

Is Bundling Books with Tuition Right for Your Students?

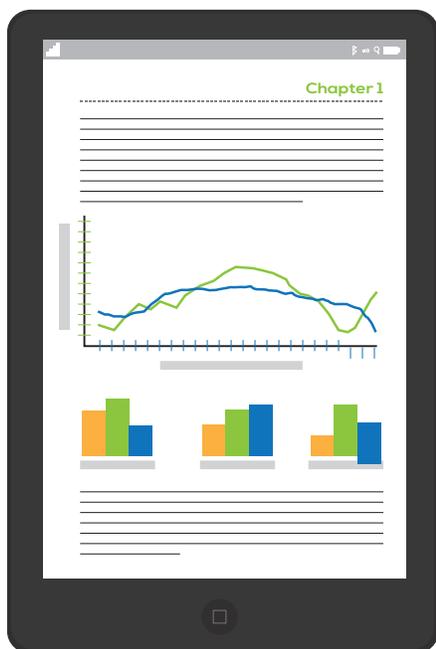
Examining both sides of a complicated decision



How Does it Work?

Description

Bundling books with tuition works exactly how it sounds. Any school that chooses this path will include a set fee for every student that is specifically set aside for the cost of their course materials. The school will then use that portion of each student's tuition to pay their textbook supplier, who will put each student's course materials together in a collection before either sending them to the school for distribution or directly to the student.

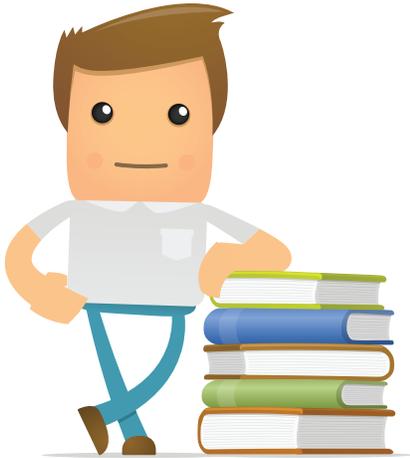


Going Digital

Bundling is obviously available for just about any kind of course material (new, used, digital, etc.), but some schools have used this strategy to steer their school towards a particular purchasing format.

Recently, some schools have used course material bundling to make digital (e-books) their exclusive format. The majority of schools that have selected this route have done so in an effort not only to save students' money, but to put themselves on the cutting edge in terms of technology in the classroom.

What Are the Advantages?



Convenience for Students

Students no longer need to search for and purchase their course materials; the school will do it for them. This means students will get the exact books they need, as determined by the faculty, and the school controls when they are shipped and how they are distributed—directly to each student or to a centralized pick-up location.

Focus on Success

Choosing to bundle books will mean that there will be one less thing that students have to do. No longer would you have to rely on students having the awareness to do their shopping in a timely manner since you will essentially be doing that for them. While in the past some students would have simply forgotten or ignored getting their course materials on time, others may have sat waiting for prices to go down or chosen to go without a book altogether. Bundling books would eliminate all of these distractions and simply allow students to focus on their most important task: their studies.



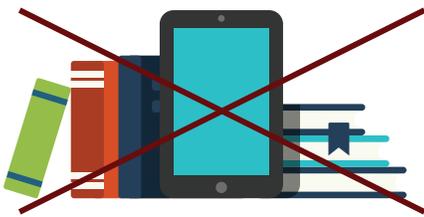
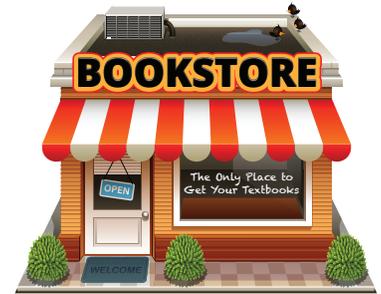
Cost-Savings

By rolling books into students' tuition, schools are often able to save their students more money on average by buying in bulk from their textbook supplier. Because the school's costs are lowered, they can pass those savings to their students.

What are the disadvantages?

Eliminating Outside Vendors

Some students may not like the idea that they do not have any choice in where they buy their course materials. By rolling course materials in with tuition, you are essentially forcing your students to buy from you, which may upset those that had planned to buy their books elsewhere or not at all.

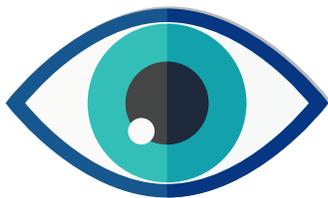
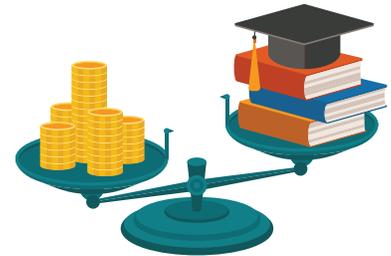


Eliminating Format Options

Should your school choose an exclusive format for your students' course materials, you would be eliminating the opportunity for them to purchase in their format of choice, should they prefer something different than what you offer. For example, a school that choose the all-digital route would be preventing those students that prefer buying or renting a physical copy from doing so.

Student Perception

Right or wrong, some students will always believe that they can get a better deal elsewhere. Even if you are truly offering your students lower course materials costs than they could find anywhere else, because bundling books eliminates the option to purchase from sources besides your school, it's possible that some students will be unhappy.



Public Perception

The reasons that schools take away the option to for students to purchase elsewhere might be done with the best intentions, but there shouldn't be a surprise if people don't like the new setup. Even taking away a freedom as small as where students buy their course materials can be upsetting to some.

What do I do?

Bundling course materials in with tuition is an important, yet divisive option for schools and students around the country. Yet this is becoming more and more common for schools that want to simplify the process of getting the correct course materials at lower prices in the correct quantities, for the sake of both themselves and their students.

Any school that chooses to go this route will likely see some combination of the advantages and disadvantages that we've discussed. Either way, bundling books is a decision that is sure to affect students, faculty and administrators and there are a number of factors that need to be evaluated.