

First Day, Every Time: The Colorado State University Bookstore Day One Access Story

Impact by the Numbers

Fall 2017 → Spring 2026

95.4% → 96.8%
participation

157K → 1.1M+
in student savings

9,072 → 57,100
student enrollments

113 → 1,308
course sections

20 → 69
participating
departments with
479 items

Spring 2026

89%
of total course
materials sales in
Day One program

63%
of CSU students with
at least one Day One
Access course

The Vision: The Colorado State University (CSU) Bookstore serves a top tier (R1) research university nestled at the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. As an independent store that puts students' interests before profits, the CSU Bookstore's mission surrounding course materials has always been simple: **make sure every Ram has what they need on day one, without breaking the bank.** Living that mission, though, has meant solving some real problems first.

The traditional access code process created operational challenges for both the bookstore staff and students. Refunds were difficult to manage, and too many students were starting the semester unprepared. So, the team found a better way by creating the **CSU Bookstore Day One Access program**, a Course Access (also known as Inclusive Access) model built so every student has the materials they need on the first day of class.

The Journey: CSU's Day One Access journey started in 2015 when Kurt Kaiser, assistant director of the CSU Bookstore, made a trip out to UC Davis. He came back with ideas and built a manual process alongside his team that included rosters by hand, codes by email, and charges at the register. It worked, but it couldn't scale. Kurt needed a partner, and in 2017, he found one in VitalSource.

What followed was a steady evolution: charges moved from manual register entries to a daily charge file sent directly to CSU Financial Services. Catalog builds that once took days were now completed in minutes.

The program has kept growing ever since. In Spring 2026, the team achieved a long-term goal when OER titles joined the Day One Access program for the first time.

Kurt has worked in this industry since 1986 and is the kind of person everyone turns to when they need help navigating a challenge. He never hesitates to share what's working, support a neighboring school, or pick up the phone when someone calls. For others starting or growing a Day One Access program, his advice is simple: **lean on the community, get it done early, connect with every expert on campus and invest in those relationships** (his homemade cinnamon

rolls helped), **and talk to other stores**. Independent campus bookstores don't compete. Every campus is different. Find what works for yours.



"If it wasn't for VitalSource, we truly believe the industry would not be where it is today."
— Kurt Kaiser, Assistant Director of the CSU Bookstore

The Outcome: As of Spring 2026, **89%** of total course materials sales flow through the program, covering **1,308** course sections across **69** departments. Opt-out rates hold around **3%**, which is well below typical opt-out rates seen across similar programs, because the team only includes truly required materials. For courseware, that number drops to around **1%**.

The average textbook price fell from **\$79.71** in 2016 to **\$69.07** in 2026. That didn't happen by accident. It's the result of a decade spent continuously investigating course materials options, embracing digital, sharing new initiatives across campus, and executing a student-focused strategy. **In a world where most costs keep climbing, that kind of progress is worth pausing to celebrate.**

The Impact: The numbers make a very strong case, but it's the stories that make the impact real. Physics instructor Brian Jones worked with Kurt and the publisher to include a print upgrade and binder in the courseware price, going the extra mile to make sure his students had everything they needed. Kurt shared that the program has saved Brian's students more than **\$500,000**, and Brian said that milestone ranks right alongside his proudest achievements as an educator.



"It used to take weeks to get materials to students. Now, we tell a professor, by the time you get back to your office, go into Canvas and the ebook will be there."
— Kurt Kaiser, Assistant Director of the CSU Bookstore

What's Next: Kurt and his team are planning a larger instructor and publisher summit aimed at expanding partner integration ahead of Spring 2027. With ebook adoptions now at **50%** of the program and climbing, and VitalSource alongside them, the mission has never changed: **keep costs down and make sure every student has the materials they need from day one.**



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Making sure every Ram starts the semester prepared

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