MEMORANDUM
September 22, 2026

ESS 26-64 | Via Email

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

FROM: James E. Todd, Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs

RE: Establishment of Standardized Low Textbook Cost (LTC) Threshold

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Purpose

This memorandum establishes a systemwide standard for the designation of course sections "Low Textbook Cost" (LTC) for Management Information System (MIS) reporting under data element XB12. The intent of this policy is to promote consistent statewide reporting practices related to course material affordability in the development and use of affordability designations for instructional planning and student communications.

Background

California Community Colleges have historically applied locally determined definitions and thresholds to identify course sections designated as Low Textbook Cost (LTC). While this flexibility has supported institutional responsiveness and innovation in reducing student costs, variation in reporting practices has limited the ability to produce consistent systemwide data regarding instructional material affordability. The Chancellor's Office Burden Free Instructional Materials (BFIM) Implementation Taskforce has undertaken a systemwide effort to reduce and eliminate unnecessary instructional material costs passed on to students. This effort was supported by systemwide shared governance recommendations.

In fall 2022, the Academic Senate for the California Community Colleges (ASCCC) adopted Resolution 17.05, which recommended the development of a systemwide definition for low textbook cost course materials. In October 2022, the Student Senate for the California Community Colleges (SSCCC) also recommended a $30 threshold as the appropriate systemwide standard for low textbook cost designation, reflecting student perspectives on affordability and access. As our system work continues to reduce educational costs incurred by students, establishing a consistent statewide parameter for LTC course designation is necessary to ensure clarity, transparency, and comparability across colleges.

Systemwide LTC Cost Threshold (MIS XB12)

Effective summer 2027, a course section shall be reported as Low Textbook Cost (LTC), under MIS data element XB12, only when the total required course material cost to the student for the course section does not exceed $30 (code "D" to be updated or new code to be established).

This threshold applies solely to MIS reporting, and it does not restrict colleges from maintaining locally determined LTC designations for instructional purposes. However, the Chancellor's Office strongly recommends colleges consider the benefit of the $30 threshold for student-facing communications to improve consistency for cost planning throughout the system. As students more frequently engage in inter-college and inter-district enrollments, including the California Virtual Campus (CVC) Exchange, consistency and cost transparency are of increasing importance to students.

Parameters of the Materials Cost Threshold

For purposes of MIS reporting under data element XB12, the determination of whether a course section meets the LTC designation shall be based on the total aggregate cost of all required course materials assigned to the student for the course section, regardless of format, source or condition. This includes, but is not limited to, digital and print materials, new and used textbooks, rental arrangements, and course materials obtained through campus bookstores or external vendors. Costs shall be evaluated on the total amount incurred by the student for required materials, inclusive of all applicable taxes, fees, and other charges associated with acquisition. The method of procurement, pricing structure or delivery format shall not be used to exclude or reduce reported costs for the purpose of determining LTC eligibility.

Implementation

This policy shall take effect beginning with the Summer Term 2027 MIS reporting cycle. The Chancellor's Office will issue supplemental technical guidance regarding coding, reporting standards, and implementation procedures in advance of the effective date. Colleges are advised to begin reviewing local systems, processes, and communications to ensure alignment with the requirements set forth in this memorandum.

The Chancellor's Office continues to advance the Vision 2030 mission of Equity in Access by improving course materials' affordability, cost transparency, and supporting equitable access to quality course materials for all students.

Questions regarding this memorandum can be directed to Specialist Chad Funk at CFunk@CCCCO.edu.

cc: Sonya Christian, Chancellor
Rowena Tomaneng, Deputy Chancellor
Chris Ferguson, Executive Vice Chancellor of Finance and Strategic Initiatives
John Hetts, Executive Vice Chancellor of Research, Analytics, and Data
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