



CASE STUDY

Harnessing Equitable Access to Boost Enrollment and Student Success

School

Hastings College

Location

Hastings, NE

Institution Type

4-year private

Enrollment

<1,000

SUSTAINING A COMPETITIVE EDGE

NO EXTRA COSTS AND EQUITABLE ACCESS

Most private liberal arts colleges must operate in a challenging enrollment landscape characterized by declining demographics and tuition discounting. In 2018, Hastings launched an institutional initiative to further differentiate the college among prospective students and families by moving to an innovative block schedule, a 1-1 iPad and Apple Pencil program and including all required course materials in tuition. The “no extra costs” strategy helped to boost enrollment and student success by providing day one access to materials.

In 2020, Hastings began searching for a new equitable access partner to help:

- *Improve the management of the budget for the EA program. Hastings provides students with all textbooks and course materials at no extra charge, which saves students \$4,000 or more over 4 years*
- *Determine the optimal mix of physical and digital materials to serve students and faculty, especially for physical textbooks as the college was renting them*
- *Streamline delivery and distribution to accommodate block scheduling by ensuring students had their learning materials on day one*



“They’re great partners to work with because they are very receptive and responsive. In our world, you don’t find technology companies [like Akademos] that solicit feedback and value our opinion on future needs. That’s been absolutely fantastic.”

-Patricia Kingsley, CIO, Hastings College

DEFINING EA

Equitable Access (EA) ensures students have all required textbooks and materials by the first day of class. EA delivers digital materials through the LMS and physical textbooks to home or campus.

While both EA and Inclusive Access (IA) ensure that students have materials by the first day of class, there is a key difference: EA is implemented for all courses within the institution. With IA, only certain courses are included and only digital materials are used.

SUPPORTING FISCAL PRIORITIES AND STUDENT SUCCESS IMPERATIVES

The cornerstone of the Hastings EA program is a course materials budget analysis that provides the college a transparent and comprehensive view of their expenditure. The budget analysis provides:

Cost transparency over textbook and course materials: Akademos shares the actual costs - there is no mark up or added margin whether colleges want to rent or own physical textbooks. With a small flat fee for logistics and support, the model is designed with no financial incentive to recommend more or less expensive materials.

Budgeting and planning insight: The platform estimates the costs of materials selected by the faculty. It highlights cost per course, per student, and credit hour. The analysis provides administrative leaders and department heads with a baseline. The model can run cost scenarios based on the different types of course materials - OER, physical, digital and so on—or renting versus owning to identify potential cost savings.

The budget analysis capabilities helped Hastings College administrators to make immediate decisions that:

- *Shifted the mix to 60% digital, 40% physical textbooks*
- *Reduced costs and staff time from shipping and campus distribution*
- *Let the college own physical textbooks as assets instead of renting them*

Key campus constituencies - students and faculty - derive benefits from the partnership.

STUDENTS Hastings College is committed to student success and the EA program tackles some major barriers:

- **Equity** - *each student has access to learning materials for every course on day one. They all start class on an even playing field and begin learning immediately*
- **Accessibility** - *students with special accommodations automatically get the type of material they need regardless of adoption - i.e. digital vs physical*
- **Affordability** - *avoids the “last dollar expense” barrier when students after having paid their most immediate expenses cannot afford to buy some or all of their course materials*

An enhanced digital experience provides redemption codes for digital materials and physical textbooks are received in 24 hours. This is essential for managing the time challenges around add/drops as well as block scheduling.

FACULTY An EA program ensures that faculty have choice with materials and insight on student usage:

- *Maintain academic freedom over course material selection*
- *Have a range options in materials—traditional textbooks, OER, digital*
- *Receive data on student engagement with materials*

The data and analytics software provides faculty extra support with immediate insight into students who might need extra help and long term insight into decisions about retaining or changing course materials.

EASE OF IMPLEMENTATION

Akademos deploys a suite of integrations that is completely customized for use with the Hastings systems. The platform integrates with existing and future campus technology including the: SIS, LMS, Student Portal, and Financial aid/payment system.



"We only had a short time to get up and running and the team really delivered from training to LMS integration to meet our deadlines. For our IT team this integration was not a heavy lift."

-Patricia Kingsley, CIO, Hastings College

OPTIMIZING **EQUITABLE ACCESS**, REDUCING **EQUITY GAPS** AND **SAVING COSTS**

Hastings College's EA program and Akademos partnership helps support its priorities:

- *Accelerating student success through equity in the classroom by giving each student the same technology, tools, and course content from day one*
- *Enhancing the fiscal management necessary for No Extra Costs. This model helps the college manage its materials budget efficiently. The cost of materials for students is significantly less than the \$620 nationwide average*



"For us, the idea of equity for all of our students is foundational to who we want to be as a college. Partnering with Akademos helps us provide a level playing field for all students so they all have the same materials from day one. Our ability to get the best mix of textbooks and materials has generated significant savings, helping us continue our No Extra Costs promise."

Learn more about Hastings College as they celebrate 140 years of helping students find their future here.

To learn how Akademos can boost student success and optimize learning materials budget management, request an Equitable Access exploration session here.