

Institutional Readiness for Affordable Learning Solutions (AL\$) program

The MERLOT-SkillsCommons team have been enabling campuses and systems of higher education to plan, design, deploy, and manage Affordable Learning Solutions programs since 2010. The California State University System launched their program in 2010, and in 2019-20, the 23-campus system saved students over \$72 million. After two years of planning, designing, and deploying their AL\$ program, the Eastern Gateway Community College in Ohio saved its 30,000+ students over \$22 million.

We have learned much over the years and have organized readiness indicators to assess the degree to which institutions and communities of stakeholders have the capacity to achieve successful outcomes for a successful AL\$ program.

Consider the following questions as you reflect on current institutional readiness and what steps you might need to take to become ready for success.

A. Executive Leadership is critical for setting institutional priorities, allocating resources, and sustaining an AL\$ program

1. Is Affordability of Education a major issue for your students? Do you know ...
 - a. How many of your students are eligible for Pell Grants?
 - b. How many are receiving other financial grants or student loans?
2. How does your university's mission and strategic priorities align with AL\$ programming? Do your president and provost include the following topics in their communications and/or are there published statements concerning
 - a. Affordability
 - b. Improving access to education
 - c. Outreach to diverse communities
 - d. Supporting upward mobility
 - e. Improve student success and graduate rates

B. Management Capacity is critical for project management and effective and collaborative implementation of AL\$ program

1. Is there a unit in the institutional organization that would be capable and motivated to manage the AL\$ program?
 - a. Library
 - b. Academic Technology Dept.
 - c. Faculty Development Office
 - d. Bookstore
2. Could the lead management team include members from other organizations in its program? For example, if the academic technology department took the lead, could librarians, faculty development staff, bookstore managers, center for students with disabilities, etc. be part of the management team?
3. Is there funding to support this unit taking on this additional workload? Yes. Minimally. No.

4. Can the unit managing the AL\$ program implement the elements of an AL\$ plan, including communications, training, support services, technology services, project management)?
Yes. Somewhat. No.

C. Faculty and Student Leadership is critical for the political support needed by Executive Leadership and project management

1. Could the Academic Senate or other faculty representative body approve a simple policy statement to support an AL\$ program?
2. Could the student representative body approve a simple policy statement to support an AL\$ program?

D. Technology Support is critical for scaling an AL\$ program efficiently, effectively, and conveniently

1. Does the institution have the capabilities to provide technical and user-support services for faculty exploring, adopting, and adapting digital content into the course delivery systems?

Where Do You Stand?

Readiness Element	Provide brief descriptions on how your institution is ready for AL\$ and what steps are needed to better prepare for success
Executive Leadership	
Management Capabilities	
Faculty and Student Leadership	
Technology Support	

MERLOT-SkillsCommons can provide you the strategic consulting, technical assistance, and technology services to enable your institution to develop your AL\$ program faster, better, and affordably. **Contact Gerry Hanley, Executive Director of MERLOT-SkillsCommons at gerry.hanley@csulb.edu and we will help you plan your next steps.**