



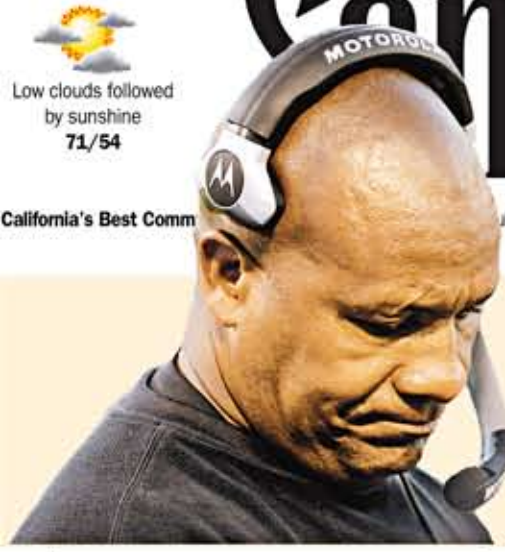
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CABRILLO COLLEGE

# Bookstore grapples with drop in revenue

Hours reduced as officials plot new business model

By TOVIN LAPAN

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APTOS — When students return to Cabrillo College for the fall term today, they will likely notice some changes in the bookstore.

The reductions are not part of the recent round of cutbacks due to a decrease in state funding. Rather, the cuts stem from a problem that all bookstores are dealing with: reduced revenue in the digital age.

The bookstore on the main Aptos campus will be closed Fridays after Sept. 16, and the bookstore on the Watsonville campus has been shut for good.

"The Watsonville closing is my biggest concern because some of those students never come to the Aptos campus, and now will be forced to come down here or forced to order online," Student Senate President Charlotte Achen said. "I'm disappointed also in the main store being closed on Fridays. A lot of things at Cabrillo are being closed on Fridays now. Sometimes it feels like the entire campus is closed on Fridays now because of the budget reductions."

One full-time employee was laid off from the bookstore, and everyone else will take a 20 percent reduction in hours due to the Friday closings. Two unfilled positions were also eliminated.

"This was the best way we could achieve some savings and really focus on getting the most affordable textbooks to students," Cabrillo Bookstore Manager Robin Ellis said of the reduction in staff and hours. "We are thinking of every initiative we can to get students the textbooks they need."

Additionally, employees with



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Declining revenue has forced changes at the Cabrillo College Bookstore.

## CABRILLO

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reduced hours will have to pick up a portion of their health coverage. A full-time employee's health care is entirely covered, but when hours are reduced, the employee must pay for the corresponding amount of their health care.

"We were hoping that since the employees voluntarily came forward and agreed to offer up a reduced contract that the district would consider lessening the hardship presented to workers in terms of benefits," Cabrillo Classified Employees Union President Stephanie Stainback said. "That wasn't deemed as possible by the district."

All together, the reductions add up to an estimated savings of \$252,000 a year, or a 32 percent reduction in salary expenses.

The bookstore pays for operating costs including more than \$256,000 in reimbursement to the college for

administrative fees including rent, Cabrillo employee expense and other operating expenses.

Expenditures at the bookstore have increased, from \$729,000 in 2005-06 to a projected \$1 million in 2011-12, while sales have declined — revenue from new and used textbooks has dropped by 28 percent in the same period.

The National Association of College Stores estimates that 27 percent of college stores nationwide do not pay rent. At Cabrillo, the store's rent is 2 percent of sales, about \$72,000 last year.

"Not all bookstores pay rent," Ellis said. "It's a statement on how the bookstore is used. Is it for student use and benefit or a profit center? We are functioning as both."

Ellis has submitted a business plan to the administration that is geared toward creating a sustainable system for the store. The plan, in general, calls for a transition into a more of a general campus store to make up lost revenue from the decline in

textbook operations.

Proposals include using bookstore space for a cafe and coffee shop and starting a print-on-demand service. The college's current food service contract with Taher prohibits the bookstore from selling food independently, but that contract is up for renewal at the end of this coming school year.

"A cafe helps bring students into the bookstore," Ellis said. "We have the population of a small city on campus every day and we all know how popular coffee is, especially on college campuses."

A print-on-demand service would open up new sources of revenue as local residents could use the service for their own publishing needs. Costs for students would decrease as professors could request only a few chapters from a text.

In 2007 the bookstore moved into a new building. In the first two years at the new site revenues matched expenditures, but in the third year of operation its deficit was \$78,000.

Bookstore revenue has been

falling as students increasingly turn to alternatives: trading books, purchasing online, downloading pirated copies or forgoing the required text all together.

"If a book in the store is \$100 and it's on Amazon for \$30, and you are a student on a tight budget, you have to choose Amazon," said Achen, who added that she spends between \$200 and \$300 on textbooks each term. "With print on demand, it gives the bookstore more of an edge."

The bookstore, in conjunction with the Student Senate in many cases, has instituted several programs to help lower costs for students such as a rental service.

Cabrillo President Brian King said that the process of envisioning the bookstore's future and evaluating the plans put forth will take place over the next year.

"The challenge with the college bookstore is more akin to challenges faced by Barnes and Noble," King said. "Students are very savvy about finding less expensive options."