The Affordability Challenge:
Lowering the Cost of College Learning Materials While Improving Outcomes and Retention

Most students pursue college as an investment in their future. Hard work and dedication now should pay off later with more career choices, better problem-solving skills and an expanded knowledge of the world.

The High Price of Higher Ed
Managing the cost of higher education can be daunting. Tuition has increased a staggering 163 percent on average in the past 30 years. Add to that the rising cost of learning materials. In the past decade, the average cost of textbooks has gone up four times faster than the rate of inflation.

According to the College Board, average college students spend more than $1,200 on textbooks and supplies during a school year.

It’s no wonder that more and more students are critical of increasing course material costs while academic outcomes remain unchanged.

For students already struggling to pay tuition, the high cost of course materials can affect their academic progress, impacting what classes and how many they take per semester, withdrawal numbers and graduation rates. Fortunately, there are a number of options available now that institutions, professors and students can take advantage of that make learning materials more affordable.

Affordability Affects Achievement
The need to reduce prices is driven by a greater understanding that the cost of learning materials can be challenging for students to manage. An OnCampus Research survey of students reveals that nearly one in five students has opted not to acquire at least one required course material because of cost.

Two out of five students who did not obtain at least one course material reported receiving a lower-than-expected grade in the course.

Access to course materials is a key contributor to student success. Seventy-seven percent of faculty report using required textbooks in almost every class session, according to a survey of faculty conducted by the Follett Higher Education Group, which manages course material delivery for more than 1,200 campuses throughout North America.

Institutions and professors are sympathetic to the impact that the cost of learning materials has on their students. More than 90 percent of faculty members say that textbooks are priced too high in a recent survey by Inside Higher Ed.

Students are savvy consumers, often delaying purchase of learning materials for classes requiring digital components until the quarter or semester has begun to make sure that instructors will use the courseware. They also compare the costs of new, used, rental and digital options before making acquisition decisions.

WHAT’S INSIDE:
The Affordability Challenge
includED® Inclusive Access
Benefits for All Participants
Tracking Success: Students and Faculty

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5 Student Monitor™. “Converting data to insight, Lifestyle & Media — Spring 2018.” Student Monitor, LLC.
More Affordable Options

There are four options that campus stores can leverage now to make textbooks and learning materials more affordable:

1. Digital Learning Materials
2. Open Education Resources (OER)
3. Rental Programs
4. Used Textbooks

Digital Learning Materials
The use of digital versions of textbooks and other course materials — often called eBooks — that students access on laptops or mobile devices is growing in popularity. A study by The NPD Group finds that 71 percent of students used digital materials in college courses, up 45 percent from 2016.\(^9\)

**Key Fact:**
About 70 percent of course materials are available in digital format, and that number is expected to increase as student acceptance of the format grows.\(^{10}\)

There are two categories of digital formats:

1. **eBooks** — typically delivered through a digital eReader with content provided in one of two formats. Both types provide little or no interactivity with the material. This content type represents two percent of all national digital content provisioning programs.\(^{11}\)
   - **Portable Document Format (PDF)** is the most basic format of digital books, which is created by producing a PDF version of a textbook’s layout. The most popular PDF software is Adobe Acrobat Reader.
   - **Electronic Publication (ePub)** is the most widely used eBook format and is the standard open format for the publishing industry.

2. **Courseware** — software designed to be used in an educational course. Courseware can often be personalized to address students’ specific learning needs, with the content adapted based on the learners’ activities. This content type represents 98 percent of all national digital content provisioning programs.\(^{12}\)

Digital learning materials can be made available for rent with a time-based subscription or purchased for use on student devices. Or schools can make digital books available via a learning management system (LMS), which often also includes tools for instructors to add additional course materials, track student progress and engage with students.

The price of digital learning materials is usually significantly less than their printed counterparts because there are no costs associated with printing or shipping. Purchasers simply buy access to the materials online. Students gain immediate access to digital learning materials because they are never out of stock.

Prices for digital learning materials can be up to 90 percent less than the cost of print versions. Based on internal data from April 2017 to March 2018, in fiscal year 2018 Follett saved students more than $50 million compared to the cost of print textbooks by offering digital options for textbooks.\(^{13}\)

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\(^{10}\) VitalSource Technologies, Fall 2018.

\(^{11}\) Follett Higher Education Group. Internal sell-thru data research based on 1,200 stores.

\(^{12}\) Follett Higher Education Group. Internal sell-thru data research based on 1,200 stores.

\(^{13}\) Follett internal data, April 2017–March 2018.
Open Education Resources (OER)
OER learning materials are openly licensed digital educational materials that can be used instead of traditional textbooks and other courseware. The concept has been available for a while but is emerging now as a viable option to reduce the cost of learning materials while still providing rich, up-to-date content.

The NPD Group finds that one in nine students currently uses OER materials, and of that group, more than half use it to supplement print or digital textbooks.\(^4\)

The Inside Higher Ed survey finds that instructors who consider price when selecting course materials may achieve the goal of reducing costs by assigning more OER.\(^5\) Professors can design courses on their own by building on available content from OER aggregators that host large collections of open resources. The process requires careful vetting of materials to make sure that they are high quality, peer reviewed and formatted properly.

Another option is to adopt OER content curated by a third party. For example, Lumen Learning reviews content from a variety of sources, selects the best available OER and adds timely updates, learning design and technical support to produce effective courseware for introductory courses, general education and developmental education available through an LMS. Working with Follett, students are charged only $10 to $25, which represents a significant savings compared to the cost of traditional learning materials.

OER have already proven to increase student success measured by course completions and grades earned of a C or better.\(^6\)

**Key Fact:**
Students using OER enjoy an average of 83% savings with the same or better learning outcomes.

Rental Programs
Textbook rental programs can help to reduce the cost of materials for students who only want course materials while classes are in session. By renting new or used textbooks, students can save up to 80 percent off the cost of purchasing new textbooks. Follett actively pursues options to expand rental programs, including a recent direct partnership initiative with publishers to extend the benefits of their rental programs through campus bookstores.

When students purchase textbooks, there’s no guarantee that they will command strong buyback prices for titles not readopted for the next semester. Book rental is a low-risk option because students know that the rental fee is the set cost. Rental programs are also a good choice for titles that do not require access codes for supplemental materials.

Rental programs can also increase the supply of used books per campus, lowering the costs of materials for students in future semesters.

Used Textbooks
An NPD Group study finds that the vast majority – 88 percent – of students still purchase print textbooks.\(^7\) Students often look for used copies of required materials in an effort to save money. Campus stores have responded by making sure that a portion of their textbook inventory includes used materials in good condition to ensure affordable course material options.

Not only are used textbooks less expensive than new, but students can also sell books back to the campus store during buyback to recoup some of the initial costs.

For institutions, used textbooks are a good option for popular titles in general education and core courses that have larger enrollments.

**Key Fact:**
When faculty make timely adoption choices about learning materials, the probability of sourcing more used and rental texts in secondary marketplaces increases, ultimately lowering the cost of materials.

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**Sample: 4,909 open course students, 11,818 traditional course students, 50 different undergraduate courses, 130 teachers, 8 institutions in 2014–2015 academic year.**

**Method:** Quasi-experimental design with: Propensity Score Matching, Post Test Only. Dependent variables: Completion; C or Better; Credits Enrolled This Term; Next Term. Independent variable: Textbook condition. 3 covariates, including age, gender, and race.


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The Industry Responds to Students’ Needs

When students enroll in college, they have their sights set on bettering their lives through education. The educational community is responding to the call to make learning materials more affordable by taking advantage of technology and alternate content provisioning program models to provide options that meet both the needs of institutions and students.

Nearly three-quarters of students agree that having their own course materials helps them earn better grades. ¹⁸

By considering ways to incorporate digital learning materials, OER, rental programs and used textbooks into sourcing options, institutions can enable students to get the best prices while quickly and efficiently acquiring needed learning materials.

Automating Affordability

A new inclusive access model is emerging that enables institutions to simplify the process of acquiring required learning materials. Professors are still able to choose the course materials, be it digital, print or a mix that works best for their courses. Students can opt-in to gain access to the materials through the school, which can either be included in the cost of tuition or fees.

Students know upfront what their course materials will cost and are prepared on the first day of classes with everything they need to succeed, generally at a much lower cost than procuring everything on their own.

includED®

Group Purchasing Delivers Affordability Directly to Students

Digital learning materials, OER, rental programs and used textbooks are proven options to help lower the cost of learning materials for college students. Follett advances the goal of affordability a step further with includED, an inclusive access program that delivers all required print or digital course materials to students as part of their tuition or fees. The program removes the uncertainty and stress of how to acquire course materials at the best price at the beginning of every semester and leverages bulk buying, which yields greater discounts resulting in lower costs, and ultimately better student engagement.

STUDENT PERSPECTIVE:

“I have had the opportunity to take advantage of the includED program midway in my BA program, and it has been great. I don’t have to worry about waiting for class to start to find out the books required. I don’t have to search online for the book or worry about shipping time and extra costs. It’s a great benefit to the students, and I am grateful I’ve had the chance to use it.” ¹⁹

includED was developed by Follett in partnership with publishers, institutions and faculty to level the playing field to ensure that all students have the materials they need on or before the first day of classes. Students who are engaged and prepared for class do better, are less likely to withdraw from courses and are more focused on the pursuit of completing their degrees.

Institutions can promote the benefits of includED to students who often evaluate multiple schools before deciding where to enroll. Lower course material costs included in tuition is a compelling differentiator. It’s also a way to provide student achievement support that can be evaluated on a regular basis to measure effectiveness.

includED offers faculty the academic freedom of choice to select the materials that work best for their learning objectives versus staying with older editions or not adopting a title because of concerns about added costs for students. All students are automatically provided with the right edition of a title. Follett has delivered an estimated 70 percent in average savings to students on the 150+ campuses where the includED program is currently implemented.
How Follett’s includED Works for Higher Education Students

The faculty defines what course materials are adopted for courses that are part of the includED program. Then Follett sources everything and provides the institution with material costs that they can share with students. When students enroll in classes that are part of the includED program, they receive all includED course materials on or before the first day of classes. Students also benefit by getting better market pricing than they most likely could find if they bought everything separately.

The program is flexible because the format of materials can be either one standard type of course material or a mix of new or used print, rental, digital learning materials and OER. Since it is essentially the institutions’ programs under includED, they can choose to brand the white label program with their own school-specific name or use the includED designation. For example, the University of Florida calls their program UF All Access.

According to Dr. Brian Harfe, Associate Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Assistant Provost, Teaching and Technology and Professor in the College of Medicine at the University of Florida, “[t]extbook costs continue to be a source of financial hardship for many of our students. The ability of the UF All Access program to drastically decrease the cost of textbooks for UF students has reduced a financial hurdle for obtaining a UF degree.”
5 Ways to Customize the includED Program

The includED program is very flexible. Institutions choose from options that work best for them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Course Material Format</th>
<th>Materials can be print, rental, digital courseware, eBooks and OER, or the format can be a mix of all types of materials.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Charges Passed On to Students</td>
<td>Charges can be passed on to students as course material charges or included in tuition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Course or Term</td>
<td>Institutions can either be charged for each includED course in which a student is enrolled or for each term they are enrolled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Custom or Flat Charges</td>
<td>Follett can charge the institution a custom charge for each material adopted, or the institution can be charged a flat fee either by course or by term.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 5. Student Enrollment Choice | **Choose either:**  
  **Opt-Out:** Provisions all students in the includED program by default. If a student does not want to participate, the institution can choose to allow an opt-out.  
  **Opt-In:** Requires students to opt-in to the program by taking an action such as clicking a link on an email or enrolling in the program on a Follett site. |
Digital-only Option

For institutions that select the digital-only format for course materials, Follett offers Instant Access with includEd, which produces even greater savings for students because it only incorporates digital assets that generally cost less than corresponding new print editions. Students are auto-enrolled into their digital content with a single sign-on (SSO), eliminating the need to manage multiple log-ins and user accounts.

For example, at Alamo Community College, costs for digital materials are passed on to students as course material charges through a program called IM Direct. By choosing digital-only materials for some courses, the college is actively lowering costs for students while making it convenient to access the materials.

FACULTY PERSPECTIVE:
“It is an excellent concept, saves $$$$ for students in the long run, eliminates complaints about the price of textbooks, and ensures they have all materials for each course. There is no doubt this is an advantage.”

STUDENT PERSPECTIVE:
“Having textbooks online means I won’t lose one or forget to bring one home or to class. I have access to them 24/7.”

Convenience from the Beginning

Making it easier for students to succeed is a goal of every learning institution. Quick and easy access to course materials at a set price through includEd delivers significant convenience and accessibility for students:

Print — course packs of new, used and/rental books can be preassembled by the bookstore for no-hassle pickup by students.

STUDENT PERSPECTIVE:
“The books always arrive on time and are always in great condition — even if they’re used.”

Digital — easy-to-use SSO provides students fast access to all online resources from one place.

STUDENT PERSPECTIVE:
“I can access my textbooks from anywhere as long as I have my laptop or internet connection.”

Students like the stress-free aspect of the includEd program because they do not need to worry about finding and paying for course materials as they settle in for the semester. For freshmen, it’s an especially welcome program as they transition to a new type of learning environment and have many adjustments to make. Materials are delivered in the same way that many of them are used to getting them in elementary, middle and high school. Even parents appreciate includEd because they know that their students have exactly the right materials needed to succeed in their courses.

PARENT PERSPECTIVE:
“When my son learned that his textbooks would be included, he felt like Xavier appreciated and wanted him, that he was being rewarded and celebrated. It was a message to him that Xavier valued him and would value him. No other school sent this type of message as strongly. Everyone wants to be at a place where they are wanted. He later learned that it was a benefit to all incoming freshmen, but it spoke to him, and I’m convinced that his financial aid package, which included the Day One program, significantly influenced his decision to attend Xavier.”

St. Thomas University, Florida
Tracking Success: Savings and Improved Grades

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A/B/C</th>
<th>Without includEd</th>
<th>With includEd</th>
<th>Net Change</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A/B</td>
<td>Without includEd</td>
<td>With includEd</td>
<td>Net Change</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A/A</td>
<td>Without includEd</td>
<td>With includEd</td>
<td>Net Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41.9%</td>
<td>49.6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
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St. Thomas University reports saving $540,000 in course materials by offering 384 includEd courses to 1,100 students. The university also found positive correlations in improved student grades after the introduction of includEd.

Source: St. Thomas University, October 2017.

20 St. Thomas University faculty response in a survey conducted by St. Thomas University about the includEd program, August 2017.
21 Victoria Williamson, psychology major at the University of Florida, “UF shifts to e-textbooks, saving students money and lightening their load,” The Gainesville Sun, March 21, 2018.
22 St. Thomas University student response in a survey conducted by St. Thomas University about the includEd program, August 2017.
23 Victoria Williamson, psychology major at the University of Florida, “UF shifts to e-textbooks, saving students money and lightening their load,” The Gainesville Sun, March 21, 2018.
24 Jill C. Rice, parent of an Xavier University student.
Benefits for All Participants

includED produces benefits for all the participants in the program: institutions, faculty and students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutions</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Students</th>
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<tr>
<td>Colleges and universities are proactively seeking ways to lower the cost of course materials for students. Results from includED at participating schools show that the program delivers on that goal. It also lowers withdrawals and increases student success, metrics that all institutions measure. For example, in Spring 2018, the University of Florida provided course materials through the UF All Access program at an average of about $76 compared to $155 for stand-alone access codes or new book purchases, a 37 percent savings. The savings are even higher when compared to average stand-alone book+code packages of $228. The program delivered materials for 142 courses and served more than 16,000 students.25 In another example, at Southeastern Missouri University, OER charges are passed on to students as course material charges by course. The school finds that the includED program lowers the costs of materials for students and improves student grades and retention. Institutions can promote success with the includED program as part of student recruitment and retention efforts. It’s also a way to leverage investments in campus-wide information technology to deliver digital course materials to students.</td>
<td>With the includED program, faculty have the academic freedom to choose the materials that best meet the goals of course curriculum with the knowledge that students will have access to everything they need on the first day of class. Everyone is also guaranteed to be using the same edition of the materials. Prework can be more easily assigned, so students can hit the ground running on the first day of classes. No one has an excuse to be unprepared. FACULTY PERSPECTIVE: “Students have the potential of being much better prepared and seem much more capable of keeping pace with the syllabus. I consider this highly valuable.”27</td>
<td>Students benefit from includED in a number of ways. They are guaranteed access to the course materials they need on or before the first day of classes. The cost of materials is already factored into tuition or fees. Because they know the costs upfront, they don’t need to defer or take fewer classes because of course material costs. Financial aid can also be applied to the cost of course materials. STUDENT PERSPECTIVE: “Since I don’t have funds to not be on financial aid, me not having to pay for books is an asset.”28 Most students enter college with no knowledge about how to find and purchase learning materials because their schools provide everything. The includED program eliminates the stress of needing to procure books at the beginning of every semester. As they progress through semesters, students know that their learning materials will always be readily available no matter what their economic situation, a peace of mind that no other program offers. Seventy-two percent of University of Florida students surveyed say that the opt-in program through UF All Access is a good value and 82 percent like the convenience of accessing eBooks through provided links.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

26 Donald Pearsall, Assistant Vice Chancellor Auxiliary Services, Fayetteville State University.
27 St. Thomas University faculty response in a survey conducted by St. Thomas University about the includED program, August 2017.
28 St. Thomas University student response in a survey conducted by St. Thomas University about the includED program, August 2017.
29 University of Florida, report on UF All Access program, September 2018.
Proof of Savings

Course materials are essential to success, yet many students struggle to pay for materials, with more than one-third opting to go without some required materials because of cost. In a Follett survey of students, 70 percent agree that accessing learning materials via includED made their lives easier. Seventy-six percent said that they received the same or a greater level of value with the includED program.31

FACULTY PERSPECTIVE:
“It includes the students who have had to wait a month for loan money to come in to buy their books. Everyone is on the same playing field.”32

STUDENT PERSPECTIVE:
“I think it is great for students because textbooks are so expensive. It was nice to have the eText as well as a more affordable version of the actual textbook.”33

Institutions that implement the includED program gather data to evaluate the effectiveness of lowering costs. Results show that the bulk purchasing power of the program enables significant savings to be passed on to students.

FACULTY PERSPECTIVE:
“We surveyed our students, and they overwhelmingly said that they supported the program because of the cost savings that it provided.”34

Savings reported by institutions represent significant cost reductions for student learning materials.

At the University of Florida for the Fall 2017–Spring 2018 academic year, the UF All Access program saved students $7.6 million compared to the cost for the same book+code package or new book purchases.35

A community college in Tennessee saved more than $600,000 in total course material costs in 2016.36

At Morehouse College, Chief Procurement Officer and Associate Vice President of Procurement and Contracts Ralph Johnson says, “Follett provided lower-cost course material options ... they have also kept us on the leading edge through various initiatives that they have introduced to our campus.”

University of Florida
The Savings Add Up

The University of Florida has been an active includED program participant since 2013 with the UF All Access program. Follett tailored the program to meet state requirements that students must opt in to the program versus automatically joining the program upon enrollment. The program has proven popular. The school has processed more than 97,000 opt-in transactions and delivered materials for more than 160 different courses and products since 2013.

The school also carefully tracks how the UF All Access program helps it achieve its goal of making course materials more affordable for students.30

Student Savings*
includED vs. Purchasing Stand-Alone

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Saved</th>
<th>Saved</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt;$14 Million</td>
<td>&gt;$3.5 Million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Print textbooks or textbook/courseware bundles | Digital access codes |

* Reflects data gathered from launch of the UF All Access program in 2013 through the Summer B 2018 semester.
Better Grades, Increased Success

Access to course materials is an important contributor to academic success. Dr. Harfe from the University of Florida finds that “[t]he ability of students to obtain course materials at the beginning of the academic semester has been shown to aid students in the successful completion of their courses. The UF All Access program is an essential component that aids students in having resources from the first day of class.”

A 12-month pilot with five schools from the Virginia Community College System revealed an improvement in grades earned year over year when students had access to content on the first day of class. The content delivered was the same throughout the pilot. Only the delivery method changed with the addition of includED.

Staying the Course: the Fall of Class Withdrawals

Class withdrawals also dropped significantly after includED was implemented.

As the rate of withdrawals from classes drops, it is more likely that, over time, graduation rates will show a corresponding uptick as students complete courses and perform better as measured by improved grades.

STUDENT PERSPECTIVE:

“Without the proper course materials, I wouldn’t be as successful with participation, assignments and tests.”

Grades on the Rise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADES</th>
<th>WITHOUT includED</th>
<th>WITH includED</th>
<th>NET CHANGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A/B/C</td>
<td>66.32%</td>
<td>77.01%</td>
<td>10.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D/F</td>
<td>22.93%</td>
<td>15.64%</td>
<td>-7.29%</td>
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<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>10.74%</td>
<td>7.35%</td>
<td>-3.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRAND TOTAL</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
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Source: 12-month pilot with five schools in the Virginia Community College System, August 2015-2016.

Making the Grade: the Increase of A’s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADES</th>
<th>WITHOUT includED</th>
<th>WITH includED</th>
<th>NET CHANGE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td>29.7%</td>
<td>36.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<td>D</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
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Source: St. Thomas University, October 2017.

After St. Thomas University implemented includED, the school realized an increase in A’s and a decrease in F’s in prerequisite/intro classes over a two-year period.

St. Thomas University student response in a survey conducted by St. Thomas University about the includED program, August 2017.
A New Approach to Learning Materials

The Power of Bulk Purchasing to Lower Costs and Drive Success
As institutions and students seek ways to lower the costs of higher education, includED helps reduce the amount of course materials by sharing the benefits of bulk purchasing for new and used textbooks, digital learning materials and OER. The challenge to make learning materials more affordable is achievable while at the same time promoting retention and student success.

Institutions can proactively address the rising cost of education and gain a competitive advantage in attracting and retaining students who ultimately graduate.

Faculty have the freedom to choose the course materials that best meet the goals of their curriculum, knowing that their selections are more affordable and accessible for all students. Plus all students are guaranteed to get the same edition of the learning materials, leveling the playing field for everyone.

Students have access to all required course materials on the first day of class or before, so they are more engaged and ultimately have a better learning experience and are proven to have more success through higher grades. Because course material costs are built into tuition or fees, students know well in advance how much they are spending. Class withdrawal rates are reduced because students don’t need to drop classes after the semester starts because they can’t afford course materials. In total, students are better prepared to excel in classes, achieve academic goals and graduate ready to successfully pursue chosen careers.

For more information about what Follett is doing to make learning materials more affordable, visit: www.follett.com/affordability.

For more information about the Follett includED program, visit: www.follett.com/included.
About Follett Higher Education Group

Our purpose is to “Improve the World by Inspiring Learning and Shaping Education.” For over 145 years, we have been doing just that by bringing together affordable educational content, products and technologies to prepare learners and educators, term after term. Follett manages all formats of affordability programs at more than 900 campuses worldwide, resulting in lower costs and better access to learning materials. We are proud to serve as a trusted partner that fosters higher student success rates and influences positive outcomes.

www.follett.com/managedstores