

BRIDGEWATER COLLEGE IMPLEMENTS A STUDENT-CENTERED BOOKSTORE SOLUTION

THE CHALLENGE

Administrators at Bridgewater College began to consider alternate solutions for their bookstore model after identifying two main obstacles with their brick- and-mortar bookstore: a rapid decline in revenue and the continued struggle to balance textbook inventory.

As an increasing number of cost-conscious students at Bridgewater began purchasing their textbooks at popular third-party online retailers, the College observed a steep decline in textbook sales; a trend many institutions have observed according to a recent survey where 95% of college CFOs reported “textbook sales have been flat or down” over the past three years.¹ Furthermore, Bridgewater’s campus bookstore found it difficult to keep shelves stocked with just the right amount of textbooks each semester. Their efforts to control inventory levels were met with complaints from faculty and students who were frustrated with the inconsistent availability of required course materials.



Located in Virginia, Bridgewater College is a private liberal arts college serving 1,900 students.

“We undertook a careful review of college bookstore providers and determined that the best way to serve our students in the future was to partner with Akademos, a fully online bookstore developed specifically to serve the needs of higher education institutions like ours.”

-Anne Keeler, VP for Finance

A NEW HYBRID BOOKSTORE SOLUTION

In considering options for their bookstore, Bridgewater desired a student-centered approach, a value the school identified as important to all its auxiliary services. In fall 2014, after a careful review of college bookstore providers, Bridgewater partnered with Akademos to launch an online store that became the college’s one-stop shop for all textbooks and course materials and provided much lower prices for Bridgewater students.



As a part of the new student-centered approach to bookstore services, Bridgewater sought to expand the offerings at the bookstore space on campus to better support the students and campus community as a whole. The quality choice was to outsource the new campus shop to the Bridgewater food services vendor. This path brings an innovative utilization of resources to the campus by relying on the expertise and familiarity of an established relationship. Preferring not to take on the management of the store themselves, Bridgewater could outsource to a trusted vendor while meeting or exceeding student needs. The brick-and-mortar store re-branded itself as the BC Campus Store and began to offer an expanded selection of spirit wear, apparel and gifts. Relieved of the burden of managing textbook inventory, management could now focus on bringing superior service and selection to the campus store.

RESULTS

To ensure a successful transition to the online bookstore, Bridgewater appointed a bookstore liaison to coordinate the relationship between faculty members and Akademos.

Already extremely comfortable shopping online, students easily adapted to the new platform, which offers students a choice of rich inventory across new, used, rental, and eBooks, plus a used textbook Marketplace that offers students great value and prices competitive with and including many popular 3rd party online retailers. Students also have the option to sell their books on the Marketplace year-round to further reduce the cost of ownership of course materials. Unlike the third-party retailers where they previously shopped, the Akademos online course materials store provides students with a personalized view of their specific classes and the required textbooks in each course all on one page. Bridgewater's customized online store offers an adaptive layout making shopping easy and intuitive across all computers, tablets and smartphones.

Since transitioning to an online bookstore, Bridgewater students have saved over *\$1.6 million* off the list price of textbooks.

In spring 2019, the average student book price was *\$38.27*, with non-new books accounting for over three quarters of sales.

"We believe Akademos stands apart for its service and its unique educational marketplace, which significantly reduces the cost of learning materials for our students."

-Anne Keeler, VP for Finance