
2. To minimize the number of platforms and portals they have to navigate
3. Peace of mind that they are getting the best price possible
4. Convenience

For schools, there is a constant pressure to reduce the cost of required course materials. Today's schools want:

1. Assurance that the right materials are available at the right price
2. The easiest path possible for students to access their course materials
3. Increased preparedness and performance that can lead to stronger student outcomes
4. Insight into which students are using which materials to avoid duplicates and overpayment
5. Opportunities and options to generate additional revenue if they wish

For publishers, it's about transparency. Publishers in today's market want:

1. To get as many print and digital resources into students' hands as possible
2. To keep up with demand for courseware (self-study guides, self-assessments and homework tools)
3. To verify usage and fees through financial controls and analytics

While each stakeholder has their own objectives, the common themes that unite them are accessibility and affordability. Inclusive Access and Equitable Access programs where students automatically receive their materials by the first day of class, are, by their very nature, structured to improve accessibility and affordability. Connecting students to their materials in this way can improve student preparedness, success, completion and retention.

STUDENTS / MATERIALS

ACCESS / AFFORDABILITY
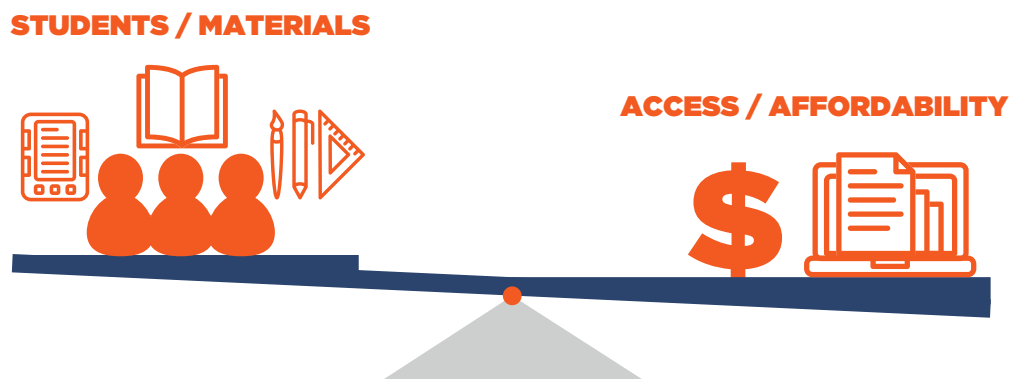
Under an Inclusive Access or Equitable Access program, there is very little a student needs to do as they automatically receive their materials simply by being enrolled in a course and agreeing to participate. It's easy and stress-free with the following advantages:

✓ **Students come to class more prepared on day one**

✓ **All students in a course are working from the same version/edition, which keeps content flowing smoothly**

✓ **Publishers can offer a lower price point as costs are spread over a larger student population**

✓ **Students understand exactly what they are paying since the fee is either bundled with tuition or billed as a separate materials fee**

✓ **Pricing is competitive so students don't necessarily feel the need to shop around**

Increased Availability	**Course Consistency**	**Cost Effectiveness**	**Total Transparency**
More Students Have Easier Access to More Materials	Better Engagement and Enhanced Learning Experiences	Keeps Fees in Check with Volume/Reduced Pricing	Verifies Usage so Schools and Students Only Pay What is Owed

Faculty Participation in Inclusive Access (*Source: NACS)

3%	5%	12%	21%	50%
2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2022
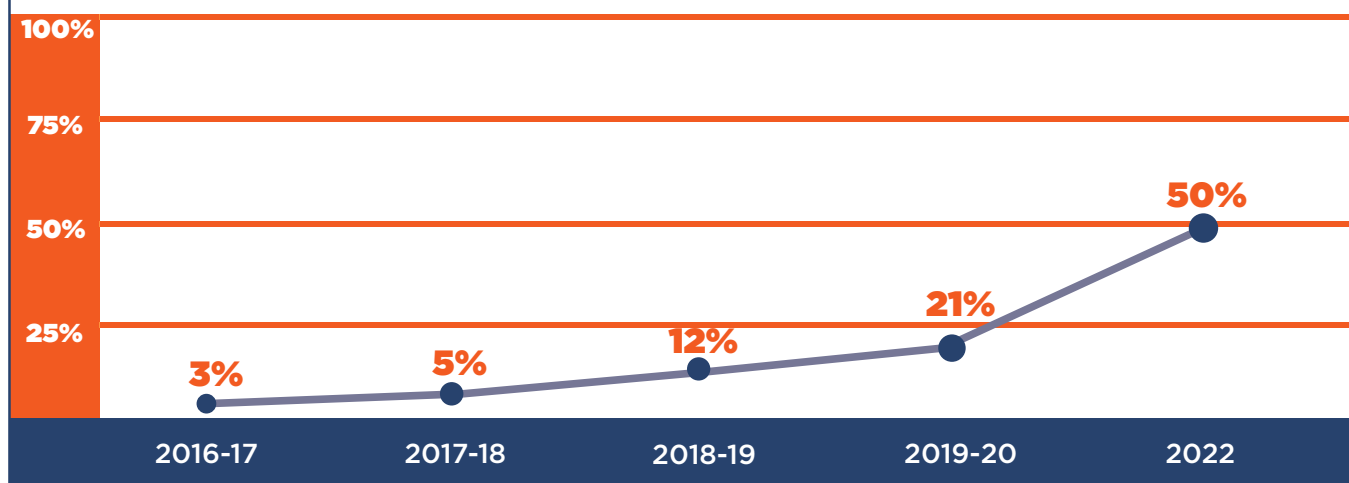
WHO IS USING INCLUSIVE ACCESS PROGRAMS?

The percent of faculty who have participated in an Inclusive Access program has nearly doubled every year since 2017[1]. In 2022, NACS reported that Inclusive Access continues to grow, as more than half of faculty have used Inclusive Access in at least one course.[2]

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN INCLUSIVE ACCESS AND EQUITABLE ACCESS?

Inclusive Access and Equitable Access models can work independently, or in tandem, depending on a school's overall objectives and the types of materials they use the most. This flexibility allows schools to further personalize the learning experience and apply the model that works best for their students.

INCLUSIVE ACCESS		EQUITABLE ACCESS
Digital only	COURSE MATERIALS	All print, digital, devices and other items
Automatic day one access to digital materials simply by enrolling in a course	DELIVERY & ACCESS	Automatic day one access; print and other tangible items are shipped to student or school while digital materials are immediately available online
Drive down costs for students with discounted prices; fees are included in tuition or billed as a separate resource fee	PRICING MODEL	School sets the student sell price; students may apply financial aid as appropriate
Students can decline materials using Ambassador's EZ Opt-Out, which helps schools maintain compliance with Department of Education IA requirements	OPT-OUTS	School decides if students are allowed to opt-out using Ambassador's EZ Opt-Out functionality or return materials
Prevent duplicate distribution and payments; simplify financial reporting and reconciliation	CONTROLS	Prevent duplicate distribution and payments; simplify financial reporting and reconciliation

Inclusive Access programs are typically handled at the course level, giving faculty the option to decide how students will receive materials while protecting their own academic freedom to choose the most applicable and relevant materials. Inclusive Access programs connect students to variety of digital materials in time for the first day of class. Pricing is typically based on a negotiated publisher rate and is embedded as a course fee or resource fee for each student. Department of Education regulations mandate that students have the option to opt-out of automatically receiving required course materials.

Equitable Access programs, much like Inclusive Access programs, also provide students with automatic access to materials in time for the start of class. However, Equitable Access programs include all types of materials, such as print, digital, devices, scrubs, kits and more. There are a variety of factors the school will consider when setting or adjusting the student price (e.g., per credit hour, per student, by program, etc.), and that price is bundled into each student's tuition and/or fees. Students also have the option to opt-out of automatically receiving required course materials.

WHAT SHOULD YOU KNOW BEFORE YOU JUMP INTO INCLUSIVE ACCESS AND EQUITABLE ACCESS?

While Inclusive Access and Equitable Access programs seem straightforward to those on the receiving end, there is a lot that happens on the administrative and compliance side that schools and providers need to consider.
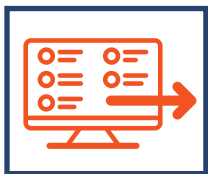
A Clear and Compliant Opt-Out Process

Federal requirements mandate that students have the option to opt-out of automatically assigned materials, allowing them to purchase course materials from an alternate source. Though most students don't opt-out because of the low-cost and high-convenience factors of such programs, students still must be given that choice.

Schools must have a clearly defined opt-out process in place that is easy for students to understand and navigate. Some schools offer students the ability to decline materials at the college level, course level or by item. There are certain instances where students are not permitted to opt-out (i.e. custom content). Students also may need to reverse their opt-out status so they can receive materials as their needs evolve.

The opt-out process is far more challenging when it comes to Publisher Direct Content embedded in the Learning Management System (LMS). This is because of varying access durations and duplicate usage. Because the links to Publisher Direct Content within the LMS tend to be openly available to enrolled students whether they opt-out or not, publishers need to be able to block access when appropriate. Schools also need to be able to confirm when students have opted out so that they are not charged for materials they didn't use.

Single Point Integrations

More course materials options can mean more to manage, and integrating with each and every publisher and platform can be overwhelming. Providing centralized access to all resources through a Course Materials Platform is key to further simplifying Inclusive Access and Equitable Access processes.

For students, it facilitates single sign-on access and eliminates the need to jump from platform to platform. This gives them more time to focus on coursework and learning outcomes.

For schools, aggregating all content and managing all integrations can add significant stress to its IT team and infrastructure. A centralized Course Materials Platform takes the away the burden and means data is easier to access and verify to help schools avoid overpayment.

Publishers benefit too. A single point for all integrations provides greater transparency, which eases account management and reconciliation.

Analytics and Financial Controls

Schools and publishers need transparency around usage and costs in Inclusive Access and Equitable Access programs, yet the reporting process can be complex, cumbersome and time intensive. It's important to have controls in place to capture all required data for all content, including non-expiring, semester-based, or census-based content, as well as to manage duplicate access for students who might use the same content in more than one course or over more than one term. Dedicated, technology-based analytics and financial controls take away the guesswork, allowing schools and publishers to verify exactly who used what, who opted out, and what is owed so that schools don't overpay and publishers receive accurate compensation.

Dedicated Support

Even though Inclusive Access and Equitable Access materials acquisition is automatic, students still need a point of contact for transaction inquiries, login questions and more. Whether students seek email and phone help, use self-help tools, or leverage a combination of these support options, it is important that students have a direct connection with accurate and thorough support so they can keep focused on their studies.

HOW DOES AMBASSADOR SUPPORT INCLUSIVE ACCESS AND EQUITABLE ACCESS PROGRAMS?

Ambassador has been powering successful, compliant, day-one automatic fulfillment initiatives for nearly two decades. Ambassador works with each school to develop a solution based on the school's objectives, it's staff's tolerance for change, and the speed at which the school wants to implement a new program.

Ambassador takes a tremendous burden off of the school's staff and IT team. Through a system integration or data file share managed by Ambassador, the school provides Ambassador with its course materials list, student directory information, shipping addresses and course enrollments. Ambassador takes it from there, matching information to required course materials. Ambassador confirms availability and notifies the school of any edition changes, price changes or supply shortages, and completes fulfillment for all materials.

EQUITABLE ACCESS IN ACTION

OBJECTIVE:

One of Ambassador's client schools that has traditionally used an online bookstore (offering students the choice of print, eBooks and other digital content) wanted to save even more money and ensure all of its students had all of their materials.

IMPLEMENTATION:

The school transitioned to Ambassador All-In, the company's Equitable Access solution. Ambassador tracks student and course information directly from the school's Student Information System, matches data with each student's required course materials, and automatically provisions those course materials for day-one access.

RESULTS:

The school has peace of mind that all students have all materials on time, and it is **saving approximately 25%** of its course materials expenditure in the process.

For digital materials, Ambassador secures and loads materials into the school's digital content collection, available to students immediately through their platforms, which integrate with Ambassador's Course Materials Platform, RODA. Ambassador can configure the system for non-expiring, semester-based and census-based digital content, which saves the school money as they only pay for materials used and they avoid duplicates and overpayments.

Ambassador procures all physical course materials and stocks items in the school's dedicated inventory within Ambassador's distribution centers. Warehouse staff pick, pack and ship materials to the student's home or to campus (as directed) using Ambassador's address validation functionality.

Through RODA, Ambassador collects school voucher charges for weekly invoicing to the school. Students can opt-out at the college, course or item level (including Publisher Direct LMS content) using Ambassador's EZ Opt-Out technology, and Ambassador tracks all transactions so students are not charged for these materials. Ambassador handles all license code redemptions, course drops and cancellations and provides detailed reconciliation to the school.

Ambassador further secures the process for schools and publishers, ensuring that access is blocked for students who opt-out, while providing visibility into all transactions so schools only pay what they owe, and publishers are accurately compensated.

AMBASSADOR DOES ALL THE HEAVY LIFTING

- Strategic planning
- Student and course materials alignment
- Materials availability and pricing confirmation
- Print, digital and other fulfillment
- Opt-out facilitation and management
- License code management and redemption
- Reconciliation and invoicing

Ambassador is helping schools adopt Inclusive Access and Equitable Access programs that promote simplicity, timeliness and affordability. After all, easier access to affordable materials contributes to better student preparedness and a more engaging and productive learning experience.

AMBASSADOR
EDUCATION SOLUTIONS

About Ambassador Education Solutions

For decades, Ambassador has made course materials simple, effective and affordable. From print and digital to OER, devices and more, Ambassador eases course materials adoption, management, delivery and access. Ambassador's Course Materials Platform, RODA, integrates with leading SIS, LMS, financial systems, eBook readers, publishers and digital content platforms. RODA connects students with affordable course materials, streamlines operations for schools and eases account management and reconciliation for publishers, all through one easy-to-use platform. Schools and publishers trust Ambassador to improve course materials accessibility, lower operational and financial risks, and deliver usage and cost transparency.

Resources

1. Phil on EdTech, The Rise of Inclusive Access, February 25, 2021, https://philonedtech.com/the-rise-of-inclusive-access-digging-into-recent-data-on-higher-ed-course-materials/

2. NACS Faculty Report, March 24, 2022, https://www.nacs.org/nacs-faculty-report-use-of-digital-course-materials-changes-as-campuses-reopen