

The future of learning for one first-generation student



Pearson

Brenda Lupo says education has always been something she's heard about at home. "From an early age, my parents helped me understand that it's the key to a bright future," she says.

A new tool for students

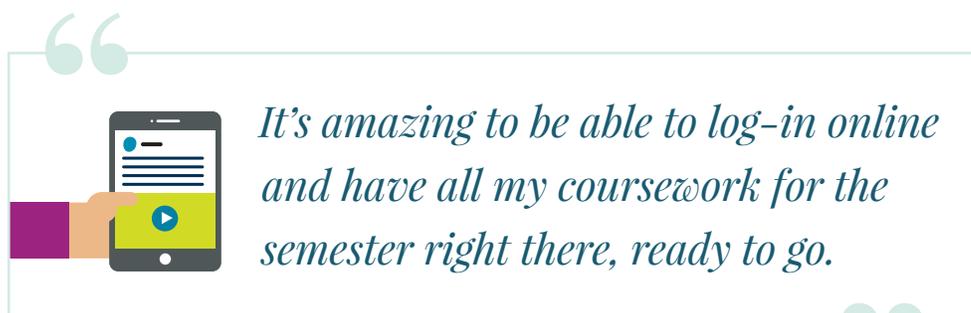
The University of Florida recently started offering students like Brenda access to high-quality digital course materials. Brenda says these digital tools have made the stressful — and expensive — process of acquiring new textbooks each semester much smoother.



Brenda's family came to the U.S. from Italy when she was a little girl. She grew up in South Florida and dreamed of attending the University of Florida to pursue her passion for media production.

Today, Brenda is a junior in the university's communications program. She's also the first person in her family to go to college — which means Brenda is going through the ups and downs of this new adventure without a family who can relate.

"It's been hard to navigate basic things like buying textbooks," she says. "My parents are learning with me."



Affordable access to textbooks

The benefit of these textbook resources is a lot more than ease of use. It's also about money. When Brenda began studying at the University of Florida, she repeatedly encountered a burdensome problem: a lengthy list of expensive textbooks.

"As soon as I received the syllabus for a class, I immediately tried to locate the required textbooks for the lowest price," she says.

It wasn't always that easy.

"My first stop is always the library, but there is usually just one copy of the book there so it was likely unavailable. Then I looked for second-hand versions online — I even checked the cost of renting the books."

Brenda emphasizes that shopping around for the best deal means students often don't get their books until a few weeks into the semester.

"Most professors give students time to buy textbooks because they understand the financial burden many of us face. But if assignments come in quickly, it can be tough to keep up without the materials."

Every penny counts

A microeconomics class introduced something that helped with access and affordability. Through a partnership with Pearson, the university offers an “opt-in” program for digital products delivered upon registration called UF All Access. The course materials were entirely digital and immediately available, which means Brenda didn’t have to shop around for the best textbook deals.

“It was a huge help,” Brenda says. “For most college students, every penny counts.”

There was one more benefit for Brenda. At the University of Florida, students are billed for the digital course materials through their existing university account. That means they don’t have to pay out of pocket at the beginning of each semester when expenses often pile up or get deeper and deeper in credit card debt.

Learning happens anytime, anywhere

Brenda says digital access to books and assignments anywhere, anytime makes students more productive.

“I don’t find myself constantly running to and from my dorm room to grab the books I need for each class,” Brenda says. “I can get more done during the day because I have all the materials I need to complete assignments on hand,” she says. “And I can easily switch back and forth between subjects.”

Connecting students and professors

Though many classes offered at the University of Florida still require traditional textbooks, Brenda has found that most of her professors do welcome the implementation of digital courseware.

“Having everything available online in one place is obviously great for students — but it also makes it easier for professors to assign tasks and track our progress,” Brenda says.

She’s discovered that digital tools also facilitate communication. Students can find study groups or reach out to classmates for help. They can get in touch with professors to continue important conversations outside the classroom.

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The next wave of courseware innovation

Brenda looks forward to the day when paper textbooks are supplemental to digital textbooks. “About half of my classes use digital courseware instead of traditional textbooks,” she says. And in the end, Brenda is getting that education her parents talked about for so long.

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