

Bookstore Efficiency Cheat Sheet

To help CBOs and VPs of Finance and Administration identify areas of greatest opportunity to make campus bookstores more efficient, the Business Affairs Forum has compiled a “cheat sheet” of replicable tactics from institutions that have successfully decreased operating costs and increased revenue. Each tactic is evaluated on two fronts: revenue potential and difficulty of implementation. Revenue potential ranges from low (\$) to high (\$\$\$). Implementation difficulty ranges from low (1) to high (3).

	Tactic	Example	Financial Impact	Implementation Difficulty
Payment Options	Allow Payment with Student Account Allow students to directly charge bookstore purchases to student accounts.	Many institutions use purchasing systems that sync with student information systems, enabling students to pay for bookstore purchases with their student accounts.	\$	1
	Offer Student-Worker Bonus as Bookstore Credit Pay a small portion of student-worker salary with bookstore credit to incent them to use the campus bookstore.	One institution awards all student workers across campus bonuses in the form of bookstore credit instead of cash, which drives traffic to the university bookstore and brings money back to the institution.	\$	1
	Open In-Store Coffee Shop Install a coffee shop in the campus bookstores to increase revenue and drive store traffic.	One school generates \$100K per year through a licensed Starbucks coffee shop operated out of the campus bookstore.	\$\$\$	2
Sales and Inventory	Target Sale Events to High-Traffic Times of Year Host community events and special retail sales during popular campus events (e.g., athletic games, graduation) to attract students and community members.	One institution boosts merchandise and retail sales through “pop-up” sales of general clothing, gift items, and miscellaneous merchandise not inscribed with the institution’s name, logo, or insignia. They host these sales during textbook and graduation regalia pick-up times to encourage students to purchase more bookstore merchandise.	\$\$	1
	Open Convenience Stores Open small retail locations that sell convenience store products (e.g., snacks, school supplies, personal items) in popular spots on campus.	One institution opened a small convenience store in a heavily-trafficked location on campus that primarily sells sundries. Students often prefer the convenience of the store and are attracted to cheap prices.	\$\$\$	3
	Sell Higher-Margin Products Supplement the main business of textbook sales with higher margin products such as apparel, technology, snacks, and other insignia items.	Many institutions supplement traditional bookstore inventory with laptop and computer hardware, apparel, dorm essentials, and office supplies.	\$\$\$	1

Source: Business Affairs Forum.

Bookstore Efficiency Cheat Sheet (cont.)

	Tactic	Example	Revenue Potential	Implementation Difficulty
Staffing	Create Specialized Roles Train staff to serve specialized roles such as bookstore liaisons and textbook buyers.	One university bookstore maintains two liaisons to coordinate with faculty and ensure they meet the deadline to submit textbook orders. The bookstore also maintains four textbook buyers. Together, the roles have increased on-time faculty textbook submissions from 20% to 80% and improved store efficiency and productivity.	\$\$\$	3
	Hire Part-Time and Student Workers Staff bookstores with part-time and student workers to reduce labor costs.	A number of institutions have successfully reduced bookstore labor costs by eliminating unnecessary positions and replacing some full-time employees with part-time and student workers.	\$\$	2
Technology	Establish Online Store with Price Comparison Tool Establish online store to target new customers and increase sales without cannibalizing brick-and-mortar sales. A price comparison tool helps prove that campus store pricing is similar to competitors.	One institution's website lets students compare online the university bookstore's prices for an assigned textbook against the prices of up to four major competitors.	\$\$\$	2
	Offer In-Store Pick-Up Option Create online service that allows students to pre-order textbooks online to compete with purely online retailers.	One institution allows customers to pre-order textbooks and pick them up in store at the beginning of the semester. In addition to convenience, many students choose this option because it increases their chances of securing used textbooks.	\$	1

Source: Business Affairs Forum.