

Fast-Tracking the Future

How a Global Pandemic Inspired a Win-Win Solution for Cloud County Community College

With so much uncertainty around the return to campus this fall, administrators at Cloud County Community College needed to guarantee learning continuity, accessibility for students with disabilities, and an engaging experience even at a distance. One fundamental aspect of achieving those objectives related to the textbooks and other course materials students would be using.

The school had already begun exploring an Inclusive Access (IA) pilot program through which students in select courses would automatically receive their required textbooks, in an affordable digital format, through the school's Learning Management System. Now, in the face of the COVID crisis, the Inclusive Access model seemed like the perfect, elegant solution for *all* students in *all* courses.

In partnership with RedShelf and senior campus leadership, Cloud County's Director of Auxiliary Services, Caesar Wood, and Bookstore Manager, Brent Cox, embarked on a full-campus rollout that launched in just a few short weeks.

With hands-on support from RedShelf, the implementation team quickly established buy-in from key campus stakeholders, set up technical integrations with campus systems, and launched the program—providing students a more affordable and streamlined experience, while driving new efficiencies and revenue for the institution.

RedShelf sat down with Caesar to talk through his process for bringing IA to campus, the impacts of going 100% digital this past summer, and what he sees as the future of course materials amid higher ed's many unknowns.

RedShelf: Thanks for taking some time to virtually chat with us today! We're excited to hear what your campus has been up to over these last few crazy months.

Caesar Wood: Of course!

RedShelf: So it may be hard to imagine a time pre-pandemic, but I know you started exploring Inclusive Access just about a year ago.

Caesar Wood: Yes, Brent and I started looking at Inclusive Access last September after meeting RedShelf at the Mid States Conference. We did a lot of research, starting with taking a deep dive into our current course materials process from start to finish. We wanted a fresh look at everything from receiving faculty adoptions, to ordering inventory, to dealing with the rental and buyback process. From this deep dive, we realized there were a lot of issues, especially when it came to time and resources, and knew there had to be a better solution. We then dove into better understanding the model and its benefits, even calling several RedShelf IA campus partners to hear about their programs.



Caesar Wood

Director of Auxiliary Services
Cloud County Community College



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RedShelf: So you definitely did your homework! What ultimately attracted you to this model?

Caesar Wood: There were three main reasons for us, first and foremost being student affordability. Tuition and fees aren't decreasing anytime soon, but we knew we could significantly reduce the cost of course materials. The second driver was being able to improve our margins by reducing physical inventory and not having to deal with the sunk cost of dead inventory sitting on our shelves. Lastly, the guarantee of first-day access for students sets them up for academic success and removes the fear of facing low inventory or backorders at the bookstore.

RedShelf: After doing your research and deciding to move forward with the program, what was your strategy for winning campus stakeholder buy-in?

Caesar Wood: This was a process really focused on building trust and understanding everyone's perspective. I went to my boss, the VP of Administrative Services, to pitch the model and focused on the business case and the positive impact eBooks would have on profit margins. I knew it was important to get academic buy-in so I worked with the academic deans and vice presidents and focused on the student savings and first-day access benefits. I was simultaneously meeting with individual key veteran faculty members to get them on board and listen to their initial concerns. When it came time to pitch the idea to the larger group of faculty, already having several IA faculty "champions" in support of the program really helped generate buy-in and excitement.

RedShelf: So after getting the necessary stakeholder buy-in, you were planning to do a three-course pilot in Summer 2020, but COVID-19 disrupted those plans.

Caesar Wood: We decided on April 1 that our summer semester would be moved to online instruction and immediately started preparing. It quickly became obvious that Inclusive Access would be the most viable solution for course materials delivery. In early May we decided to change our three-course pilot to a campus-wide rollout to ensure our students had access to their materials, even when virtual. Summer semester started June 1 so we had less than three weeks to get everything ready for launch.

RedShelf: So it was go time! What'd it take to transition from prepping for a three-course pilot to delivering digital to 100% of summer courses in a matter of weeks?

Caesar Wood: We couldn't have done it without RedShelf. Even before the pandemic, the team visited our campus to meet with stakeholders to ensure there wouldn't be any hiccups. Prepping for this summer, the team was super responsive and attentive to help us get everything from the technical integrations to the billing and accounting set up in record time. Their customer support was unparalleled and I often felt like I was the only campus they were dealing with, which I know is far from the case. You just don't see that oftentimes in a partnership.

RedShelf: Happy to hear we could help support your campus even under a time crunch! So, how did the launch of Inclusive Access go for the campus?

Caesar Wood: Eighty-five percent of students remained opted into the program and we received extremely positive feedback from both students and faculty. On the business side, we hit our margins and were able to reduce the stock we had in the bookstore. All around, it was an extremely successful launch and we've decided to continue the program this fall with nearly 230 courses delivering their materials through Inclusive Access.

RedShelf: Looking ahead to this fall and beyond, what do you hope to accomplish with Inclusive Access?

Caesar Wood: In the near term, we'll be conducting student and faculty surveys to get feedback and will also look at our own data to continue improving and iterating on the program. While COVID-19 definitely expedited this process for us, I really do see this being a sustainable course materials model for Cloud County Community College. Now more than ever, I believe the way of the future will be through digital, and Inclusive Access will be helping us lead the way.

Summer Term 2020

100%
of courses
moved to IA

85%
of students
opted in

10%
increase in
textbook
revenue

Fast-track
your institution's
digital future at
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