

INCLUSIVE ACCESS

Myth vs. Fact

Inclusive Access (IA) is an innovative course material delivery model that helps institutions of higher education provide students with access to course materials on the first day of class at a discounted price. The model continues to gain popularity, with more than 1,900 campuses (and growing) making Inclusive Access models available as a required course material affordability option to their faculty and students.

Below are some easily dispelled myths about IA programs.

MYTH #1:

Inclusive Access is a model that seeks to trap students into paying a high price for course materials.

FACT:

Just the opposite. Inclusive Access models were instituted as part of the U.S. Department of Education's regulations in 2015 that permit publishers and institutions of higher education to partner together to provide students with convenient, affordable options for accessing digital course materials on the first day of class, at a discounted price. Publishers provide these materials at a cost "below competitive market rates," savings which institutions pass along to their students (see [here](#) for IA success stories). As part of the regulations, institutions are required to provide students the ability to opt-out of Inclusive Access and acquire their materials elsewhere if they so choose.

MYTH #2:

Student spending on textbooks and course materials is at an all-time high and continues to grow.

FACT:

No, in fact [recent data](#) has shown that average student spending on course materials has steadily declined over the past decade:

- **Student Watch:** a recent survey found a drop of 57% in student spending on course materials over the past ten years. The Student Watch findings are the result of a survey involving more than 20,000 students across 42 institutions.
- **Student Monitor:** another recent report indicates a 41% decline in student spending on course materials over the past ten years. The Student Monitor findings are the result of comprehensive, one-on-one campus interviews conducted among four-year, full-time undergraduates attending 94 colleges and universities.

The two organizations have different methodologies, which can result in slightly different figures, although their findings are quite similar. What they do agree on is the overall trend of student spending on course materials declining over time, which is helping provide more equitable access to materials.

MYTH #3:

Under Inclusive Access, publishers hide from students the ability to opt-out.

FACT:

Under the framework set up by the U.S. Department of Education, institutions of higher education and their affiliated bookstores are responsible for implementing an opt-out process for their students. Publishers encourage transparency and clear communication of this process so that students are fully aware of their options in obtaining their required course materials.

MYTH #4:

Inclusive Access allows publishers to automatically bill students for course materials.

FACT:

Publishers do not charge students directly for Inclusive Access programs. All financial transactions are between the student and the institution.

MYTH #5:

Publishers want Inclusive Access agreements with universities to be confusing so students won't understand the discount structure or how to opt out.

FACT:

Education publishers continue to make affordability a top priority, offering high-quality content and courseware in a variety of delivery models that have been proven to dramatically reduce the cost to students – not just through Inclusive Access, but also through digital, print rental or digital subscription models, and individual learning apps. For the purposes of Inclusive Access, to be clear, an institution and/or affiliated bookstore is responsible for determining, implementing, and communicating their final discounted retail price to students as well as their designated opt-out policy. Publishers are strong supporters of innovative and affordable programs such as Inclusive Access and highly encourage transparency so that students are fully aware of their options in obtaining required course materials.

MYTH #6:

Inclusive Access can be more expensive than traditional textbooks.

FACT:

Under the U.S. Department of Education regulations for Inclusive Access, publishers are required to offer institutions course materials “below competitive market rates.” The discounts to students are significant, with [one university](#) citing reductions in price of 50 –80% for participating students (see [here](#) for more examples). The program is popular among students, with 91% of students interested in having less expensive course materials that were included in the cost of tuition, according to [Student Watch](#).

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