

EQUITABLE access

Equitable Access is a digital-first, flat-rate textbook subscription program for all undergraduate students at UC Davis, with required textbooks and learning materials delivered through the Canvas Learning Management System (LMS).

2020-21 ANNUAL REPORT



Letter from the Vice Chancellor

The UC Davis Division of Student Affairs inspires and prepares students for a diverse and changing world by providing programs and services that foster academic success, student development and campus community. To achieve this mission, UC Davis Stores diligently works to serve the needs of our students through bold innovation, engagement and collaboration.

UC Davis Stores has continued its goal of reducing inequity among students by introducing Equitable Access in the fall quarter of 2020, an innovative textbook and course content initiative that supports student success. This report summarizes the development of the program, the first year launch, and looks ahead to future program enhancements.

While there is still work ahead of us, the success of the initial launch has already enabled the program to lower the per term rate by 15%, from \$199 per term to \$169 per term. In addition, by working with the Financial Aid office, the excess reserve balance that was achieved in the first year has allowed \$170,877 to be distributed as grants to approximately 1,000 of our lowest income students to pay this fall's Equitable Access charge. We aim to continue to put downward pressure on the price students pay for their required textbooks to reduce financial barriers. We invite you to explore this report to learn more about the performance of year 1 and we welcome your feedback on how to continuously improve the experience of students, instructors and faculty.

Pablo Reguerin

Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs
University of California, Davis



Before Equitable Access **78%** of UC Davis students indicated they **did not have access** to all their required materials

The Problem

Textbooks have become increasingly expensive and prices vary widely by major. This has contributed to inequity on campus because not all students can afford their required course materials and acquiring them can be a complex process. During the winter quarter of 2020 before Equitable Access began, students were asked if within the previous 12 months, they did not rent, purchase or acquire at least one required textbook. 78% of UC Davis students indicated they did not have access to all their required materials. In addition, traditional textbooks are no longer the only learning materials faculty require in their courses. Traditional textbooks, Open Educational Resources (OER), homework platforms, library resources, and adaptive courseware are among the learning materials assigned by faculty on campus today. This wide variety of content and where to acquire it has caused confusion and delays in obtaining course materials. The goal of this program was to reduce inequity among students by eliminating course material access issues, while ensuring that costs are predictable and equal for all undergraduate students.

The Solution

Under Equitable Access, all undergraduate students are enrolled by default and pay the same flat rate per quarter (\$199 in 2020-21; \$169 in 2021-22) regardless of their major and courses. For students who remain in Equitable Access, all required content is delivered through the LMS by the first day of class. When students add or drop courses, their



digital textbooks move with them automatically so they can stay focused on their studies. If students prefer to obtain textbooks on their own, they are free to opt out of the program each term.

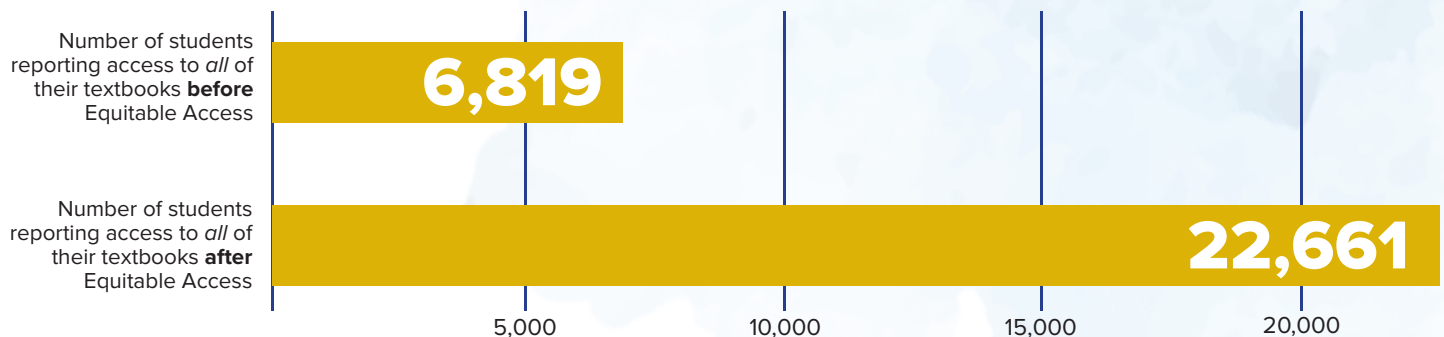
The Innovation

By pooling all undergraduate students together, innovative cost savings were achieved during price negotiations with publishers. The operational efficiency of the program creates opportunity for savings far beyond the traditional print model that most college campuses have employed for decades. Based on the performance of the program this academic year, there was a reduction in the price of Equitable Access in fall 2021. At the end of each academic year, an actuarial science firm will analyze the performance of the fund and recommend the next year's rate. This annual actuarial analysis was inspired by the UC Student Health Insurance Program (UC SHIP).

Lower income students no longer have to worry about textbook costs varying based on their courses or major

The Impact

After launching Equitable Access, the number of students with access to their required textbooks has significantly increased. Students now have a single convenient location for day one access to all of their textbooks; they no longer have to worry about returning textbooks as they add or drop classes because their textbooks move with them automatically in the LMS. For the 15% of textbooks that are not available digitally, students can either pick up their textbooks at the campus store or can request to have them shipped at no additional cost. One low flat rate means costs are predictable for students. Additionally, those who receive financial aid for their textbook purchases can easily apply those funds as the program operates within the campus billing system. Perhaps most importantly, lower income students no longer have to worry about textbook costs varying based on their courses or major.



The Numbers

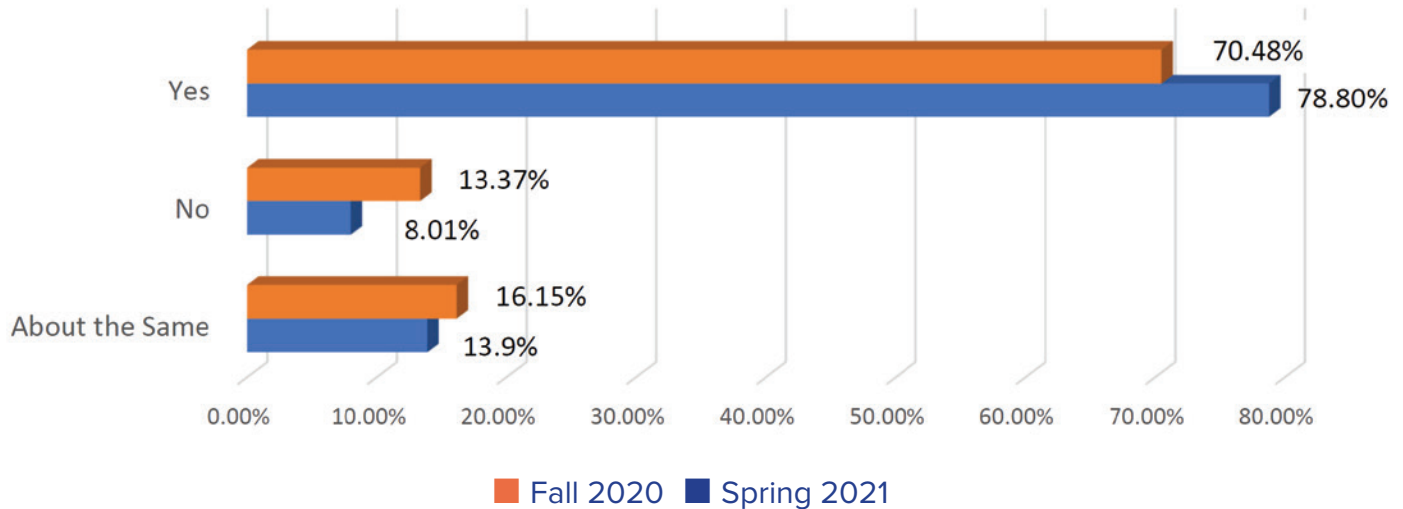
The success of Equitable Access was primarily measured by the increase in the number of undergraduate students with access to all their required textbooks before and after the program launched. In the winter quarter of 2020, UC Davis undergraduate survey data indicated that 78% of students claimed they did not have access to all their required textbooks. After Equitable Access, the number of students who claimed they did not have access to all their required textbooks plummeted to 27%. Stated differently, before the program began, 6,819 students claimed to have access to all of their required textbooks. This number grew to 22,661 after Equitable Access launched.

Equitable Access

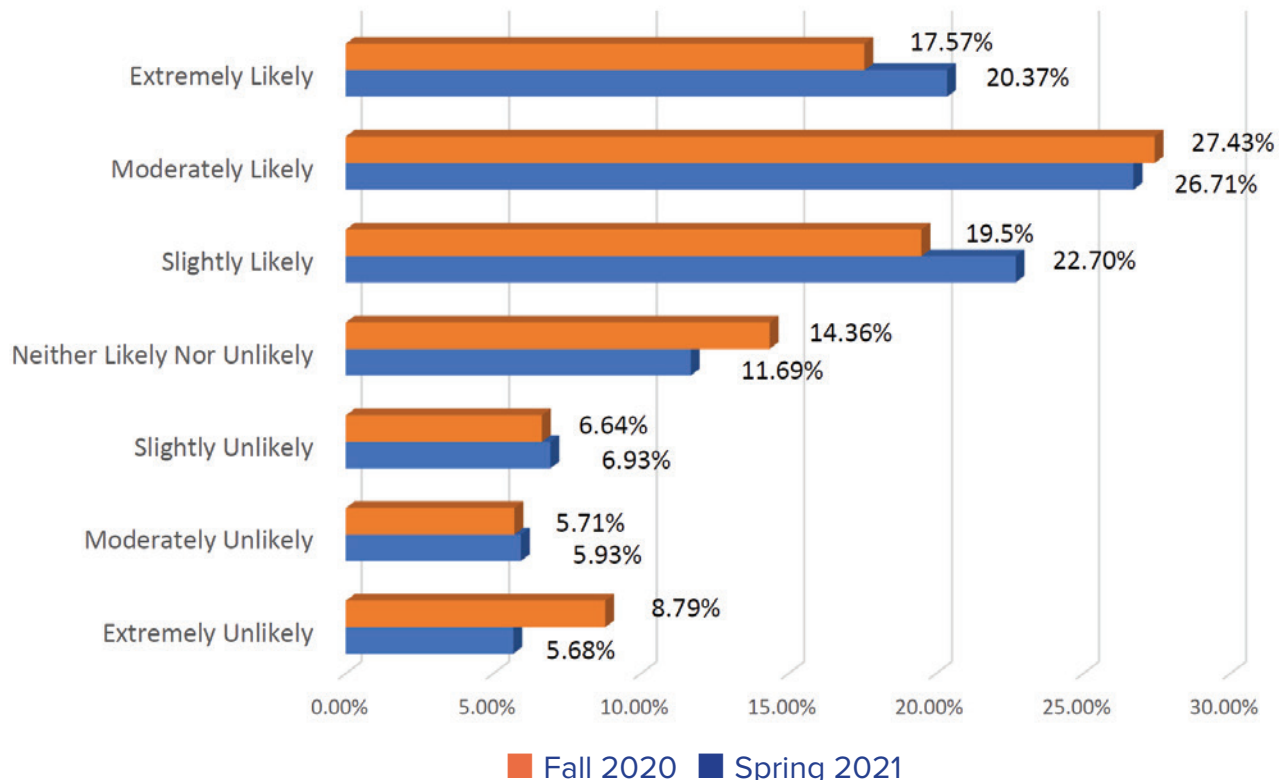
Student Survey Comparison | Participants

- The **fall 2020** Equitable Access participant survey was sent to 16,715 students and generated 1,400 anonymous responses, resulting in a 99% confidence level with a 3% margin of error.
- The **spring 2021** Equitable Access participant survey was sent to 13,427 students and generated 1,202 anonymous responses, resulting in a 99% confidence level with a 3.5% margin of error.

Was Equitable Access easier than shopping for textbooks on your own?

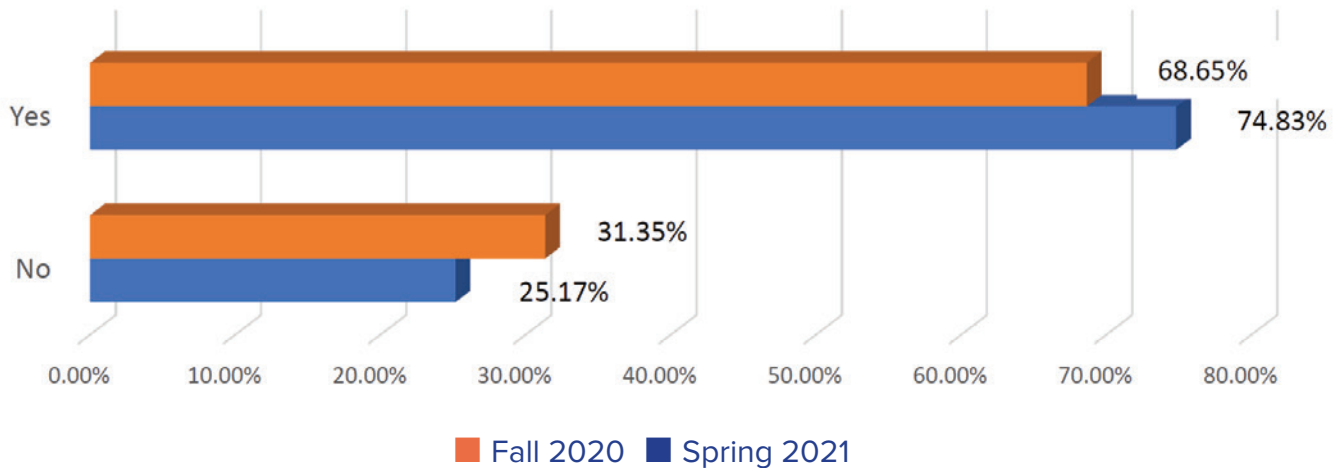


How likely are you to recommend Equitable Access to other students?

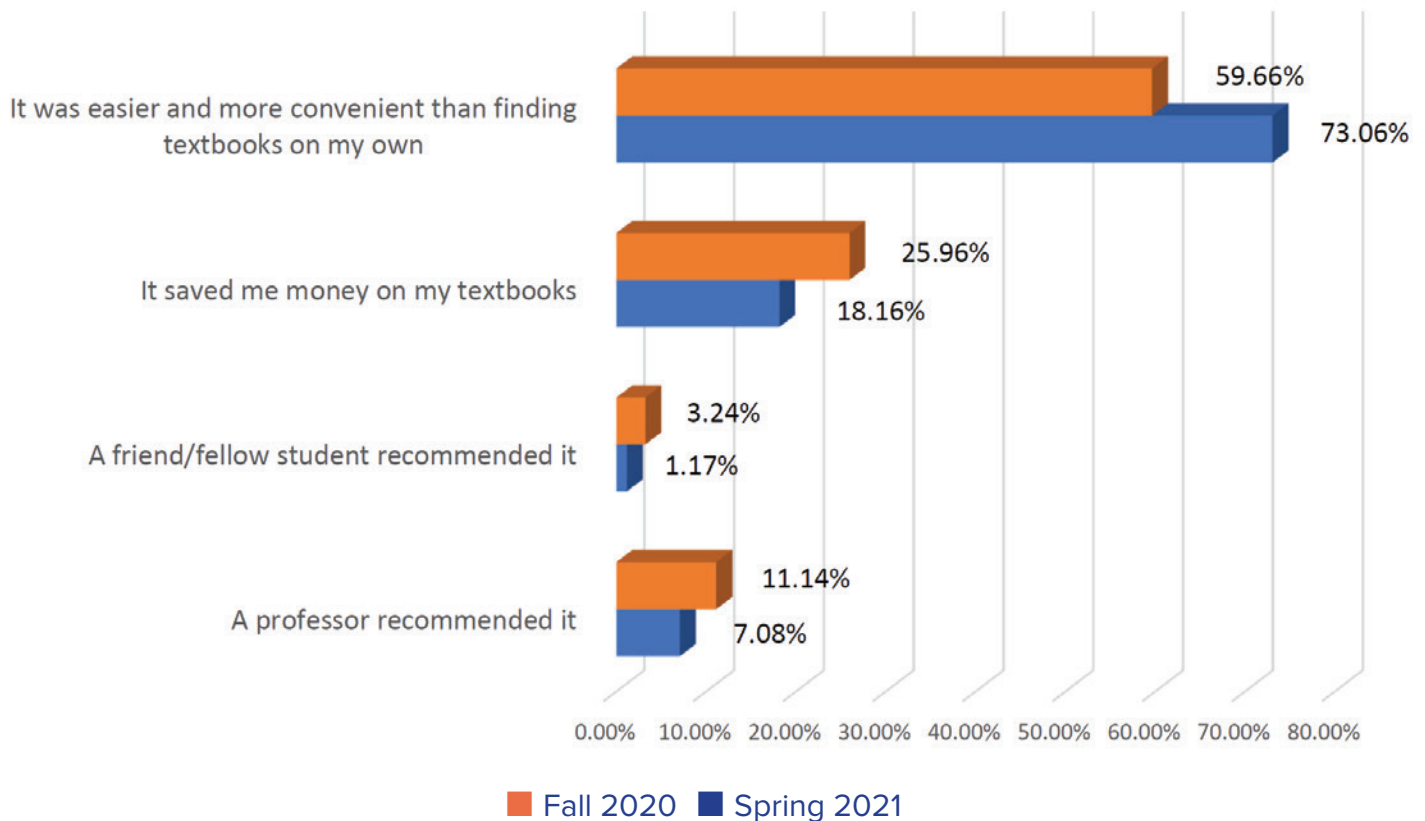


Equitable Access Student Survey Comparison | **Participants**

Did you feel free to choose classes without worrying about textbook prices, knowing that all of your books were included for \$199?



What was your primary reason for remaining in Equitable Access?

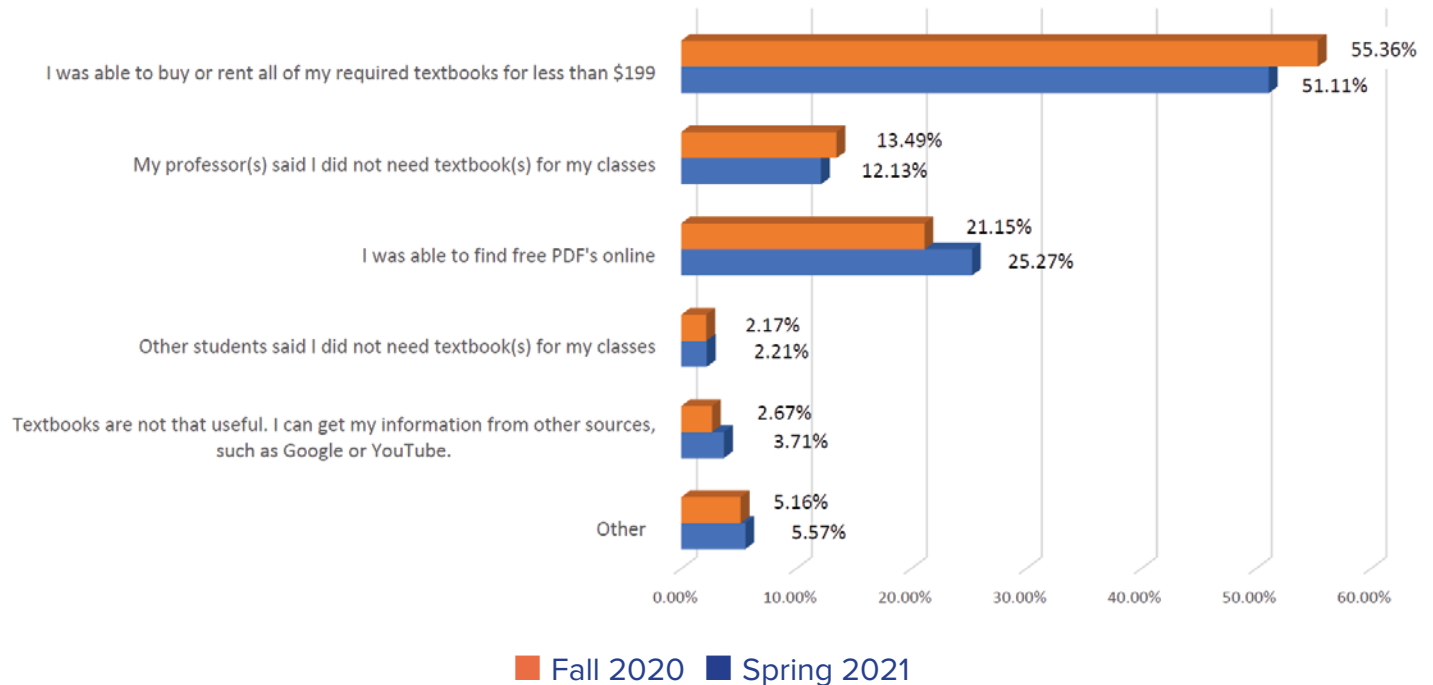


Equitable Access

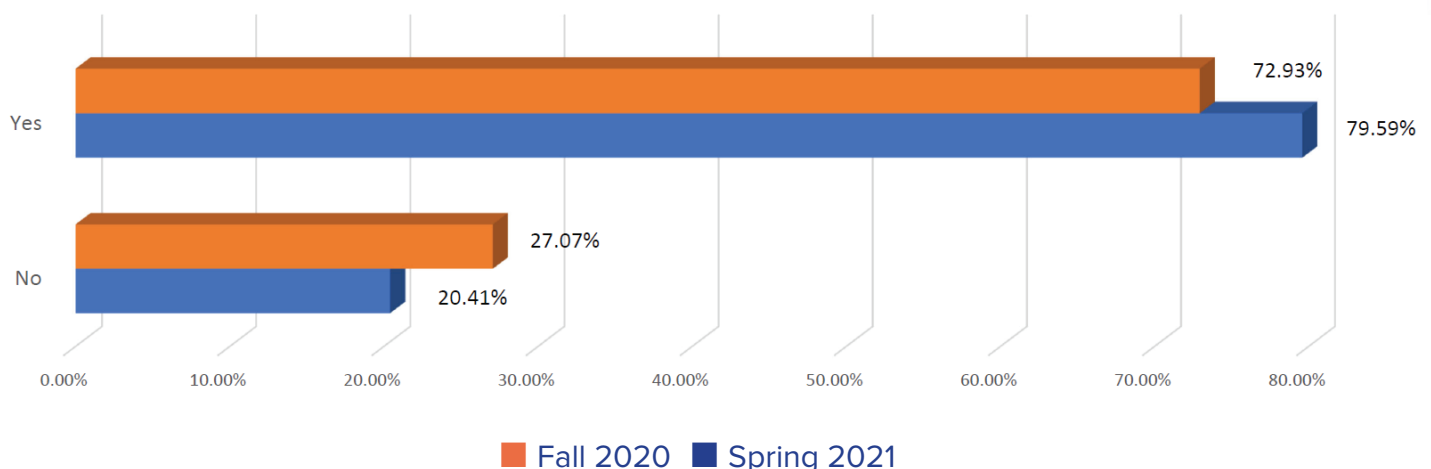
Student Survey Comparison | Non-Participants

- The **fall 2020** Equitable Access non-participant survey was sent to 14,052 students and generated 1,804 anonymous responses, resulting in a 99% confidence level with a 3% margin of error.
- The **spring 2021** Equitable Access non-participant survey was sent to 13,402 students and generated 1,405 anonymous responses, resulting in a 99% confidence level with a 3.25% margin of error.

What was your primary reason for opting out of Equitable Access?

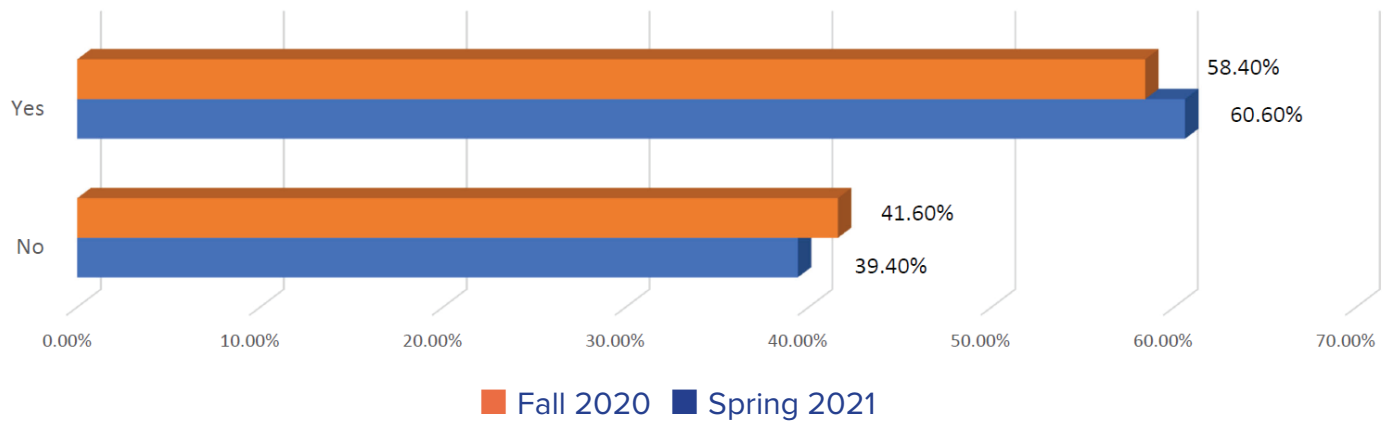


Did you realize that you could opt back in to Equitable Access after you opted out?



Equitable Access Student Survey Comparison | Non-Participants

Were there any courses for which you did NOT purchase, rent or acquire the required course content (either print materials, textbooks or digital content)?



The Collaboration

Launching Equitable Access required successful collaboration with many departments on campus. **Academic Technology Services**, which manages the campus Learning Management System is a critical partner in this program, as textbooks and other course content are accessed through the LMS. Course rosters from the **University Registrar** are regularly updated in the LMS to manage student access to textbooks as courses are added and dropped. Collaboration with **Student Accounting** integrates program billing into the tuition and fee payment process, which allows easy application of available financial aid dollars to pay for the program. Significant collaboration with the **University Library** is also a key feature of this program. Over 400 Library-owned digital resources that faculty have assigned for their courses are currently included within the LMS. Each quarter, the bookstore reviews licensed library content availability and links textbooks that match faculty-assigned content to the LMS. This collaboration provides significant savings to the institution (over \$400,000 in the first year); as program costs decline, this will contribute to reducing the price of Equitable Access in future terms.



The Timeline

Equitable Access was developed between 2018 and 2020. Initial meetings with education technology and campus partners were followed by publisher price negotiations, actuarial analysis to determine pricing, and the development of the technology to run the program. Our work also included receiving feedback from a steering committee of UC Davis undergraduate students; as the program was being developed, student feedback was regularly sought and incorporated. Meetings with numerous campus departments to facilitate the launch of the program occurred during this two-year period. After extensive student and campus outreach campaigns, the program launched to all UC Davis undergraduate students in fall quarter of 2020. We are currently nearing the end of our third academic term with the program in effect.



Communication

- Academic departments. We requested 10–15 minutes on the agenda of all academic department faculty meetings prior to the program launch to share information and answer questions. 25 department chairs responded and invited us to those meetings.
- Academic Senate. Engaged and collaborated on two faculty surveys conducted in spring 2021.
- ASUCD leaders. Multiple meetings were held prior to the launch.
- Chancellor's Leadership Team.
- Provost's Leadership Team.
- Associate Deans.
- Academic coordinators (assigned bookstore liaisons for textbook ordering). Five meetings per quarter and regular email communication beginning fall 2019.
- Major publishers. Multiple meetings were held to negotiate favorable pricing models.
- UC Davis Library staff. The library has been an integral partner of the program. This collaboration included sharing bookstore textbook orders from faculty with the library; those titles were cross-referenced with titles for which the library had already procured the multi-use digital delivery rights. This data was shared with students as an affordable and accessible solution for those titles.
- Open Educational Resource groups. These meetings included Open Stax and Libretext.
- AggieOpen. Provided funding of \$47,250 (\$10 per participating student) through Libretext.
- CALPIRG students. Meetings were held to discuss the program and receive feedback.
- Student Disability Center. We collaborated with this campus partner to ensure that we met accessibility needs.
- Academic Technology Services. This collaboration facilitated adding course content to Canvas.

Prior to launching Equitable Access and during the first year of the program, UC Davis Stores met with many campus departments and outside vendors

- Instructure (parent company of Canvas). This partner adjusted their software to allow students to access course content when a faculty member chose not to publish a Canvas course page.
- Equitable Access Student Steering Committee. This group of approximately a dozen students met for several years before launch to help develop the program.
- Student Accounting. This collaboration facilitated program inclusion in the tuition and billing process.
- Financial aid. Multiple consultations throughout the development of the program.
- Intercollegiate Athletics. This collaboration ensured that student athletes could participate in the program and that NCAA regulations were followed.
- Office of the University Registrar. We communicated with this office to integrate program due dates with their calendar and to verify waivers were issued to Planned Educational Leave Program (PELP) students.
- Information and Education Technology (IET). Worked closely with UC Davis Stores IT and our vendors to ensure the accuracy of student data from the Student Information System (SIS), Banner.

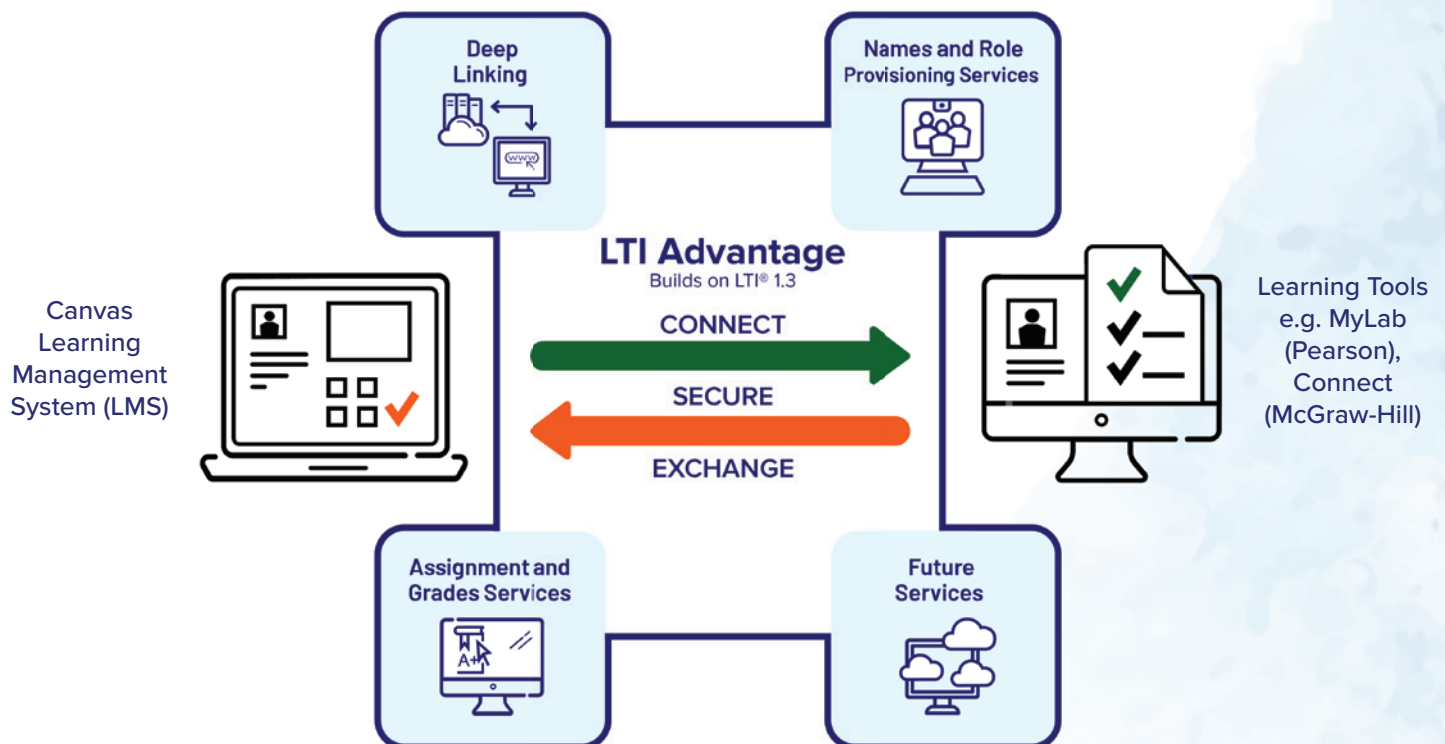


The Technology

Students are provided immediate digital access to their required course materials through the use of VitalSource's single Learning Tools Interoperability (LTI) tool. The LTI tool securely connects students to digital content delivered in both VitalSource Bookshelf and provider-hosted courseware inside of the Canvas LMS. The technology combines adoption data from the student information system, the retail management systems and course rosters from Canvas to present a personalized experience for each student across all courses in the current term. This integration and partnership supports multiple content fulfillment sources, ranging from proprietary platforms to the campus library to present a unified, comprehensive use of resources resulting in a superior student experience.

*The technology combines adoption data from the student information system, the retail management systems and course rosters from Canvas to present a **personalized experience for each student across all courses in the current term.***

Learning Tools Interoperability (LTI)



Student Participation

Quarter	Participation Rate	Students Participating	Opt Out Rate	Students Opted Out
Fall 2020	53.9%	16,657	46.1%	14,256
Winter 2021	52.8%	15,436	47.2%	13,793
Spring 2021	51.9%	14,551	48.1%	13,749

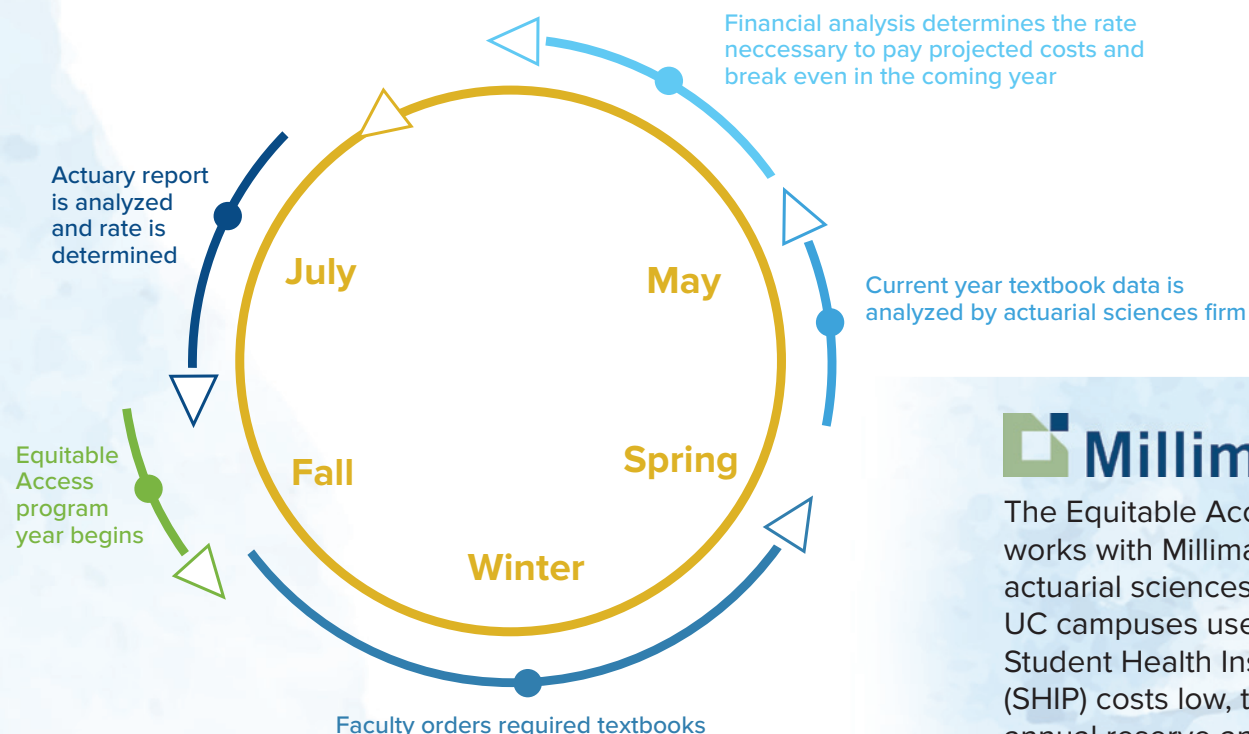
Financial Data

The Equitable Access program had a goal to end the year with a surplus that would eventually grow to \$2 million. This reserve balance is intended to mitigate risk since we do not control faculty adoptions, which account for the majority of the program costs. Our initial analysis predicted it might take several years to reach the \$2 million reserve, however, the reserve balance was achieved in year one. This has allowed the program to leverage that reserve and lower the per term price to \$169.

\$170,877 will be distributed to approximately 1,000 of our lowest income students to pay this fall's Equitable Access charge

Income 2020-21	\$9,486,515
Expenses	
Publisher Purchases (64%)	\$4,686,731
Campus Administrative Costs (36%)	\$2,628,907
Total Expenses	\$7,315,638
Carry Forward Balance	\$2,170,877

\$2,000,000 will become the risk-mitigating reserve that enables us to protect academic freedom and lower the program cost for the 2021-22 school year



The Equitable Access team works with Milliman, the same actuarial sciences firm that UC campuses use to keep the Student Health Insurance Plan (SHIP) costs low, to analyze the annual reserve and plan rate.

Recognition

In June 2021 Equitable Access was awarded a Gold medal in the IMS Global Learning Impact Awards competition. The annual competition is open to all educational institutions, school districts, states, educational technology suppliers, and workplace training organizations worldwide. Organizations from Australia, Canada, India, Japan, Luxembourg, Norway, Spain, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Vietnam advanced to this final round of the 2021 competition.



*Equitable Access took home **Gold** in the IMS Global Learning Consortium 2021 Learning Impact Awards*

Looking Ahead

- An Equitable Access Student Advisory Council is being launched mid-fall 2021. The council will have 12 voting members—10 undergraduate students, one faculty member, one staff member and nine ex officio members.
 - The council will meet quarterly and provide advice regarding:
 - Student communication.
 - Student experience with digital content.
 - Ideas for improvement.
 - Areas of confusion that can be addressed.
 - Financial performance of the current year and provide advice regarding a possible rate adjustment for the following year.
- Simplifying the current multi-step opt-out process for non-participants to a single step by utilizing UC Davis Central Authentication System.
- Providing more information to participants on how to obtain print materials when faculty-chosen content is not available digitally.
- Data-driven decision making for program enhancements that are informed by the evaluation report of the program's outcomes, conducted by Student Affairs Assessment.
- Finding more efficiencies to continue downward pressure on program costs.
- Answering faculty questions and hearing input at department meetings.