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CU I&E Submission: Chemistry Laboratory Kits - Facilitating Student Success Using Novel Purchasing Methods [1]

Team Information

Matthew Wise, matthew.wise@colorado.edu [2], Senior Instructor - Chemistry
David Jonas, chemchair@colorado.edu [3], Chair, Chemistry Department

Who

Matthew Avena, Asst. Dir. Ac. Resource Ecommerce, CU Bookstore

What

The COVID-19 pandemic caused a shift in the way the Chemistry Department facilitates the delivery of its general chemistry laboratory experiments. Students are required to purchase a laboratory kit from Carolina Distance Learning so experiments can be performed at home instead of on-campus (required by social distancing guidelines). Kits were introduced during the 2020 summer session. Students were required to purchase a voucher from the CU bookstore and redeem the voucher at the Carolina website. Carolina shipped the lab kits to students after the voucher was redeemed. We found this process to be extremely inefficient. Therefore, prior to the Spring 2021 semester, the CU bookstore completely reworked the student experience by: purchasing lab kits, shipping them to Boulder and selling them in-house. The new purchasing system saved students (~1,700 students) countless amounts of time. For example, they did not have to wait for lab kits to be shipped from North Carolina. Additionally, the new system improved customer service by allowing students to return and/or replace the lab kits easily if items were missing or damaged.

Why

We found the “voucher” system of purchasing lab kits to be extremely inefficient. Students had to wait several days, if not weeks, for their lab kit to be delivered. This was a big issue for students who added the laboratory course after the semester started. Second, if there was a problem with the lab kit (e.g., missing items) students had to contact Carolina customer service. We found Carolina customer service was hesitant to help our students with their problems. CU bookstore customer service is more student friendly. Selling the lab kits in-house eliminated these issues and many more.

When

The new purchasing process was negotiated and implemented before the Spring 2021 semester.

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