

Consortium Agreement

Vision

To create a consortium agreement among multiple Ohio institutions in order to leverage the academic and institutional strengths of each participating school. For Ohio residents, this agreement would augment access to and ease of transferability within participating USO institutions.

Working with an eye towards meeting various key goals of the Chancellor's *Strategic Plan*—for example, “increasing enrollment [in the USO] by 230,000 [students] by 2017” (p. 31); “increasing the rate of graduation by 20%” (ibid.); and augmenting dual admission practices undertaken by community colleges and universities (p. 54)—participating institutions will collaborate to provide a multi-faceted college experience that is seamless in administrative processes, that removes barriers, and that presents new avenues of accessibility to higher education for all Ohio residents.

In Practice

The consortium agreement would bring higher education to the student by “bundling” the process by which the student interfaces with student services, academic programs, course delivery, financial aid, and advising. The premise is that the student would benefit from both the collective strength of the consortium and the individual educational experience provided by each institution within the consortium.

Key Features of the Consortium

The consortium offers a number of key features, among which are the following:

- One application—The student would use one application to apply to the consortium. For financial aid purposes, the student admitted into the consortium will have a designated home campus but will have the status of being a student at each campus of the participating institutions.
- Consortium-wide advising—The student will have a main advisor (who might or might not be at the student's designated home campus) but will have easy access to advisors from all participating institutions.
- Multi-campus registration—The consortium student will be able to register for classes at any of the participating institutions without having to fill out and submit additional forms for each institution (e.g., additional application forms).
- Single tuition structure—Participating institutions will agree to charge the same rate of tuition to all (in-state) students who are part of the consortium.
- Consortium I.D. card—The student admitted to the consortium would receive a consortium student identification card that will grant the student the same rights and privileges on each campus of the participating institutions that non-consortium students enjoy who are students of a given institution that is participating in the consortium (e.g., the consortium student will be

able to enjoy the library privileges offered by each participating institution and will be able to purchase student tickets to athletic and cultural events at each participating institution). For practical purposes, the consortium student identification card would have the logo of each school participating in the consortium so that officials at each school will easily recognize their school's participation in the consortium. In addition, the student's identifying data will be in each school's database to facilitate the student's navigation throughout a given school's systems and procedures.

In sum, then, the consortium would provide for the student the following:

- One application for admission to multiple institutions
- Access to multiple schools' faculties and services
- One main advisor to assist the student through the process, and access to advisors from each institution as necessary
- One financial aid process
- The ability to take courses at multiple schools within the US
- One standard tuition rate for the student (and revenue sharing with the member institutions)

In addition, the consortium would provide the student with both face-to-face and online options for courses. Ideally, participating institutions would also engage in team teaching, program and course sharing, and other collaborative ventures that would yield benefits for faculty professional development, institutional creativity, program innovation, and so on.

Why would a student elect to apply for admission to the consortium?

Although the consortium is open to all students, it is not necessarily intended for all students. Students who already know that they want to attend a particular four-year institution and pursue a particular degree at that institution, for example, might not need the services of other institutions (except for their having or wanting to take an occasional course, perhaps, at a local community college).

On the other hand, students who for whatever reason need or desire to have access to a range of courses, programs, and support personnel at multiple institutions would benefit by being admitted to the consortium, since consortium admission would allow the student seamlessly to navigate the processes and easily to register for classes and use the services at each participating institution. The student would not have to maintain separate school affiliations and deal with individual registration and other processes at each school. Rather, by bundling services, the consortium would provide a "multi-institution one-stop shop" for the student. The consortium student would soon realize that, to use a popular advertising phrase from a major company, "membership has its benefits."

Alignment with or Differentiation from other Ohio Initiatives

Processes and agreements already in place will help to facilitate the success of the consortium. TAG- and OTM-approved courses already transfer seamlessly within the USO, for example (as do courses approved for C-TAGs). In addition, participating institutions will develop and implement consortium-wide articulation agreements that will work similarly to the ways in which bi-lateral articulation agreements work. A key difference will manifest in the yield to the student: A student who is not enrolled in the consortium but whose college has a bi-lateral agreement with another college will be assured that a given course (that is not covered by the C-TAGs, OTM, or TAGs) will transfer from her college to the other college participating in the bi-lateral agreement. However, that course might not have portability to a third institution. Although consortium articulation agreements cannot guarantee transferability of non-TAG, OTM, or C-TAG courses to non-consortium institutions, the multiple institutional participation comprising the sum and substance of the consortium will augment the portability of courses for the consortium student, and it will do so systemically seamlessly and, for the student, effortlessly.

Other alignment/differentiation issues needed to be addressed include those having to do with a statewide application process; various aspects of the “Big Idea” initiative for Distance Learning; and various aspects of the “Pilot Sharing Program” initiative.

Operational Questions and Challenges:

How do we ensure that a student’s full-time status be recognized (for financial aid purposes, e.g., or for the purpose of a student’s being on the parent’s auto insurance plan) if the student is not taking a full-time course load at any of the participating institutions but, in the aggregate, is taking a full-time course load?

Do we offer a couple of degrees that each institution can contribute towards in courses?

Will degree residency requirements come into play?

Will different formats of each institution help or hinder the student’s education?

Who confers the degree? (Among other things, this issue has financial implications to colleges and universities.)

Are there accreditation issues of which we need to be concerned?

How would the degree audit be processed?

Presumably, the student’s home campus would process the student’s financial aid. How would this process run smoothly?

Would we be able to offer and agree upon a flat tuition rate in this agreement?

How would we process revenue sharing?

How would we ensure that students not have difficulty with textbook ordering and delivery?

If institutions use different data systems, would data sharing become problematic?

How would we ensure even workloads of the participating institutions, and would faculty workloads pose any problems?

What are the graduation processes?

Are we able to offer face-to-face courses from the 4-year schools near or at community colleges so that the student does not have to move to the campus if the course is not offered online? How can we leverage this arrangement with the other consortium agreement members?

Risks:

What unforeseen results can come from this agreement (with the other institutions in Ohio, that is)?

Why would Boards of Trustees agree to enter into this agreement?

Does a consortium arrangement of the sort under discussion here possibly—and unintentionally—undermine each institution's program strength?

Will the desired benefits to the students, institutions, and the state outweigh the time and resources needed to make this agreement operational from a given college's perspective?