



How Three Rivers College Went *All-In* with **Equitable Access**



Three Rivers College started offering Equitable Access (EA) for the 2021 summer session. Their all-in EA program, positioned as Three Rivers College Resource Fees, provides enrolled students with immediate access to all required digital and physical course materials on the first day of classes, including digital titles delivered directly through their LMS, printed titles, lab kits, required course supplies, and more. This innovative approach, now in its third academic term, represents a giant leap forward in driving student access, ensuring preparedness, and delivering cost transparency for more effective financial planning and management.

Results for Three Rivers:

- **ZERO** student opt-outs since launch
- **ZERO** resistance from faculty and campus administration
- **ZERO** negative customer conversations about price in the campus bookstore



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Bob's Playbook:

5 Tips for Starting Equitable Access Programs

What can we learn from the Three Rivers' EA playbook? We had an opportunity to speak with Robert (Bob) Jansen, Director of Retail Operations at Three Rivers College, to learn more about how EA became a very successful reality. While taking the leap to an EA program seems daunting to many school administrators, Bob explained that dissecting the effort into a manageable playbook, or a checklist of tasks and key considerations, was the first and most important step in driving this campus-wide change.



Robert Jansen
Director of Retail Operations,
Three Rivers College

1. Assess the campus climate. Find your first followers.

Before you can start a local EA program, it's best to determine if it is operationally and politically possible to implement. Depending on the size and complexity of your institution, you'll need to tap and win buy-in from a wide collection of key campus players. For most institutions, the list will include the school president, chief financial officer, chief academic officer, and other academic, operational, and financial constituents. This localized list of players should quickly reveal your potential supporters and anticipate the potential sources of resistance.

2. Lean on experts. Jumpstart conversations.

In addition to our program at Three Rivers College, there are many other schools experimenting with or discussing equitable access. You'll find that others in our industry are very willing to share details, discuss challenges, and brainstorm solutions that positively impact students. Hit the web and search for others exploring the EA topic. The resulting list is often a collection of experts from industry associations, vendors like RedShelf that are helping others with EA, and administration from other institutions. Tap these experts and start your own locally-focused EA conversation. You'll find this curated list will quickly become a must-have resource, providing backup and strategic proof-points as you seek campuswide buy-in.

3. Run the numbers. Showcase local impact.

Being prepared with the appropriate data will help you quickly transition away from having general conversations about the philosophy of equitable access to having meaningful and localized conversations about the real-life impact on your institution. With the implementation of EA, the campus and bookstore balance sheets will change, largely tied to a shift in the source of revenue previously generated by more traditional bookstore transactions. And remember, these traditional transactions include the dollars generated from the sale, rental, or digital subscriptions of required course materials, and sales of required course-related supplies (physical lab kits, coursepacks, workbooks, uniforms, or even a block of clay.) You'll use that revenue total to help recommend a per-hour EA fee. For Three Rivers' calculation, we also included the cost of free shipping, and then divided that total revenue by the corresponding credit hours generated by students in a year. The result was our per-credit-hour fee, our Resource Fee, that would keep the bookstore financially whole.

4. Design a Distribution Plan.

Bring even more attention to your EA plan by wireframing your fulfillment plans. How many students purchase books, rent printed copies, secure digital access, and purchase related course supplies? Understanding past behavior, or your store's current sales mix, can help you assess your store's ability to manage each of those course material categories in a future EA program. For Three Rivers College, building a program with long-term flexibility was extremely important, so we identified vendor partners that could help us pivot or scale quickly. For example, we offer a mix of print and digital course materials in our current program. And that mix, or percentage of each format option adopted for classroom use, will likely shift more to digital in the years ahead. To prepare for that format shift, and to solidify long-term program flexibility, we partner with companies like RedShelf that can help us pivot to or scale digital quickly.

5. Polish your pitch. Start the EA roadshow.

Now it's time to use all collected bits of research and due diligence to communicate the potential benefits of EA at your institution. Lean on your identified list of key players, paying mindful attention to those you've flagged as potential supporters or sources of resistance. Creating momentum, like growing a crowd of local campus supporters, will play a monumental role in grabbing the attention of final decision-makers. Keeping your key messages simple, and at the top of the agenda for every stop on your roadshow, will also help you gain traction. Remind all of your audiences, whenever possible, that EA programs can make a direct impact on student success, taking aim at student affordability, material access, and readiness for the first day of class.



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