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Impact of Textbook Costs on Student Success

An Opportunity to Increase Equity in MIS Courses By Removing the Textbook Cost Barrier

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Abstract

Replacing traditional, costly textbooks with Open Educational Resources (OER) improves student success and equity. OER adoption boosts course grades and reduces failing grades and withdrawals for all students, and by an even greater amount for students who are part-time, receiving Pell grants, or who belong to a population historically underserved by higher education (Colvard et al. 2018). Although OER materials are free, students and faculty perceive no difference in quality between OER and traditional textbooks (Bliss et al. 2013; Clinton 2019). This study examines students' perceptions of how textbook costs impact their success at a federally designated minority-serving institution where 57.6% are low-income (Wolfston 2020). The study aims to determine if the traditional textbooks used in Management Information Systems (MIS) courses should be replaced with OER to promote equity by eliminating the barrier of textbook cost for students. A quantitative approach was used to gather the data by anonymously surveying MIS students at a mid-size, urban, public university in the United States, where the majority of students are people of color and 75% are Pell-grant eligible (Whelan 2019; Wolfston 2020). The survey evaluated students' perceptions of textbook costs and how the costs impact student success. The results showed the vast majority of students perceive textbook costs as a barrier to their success. 65% of students said they did not purchase a required textbook because of cost and 77% delayed buying their textbooks due to cost. A majority of students, 55%, felt not being able to buy a textbook hurt their grade in a course. A whopping 93% of students felt they would be more successful in a course that used a free eBook. The cost of textbooks clearly presents a barrier for students, thus replacing traditional textbooks with freely available OER materials will boost student success and improve equity, based on the research showing students from underserved groups are disproportionately harmed by the high cost of textbooks (Colvard et al. 2018). The greater impact and contribution of this research is that it will encourage faculty to break down textbook cost barriers for students to increase equity and student success by adopting freely available OER materials.

Keywords

Open Educational Resources (OER), equity, MIS students

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