

Z-Major FAQs:
Frequently Asked Questions

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Abstract: The following list of frequently asked questions (FAQ) represents some of the most queries about how CSUCI developed the CSU's first three zero-textbook-cost undergraduate majors (aka, "Z-Majors") in Communication, Health Science, and Early Childhood Studies.

Question #1: In order to develop a Z-Major, does every faculty member in the degree-granting department/program have to adopt no-cost course materials?

Answer: Not necessarily.

Z-Majors offer students a zero-textbook-cost pathway through all major-specific course requirements. Not every section is required to be zero-cost, per se. Hence, not every faculty member is necessarily required to use no-cost course materials.

At the time CSUCI's Communication department launched its Z-Major, for example, it had approximately 20 teaching faculty: 7 tenure-track Professors, 6 full-time Lecturers, and 7-9 part-time Lecturers. From this group, 100% of the Communication program's tenure-track Professors and 90% of its entire teaching faculty had chosen to (re)design at least one course using no-cost materials. Meanwhile, at least 6 teaching faculty in total (3 tenure-track Professors and 3 full-time Lecturers) have committed to redesigning all of the courses using no-cost materials. As encouraging as these numbers were, however, it also meant that several sections throughout the curricula continued to use traditional course materials.

Although every faculty member in the Communication department had not yet adopted no-cost course materials, there was still buy-in across all levels of the department. Meanwhile, the few remaining "laggards" (Rogers, 1967/2003) were not impeding the Communication department's ability to create a pathway through its required curricula. Finally, it was hoped that any remaining holdouts would eventually agree to redesign their course(s) in subsequent years – an expectation that has mostly come to fruition.

Question #2: What was the student feedback following CSUCI's development of the CSU's first three Z-Majors in Communication, Health Science, and Early Childhood Studies?

Answer: Overwhelmingly positive.

The student response was overwhelmingly positive to CSUCI's Z-Majors. Both in and out of the classroom, students expressed their appreciation - not only for the money they

saved on textbooks, but also for the level of care and concern displayed by the faculty members who embraced such a student-centered effort.

Like anything new, however, CSUCI's Z-Major initiative has not been without its naysayers. From the approximate 500 Communication majors, for example, a small handful of students expressed surprise and disappointment after learning a certain class section required the purchase of a traditional textbook. In effort to address this issue and to further communicate the pathway element of any Z-Major, the Communication program's website was updated to include a descriptive blurb for what its Z-Major entails (Please "Z-Major Website Wording").

Question #3: Has student enrollment and/or choice of course selection been impacted by no-cost classes being labeled within the university's course catalog (per SB 1359)?

Answer: Anecdotally, yes.

Anecdotally, it appears that the indication of classes with "no-cost course materials" has prompted students to enroll in certain course sections. Yet no formal analysis has yet been conducted to ask students' reasoning for choosing the section they did, nor have efforts been made to model a statistical migration between/among particular course sections. So, while it can be assumed that student enrollment and/or choice of course selection has been impacted by no-cost classes being labeled within the university's course catalog, it is still unknown exactly how significant this influence has been.

