



TO: Chief Executive Officers
Chief Business Officers
Chief Instructional Officers
Chief Student Services Officers
Academic Senate for the California Community Colleges

FROM: Rebecca Ruan-O'Shaughnessy
Vice Chancellor, Educational Services and Support

RE: Zero Textbook Cost Program – Overview and Guidance

The Legislature appropriated \$115 million to the California Community Colleges in the 2021 Budget Act in one-time funding for the Zero-Textbook-Cost Degree Grant (ZTC) program. The program intends to “reduce the overall cost of education for students and decrease the time it takes students to complete degree programs offered by community colleges.” ([Education Code Section 78050-78052](#)). This memo provides (1) brief background information about the program and (2) an overview of the Chancellor’s Office’s multi-pronged approach to ensure the program’s alignment with the Vision for Success and (3) identifies resources that may prove helpful for colleges.

1. ZTC Program Background

The Legislature appropriated \$5 million in one-time funding in 2016 to launch a pilot ZTC Program. It established planning and implementation grants for institutions to develop program pathways free of textbook costs. This pilot-program investment provided grants to 34 colleges, creating 37 certificate and degree programs and 404 courses with no textbook costs, in a three-year timeframe. Still, there was insufficient data to evaluate the true impact of the pilot program on the overall cost of education or the time to completion for students across the system. See the [Zero Textbook Cost Degree Grant Program Report](#).

The Legislature’s historic 2021 investment of \$115 million for the ZTC program renews the effort to help California community colleges students meaningfully eliminate conventional textbook costs, increase college affordability, and remove inequitable financial, administrative, and psychological loads that students without access to financial resources experience. To that end, the Chancellor’s Office has taken a multi-pronged approach to ensure alignment between ZTC program design and implementation and the Vision for Success.

2. Multi-pronged Approach to Implement the ZTC Program

a. New Instructional Materials Data Element

The Chancellor's Office launched in May 2022 a [new data element, XB 12: Instructional Materials Cost](#), in the Management Information System as an initial infrastructure-building step to collect systemwide data on instructional material costs. As part of their data submissions each term, colleges will report on how they made instructional materials for each course section available to students. The new data from these submissions will help bring the community colleges closer to understanding the various strategies institutions utilize to make course sections no or low cost. The Chancellor's Office will continue to work with our system partners to refine the data collection so it provides additional insight on high impact levers that significantly lower the overall cost of education for students.

b. ZTC Taskforce

The Chancellor's Office will convene a ZTC Taskforce in the fall of 2022 to evaluate the existing infrastructure in place that guides instructional material choices and provide recommendations to structural changes that will facilitate the creation of sustainable solutions that reduce textbook costs for students in the long term.

Specifically, this taskforce will:

- Inform the development of a systemwide approach to alleviate the administrative, financial, and psychological burdens of accessing textbooks that students currently experience;
- Provide recommendations on baseline policies and regulations that strengthen equitable access to required instructional materials;
- Provide guidance on maximizing, leveraging, or adjusting existing system resources to support a student-centered, zero-cost textbook priority;
- Provide recommendations for establishing a robust and sustained open educational resource support infrastructure; and
- Inform strategies for state-level support and resources needed to enhance campus efforts to adopt zero textbook cost policies and practices.

c. ZTC Grants – Phases 1 and 2

The Chancellor's Office is releasing ZTC grants in multiple funding phases. Phase 1 provides \$20,000 to 115 colleges to begin planning the development of a ZTC program. Phase 2 provides additional funding to support colleges in implementing ZTC programs locally. Additional funds will be available for future phases of grants. For each of the grant phases, the Chancellor's Office will provide an informational webinar and office hours for questions.

Zero Textbook Cost Program – Overview and Guidance
July 29, 2022

In Phase 1, each college will receive an initial grant of \$20,000 through district apportionment in September to begin planning the development of a ZTC program. As a condition of receiving this funding, colleges will certify their commitment to develop ZTC programs that comply with the legislative requirements and align with the Vision for Success. The ZTC program assurances will be available in NOVA August 30, 2022, and colleges must certify by November 1, 2022.

In Phase 2, colleges and/or districts will apply for funding to develop and implement ZTC programs locally by responding to the Chancellor’s Office’s Request for Applications. Applicants will provide details about their proposed ZTC program(s) and self-assessments of their institutions’ capacity to support that effort. The Request for Applications will be released in Fall 2022 through NOVA, and awardees may receive up to \$200,000 for each degree developed and implemented.

3. Resources for Institutional Support

a. Field Guidance

As the Chancellor’s Office continues the roll-out of the ZTC program, it will provide informational webinars and office hours.

[Register for the XB 12: Instructional Materials Cost Informational Meeting](#)– On August 16, 2022, at 1:30PM, join us for an overview of the new data element and its implementation schedule.

[Register for the ZTC Phase 1 and Phase 2 Grants Overview Meeting](#)– On August 30, at 1:30PM, the Chancellor’s Office will provide an overview the initial rounds of grant funding for the ZTC program.

[ZTC Program Weekly Office Hours](#) – Beginning Friday, August 26, 9:00AM – 10:00AM, the Chancellor’s Office will hold weekly office hours for ZTC Program questions.

[NOVA video tutorials are available online.](#) For a new login and access to NOVA, please visit <https://nova.cccco.edu/request-access>.

b. ZTC Program related Statutes and Regulations

- [Education Code Section 78050-78052](#) –Zero-Textbook-Cost Degree Grant Program
- [Education Code Section 66406.9](#) – Highlighting courses with free textbooks
- [Education Code Section 66408](#) – Digital Open Source Library
- [California Code of Regulations, Title 5, Section 59404](#) – District Policies and Regulations for Instructional Materials.

c. Additional Resources

Zero Textbook Cost Program – Overview and Guidance

July 29, 2022

- [Academic Senate for the California Community Colleges Open Educational Resources Initiative](#) expands the availability and adoption of high-quality open educational resources. They provide informational webinars and events, links to OER resources, and a team of local OER Liaisons who advocate for awareness, adoption and support.
- [Community College Consortium for Open Education Resources](#) promotes the awareness and adoption of open educational policies, practices, and resources. They provide resources, support and opportunities for collaboration for learning, planning and implementing successful open educational programs.
- [Cool4Ed](#) is an OER repository service by the California State University Multimedia Educational Resource for Learning and Online Teaching (MERLOT) program.
- [Open for Antiracism Program](#) is a 4-week facilitated course on making content and classroom practices antiracist.
- [Libretexts](#) is an online textbook platform open to students, faculty and scholars.
- [OpenStax](#) is a repository of textbooks available to instructors and students.

For questions regarding this memo or the ZTC program, contact Erin Larson, Specialist, Educational Services and Support, at elarson@cccoco.edu. For general information about the ZTC program send your questions to ztc@cccoco.edu.

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