



University Integrations FAQ

This document seeks to answer some initial frequently asked questions as we begin the integrations review and planning process. Many questions remain to be answered because it is just the start of a longer process; this document will be updated frequently to reflect the ongoing data analysis and engagement with stakeholders.

What does the State System mean by university integrations?

For the purposes of the review process launched by the Board of Governors, we are exploring an approach that could identify combinations of certain universities that, when integrated, would operate under a unified leadership team reporting through the Chancellor to the Board of Governors, have a single faculty and staff, a single academic program array, a unified enrollment strategy, and a single budget—all while honoring the local identity of the original institutions.

Does this mean universities will close?

No. The State System does not have the authority to close universities. The chancellor has clearly stated that a policy of closure is not in the best interest of our students, the regions we serve, or the Commonwealth.

If a student is attending any of these universities, will be they be able to finish their studies and earn their degree?

Yes. That's a prime reason why the State System is exploring an integrations approach that keeps all institutions open, focuses on student success, and uncovers cost efficiencies, which directly impact the total price a student pays. Any eventual plan would be designed to ensure our universities continue offering students the programs they want and their regions need. Integrations provide the State System with its best opportunity to balance its responsibility to provide a quality education at an affordable price for students.

Could there be administrative, faculty, and/or staff reductions as a result of the integrations?

We are at the beginning of what will be a lengthy review, consultation, and planning process, with an estimated review to final proposal time of over a year. It would be inappropriate to speculate on the potential employment impacts of any potential multi-university integration, but the State System remains committed to an open, transparent, and consultative process from start to finish.

Why is the State System exploring an integrations approach?

The State System's mission is to provide affordable, high-quality public higher education across the Commonwealth, and this approach is designed to bolster that mission. At a time when universities are financially challenged, it's incumbent upon the State System to creatively

manage in a way to keep institutions open, vibrant, and centered on student success. The goals of an integrations approach would be to maintain or expand high-quality educational opportunities for students across the state; position institutions for growth; and meet regional economic and workforce needs.

What does the process look like?

The process for integrating State System universities is defined by law in Act 50. It is transparent, consultative, analytical and intended to seek solutions, not implement solutions that have been predetermined. The process is conducted in partnership with the General Assembly through quarterly check-ins with House and Senate Education and Appropriations Committees. It consists of four phases, progress between which requires affirmation by the Board of Governors. The phases, and the most expeditious path for their completion is outlined below.

- Phase 1 involves a review of the financial impacts of a potential integration. That review was launched today. It could be completed by October 2020.
- Phase 2 involves the development of a detailed plan or plans to integrate selected institutions. It could be completed in April 2021, with a mid-phase checkpoint in January.
- Phase 3 involves a public comment period and could be completed by July 2021.
- Phase 4 involves implementing the plan and could be completed for the start of fall term 2022.

How soon could any proposed integration become a reality?

Any proposed integration would be required to follow an extensive consultation, and reporting process. This includes no-less than a year of review, including public reports to the Legislature.

The Board of Governors authorized the Chancellor to explore three integrations – Slippery Rock/Edinboro, California/Clarion, and Lock Haven/Mansfield. Why these six and will the System consider others?

Those choices reflect the belief that each could realize significant benefits from working together and because of the regional nature of how our universities operate. Some of these benefits include:

- potential for growth into new markets to serve more students;
- ability to leverage their regional proximity to each other; and
- opportunities for cost savings that enhance financial sustainability.

These three integrations could look very different from one another, with several models being explored. The Board's action does permit the Chancellor, if financial circumstances merit, to explore other combinations of institutions as part of the integrations approach.

What's might the outcome be of these three integrations?

Each one could be designed to meet the unique demands of its region. Slippery Rock/Edinboro with their regional proximity could be able to broaden a student's experience through aligned academic programming. Lock Haven/Mansfield could develop a robust non-degree and stackable credential program to meet the workforce needs of central Northern Tier employers. And California/Clarion, in addition to on-campus programs, this integration seeks to stand up a low-cost, high-quality online undergraduate degree and degree-completion program that is not currently available in the state.

Can the State System simply order a multi-university integration?

No. While the authority to explore and execute an integrations approach is supported by Act 50 of 2020—a new law supported by the Legislature and Governor in overwhelming bipartisan fashion—there are layers of accountability and transparency that come with the process. This accountability environment includes quarterly reports to the General Assembly and at least two public hearings. We are committed to an open, transparent, and consultative process that will include all of our stakeholders. The success of this type of planning will depend on all of our stakeholders and all of our universities working together to build an even stronger System.

When will students, faculty, and staff be informed of these plans?

We will be engaging with stakeholders throughout the process to keep them informed and to help inform our decisions. The review and plan development process will be broadly consultative and transparent.