Membership Review Process

As an institution’s mission or administrative structure or makeup evolves or involves substantial challenges, the membership committee and executive committees may feel it necessary to invite a campus to consider its membership with the consortium.

These guidelines are for the membership of member campuses as they transition and are intended:

1) To provide fairness and consistency as current members evolve
2) To ensure the defining elements of COPLAC are part of its member campuses as they transition and make significant changes
3) To specify how COPLAC will review a member campus

What might prompt an invitation?
The Membership Committee is mindful that universities change in response to many variables. The Committee would review cases individually and then invite a discussion with a member institution in the event of:

- Mergers with other campuses
- Major shifts in number and types of undergraduate programs being offered to the extent that the liberal arts are less emphasized
- Substantive changes to the mission statement or the strategic vision held at the campus, system, state or board levels so that it is no longer resonant with COPLAC values
- Sustained reductions in the residential nature of the campus

The Membership Committee might talk with senior representatives from a campus about these or other topics as applicable:

- Does the institution have a predominantly undergraduate student population?
- Is the full-time faculty in numbers and expertise appropriate for a liberal arts and sciences institution?
- Does the institution demonstrate a commitment to access and inclusion and to serving students who reflect the populations of the state?
- Does the institution demonstrate a strong commitment to preparing students for a life of active citizenship and public service?
- Does the institution demonstrate a sustained commitment to the liberal arts and sciences as a core educational enterprise beyond a strong general education program?

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Implications for COPLAC's core values and characteristics to consider during a review

- What is the nature of the change happening to the institution (merger, program cuts, mission/strategic plan changes, etc.)? Are the changes forced by the state or a governing board? Internal politics? Financial exigencies?
- What will be ongoing evidence of liberal arts outcomes – such as those identified in the Wabash National Study (2006-2008) – at the new institution?
- For a merger, will there be a transference of significant liberal arts features from the old single campus member to the new multi-campus university? For example, does the new institution lead to a significant change in the direction of its mission as it joins together with other institutions?
- Will the changes at the institutional, system, or state level lead to changes in the types of degrees offered, the disciplinary expertise of faculty, the predominantly undergraduate student population, or the residential population?
- Will the changes at the institution alter the sustained commitment to the liberal arts and sciences as a core educational enterprise beyond a strong general education program?

Recommended Process for Extending Provisional or Full Membership to a Multi-Campus Institution Resulting From a Merger with a Single Campus Member

- As a COPLAC member changes, the Membership Committee will review the new university’s structure, mission, and curriculum and discuss the anticipated effects on the institution’s participation in COPLAC
- Membership committee and a point person at the member campus maintain communication to identify anticipated issues and to work on their resolution
- In the case of a merger, the campus(es) or system will submit a Letter of Intent about limiting affiliation to just the original member (programming, governance, etc., restricted to one campus) OR a Letter of Intent from new university about expanding membership to all campuses
- Letters and any requested materials will be reviewed by a Membership Committee team regarding mission statement, programs, etc. with a recommendation made to Membership Committee, Executive Committee, and the Board of Directors

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