Course Sharing in Action:

A Practical Guide For Higher Education Systems



NASH
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HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEMS

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About the Organizations

NASH
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEMS

Founded in 1979, the National Association of Higher Education Systems (NASH) works to advance the role of multi-campus systems and the concept of systemness to create a more vibrant and sustainable higher education sector. NASH represents the nearly 90 public higher education systems in the U.S., which include more than 1,200 institutions and serve 13.9 million students nationwide. Learn more at www.nash.edu.

W/A Whiteboard Advisors

For more than 20 years, Whiteboard Advisors has collaborated with the most transformative organizations, investors, and entrepreneurs in education to elevate new ideas about how we learn, work, and live. Our diverse team of educators, wonks, and storytellers brings in-depth understanding of policy and practice to bear on cutting-edge research, powerful writing, and the design of communications and advocacy campaigns that challenge the status quo. Whether we're working with startups or the most established organizations in education, we're passionate about taking breakthrough ideas to scale.

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Foreword

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There is currently wide agreement among critics, leaders, and pundits that institutions of higher education need to change, even as there is little agreement around exactly how. Amid demands for greater accountability, increased efficiency, and tighter focus within institutions, there is also concern over losing the soul of an ecosystem that is arguably responsible for the innovations and economic successes of our nation that are the envy of the world.

Collaboration has now permeated our research environment, with widespread recognition that the most important discoveries today are the products of teams of scholars, often multi-institutional. We have also seen successful collaborations in areas of administrative and academic support services. Yet, institutional collaboration is still much less common in one of our most fundamental activities -- teaching.

Smaller institutions, in particular, may be unable to offer the breadth of courses their students expect because they lack faculty with specialized backgrounds. Or they may struggle to offer all courses with the frequency students require to stay on track for timely graduation. These smaller regional institutions are often most critical to meeting the needs of some of the most underserved communities in our country.

There are examples of course sharing within established consortia and partnerships that have helped address these challenges, but the practice is not widespread. Some systems of higher education see course sharing as a strategic imperative that can allow individual institutions to focus on what they do best and most efficiently while providing students with significant benefits as part of a system. Course sharing may also enable the development of innovative interdisciplinary courses, pathways, and credentials that address emerging challenges and opportunities.

Higher education's experience during the pandemic helped nearly all faculty, students, and institutions understand the extent to which courses need not be restricted to a specific classroom on a campus. But there are still significant hurdles such as financial arrangements, ensuring support services include complex student financial aid considerations, and aligning academic policies where necessary. Early adopters' experiences can inform new course-sharing initiatives by institutions, systems, and consortia. It may be premature to offer detailed, playbook-style guidance, but this implementation guide offers useful lessons from those innovators and provides insights that will help others chart their own successful paths forward.

Course sharing can be an important tool for meeting student and community needs across many institutions. Fortunately, with this guide in hand, it is no longer necessary to start from ground zero.



Executive Summary

Course sharing offers a valuable strategy for institutions grappling with the best ways to adapt to changing demographics and economics. Whether an institution seeks to maximize revenue, minimize unnecessary costs, remove barriers to on-time graduation, or build entirely new shared programs that leverage strengths across different campuses, course sharing can be part of the solution.

The breadth of starting places, ending places, and ways to get there is a strength, not a weakness, of course sharing. Each system and/or institution can find the approach that best meets their needs and their students' needs. In some cases, course sharing represents the first time institutions within a system have formally partnered with one another; in other cases, it codifies and simplifies what students have already been doing for many years.

Institutions or systems considering adopting or expanding course-sharing efforts can learn from the experiences of others while also adapting approaches as needed. This resource offers lessons from a wide range of course-sharing implementations as well as a structure for helping institutions understand the stakeholders, technologies, policies and procedures necessary to bring course sharing to life.

Course sharing touches many departments on campus, requiring the involvement of faculty and administrators responsible for a wide range of functional areas. Institutions interviewed for this resource identified several areas that required thoughtful consideration, including the following:



Breadth of Course Sharing

Determining the breadth of course sharing entails determining which courses to offer as a teaching institution and which courses to allow students to take elsewhere. Institutions will need to consider how many courses they can realistically offer and/or articulate, whether they want to set limitations to accessing courses based on the prerequisites or course level, how many seats they want to open up for courses they're teaching to visiting students, or how many credits they want to allow students to take at the nonhome institution through course sharing.



Financial Mechanics

While approaches for reimbursements across participating institutions vary, one through line was consistent: Course-sharing reimbursement rates should make every institution better off. The host (teaching) institution will bring in incremental income from filling otherwise unused seats; the home school, meanwhile, should reimburse the host school at a rate lower than its per-credit tuition. In this model, the home school receives more tuition from a student on a per-hour basis than it pays out.



Technology Needs

From the student information system to the learning management system to platforms specifically for course sharing, a range of technology underpins course sharing. Ensuring student information is shared appropriately, automating creation of emails or other logins, and enabling workflows can all support course sharing. Additionally, purpose-built platforms for course sharing, either from a third party or built in-house, can offer a user-friendly way to offer access to a catalogue of shared courses and simplify financial reconciliation.



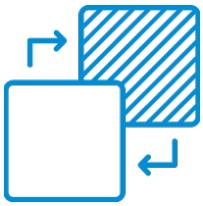
Institutional Practices

From articulation to registration to transcription to financial aid, a range of institutional practices need to either change or be considered to accommodate course sharing. Institutional policies may also need to be developed to support student permissions (e.g., who approves a course, whether multiple permissions are needed, in what order they happen) as well as to set norms (e.g., will grades earned in course-share courses count toward GPA, Dean's List, etc.) related to course sharing.



State or System Policy

Public systems may find that state or county legislation or regulation impacts some aspects of course sharing (e.g., related to how much can be charged or discounted on tuition). System-level policies may also need to be changed, which can require approval from the Board of Regents/Trustees.



Change Management

From the IT department to institutional research to faculty, registrars, bursars, and student success advisors, a wide range of institutional and system-level stakeholders have a role to play in course sharing. Involving representatives from across campuses can help build buy-in and ease adoption.

Glossary of Terms

Course sharing: This is the practice of making courses from other institutions available to students to expand access to courses. Through these formal agreements, students from one institution may take courses in person or online (depending on geographic proximity) at a second institution, and courses are counted for credit.

Cross-registration: This is often used interchangeably with course sharing. It can also be used to signify the process of registering at the host campus as part of a course share.

Home institution: This is the primary institution of enrollment for a student — the place the student matriculated to and will graduate from. This institution is responsible for the student's academic record, financial aid, and graduation requirements.

Host institution: This is the institution that offers (teaches) a course through course sharing. It is responsible for delivering instruction and sharing course completion details with the home campus. Sometimes it is referred to as a "teaching institution."

Consortium: This is a group of colleges or universities that collaborate on academic initiatives, often including shared course offerings or joint degree programs.

Articulation: This is the process of evaluating and aligning courses across institutions to ensure they are equivalent in content, rigor, and credit value.



Introduction

From formal agreements between geographic neighbors to cross-continent partnerships with institutions as part of a study abroad program, institutions have long found ways to partner with peer institutions to expand their offerings and provide expanded experiences for their students.

As online courses have proliferated, these opportunities for collaboration have likewise grown, transcending the need for physical proximity or semester-long travel. Access to a larger number of individual courses from a wide range of partner campuses can now help students unable to access a specific class on their home campus to stay on track to graduation or help students explore academic areas of interest beyond their home campus catalogue of offerings.

For the purposes of this paper, the term "course sharing" is used to encompass a wide range of agreements between institutions or systems that enable a student from one institution to access a course (either in person or online) offered by a different institution (and have their institution automatically accept that credit) while remaining enrolled in their home institution.

While each system or consortium may use its own terms to describe the home/sending institution and the host/receiving institution, this paper uses the term "home institution" to describe the institution where a student is enrolled full time and uses the term "host institution" to describe the institution teaching a course to a visiting student via course share.

Since 2023, the National Association of Higher Education Systems (NASH) has supported systems as they pilot and scale course-sharing initiatives. The experiences of these systems (and their respective institutions) and the systems' willingness to share lessons on what worked, what didn't, and what they would recommend to peers informed the creation of this resource.

Participants range from large and complex (like the Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area, made up of 20 public and private institutions, including community colleges, multiple R1 research universities, and two historically Black colleges and universities [HBCUs] to public systems made up of just two institutions. The diversity in geographies and institutional makeup has led to a range of experiences and similarly wide-ranging insights.

In addition to eight participants from the NASH pilots, this paper also includes insights from the State University of New York system.

System/Consortium	System Size/ Institutional Types	Course-Sharing Participants	Timeline
Montana University System	16 campuses, ranging from R1 universities to community colleges	Started with 2 institutions in Spring 2021; now nine institutions	Began exploring course-sharing work in 2019 and launched a full pilot in fall 2020.
Texas State University System	Seven institutions, both two- and four-year institutions	Three institutions	Began work with NASH on course sharing in 2022.
Texas A&M University System	11 universities, including one HBCU, Hispanic-serving institutions and minority-serving institutions (MSIs)	10 out of 11	Has experimented with course sharing for over a dozen years and started work with Acadeum in 2022.
Southern Illinois University System	Two four-year institutions	Two four-year institutions (SIU Edwardsville and SIU Carbondale)	Began work with NASH in 2022; enrollment began in fall 2023.
University of Hawai'i System	10 campuses: seven community colleges and three universities	All 10 institutions	Has experimented with course sharing over the last 10 years; course sharing in its current form began in 2023.
Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education	10 institutions	All 10 institutions	The course-sharing process began in 2024.
Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area	20 institutions, including community colleges, four-year institutions and MSIs	Traditionally, most — if not all — institutions were involved; 14 institutions currently enrolled in cross-registration	Has been engaged in some form of course sharing since the 1960s; attempts to modernize in the last five years culminated in a NASH grant (2024).
Louisiana Board of Regents	Coordinates all public higher ed institutions in Louisiana	Six institutions across four systems	Received a grant from NASH in 2024; course sharing in its current form began in 2024.

Course Sharing: From Concept to Action

Why: The Impetus for Adopting or Expanding Course Sharing

Unsurprisingly, many of the macro trends impacting higher education, from the changing student demographics (e.g., fewer 18- to 24-year-olds attending full time; more parents and working learners) to the increasingly constrained financial environments, are driving the adoption or expansion of course sharing. Using course sharing to maximize revenue, control costs, support student completion, and expand offerings supports broader institutional objectives.

Across the nine systems interviewed for this report, three trends emerged in their reasons for course sharing:

- **Fiscal imperatives or system improvement:** Creating system-level efficiencies, reducing overall budget or increasing revenue to respond to budgetary pressures.
- **Removing barriers to student completion:** Increasing completion (and particularly on-time completion) by using course sharing to overcome limitations of bottleneck courses or scheduling courses.
- **Expanding opportunities for students:** Enabling students to take advantage of courses not offered at the home campus or partnering on a joint program that brings together the best of two or more institutions to create an entirely new offering.

Southern Illinois University System:

Course Exchange as a Vital Step in Campus Collaboration

In its current strategic plan, the Southern Illinois University (SIU) System placed a high priority on using systemwide collaboration to create new opportunities for students. That meant building a student-first course exchange framework so students could take online classes offered at another SIU institution.

This task seemed straightforward because the SIU system has just two undergraduate campuses. But SIU Carbondale and SIU Edwardsville had little history of collaboration in the area of academic programming. The campus teams assigned to this project quickly discovered significant differences in culture and practice that made this process much more intricate than expected. Carbondale and Edwardsville used different learning management systems. Their academic calendars and tuition and fee structures did not align. Edwardsville students pay a flat fee to rent their textbooks; Carbondale students must buy books. Technical limitations meant staff had to create multiple manual processes so students could register for classes and faculty members could submit their grades.

Despite these initial stumbling blocks, campus teams worked well together and enthusiastically helped each other solve problems as they arose. This effort to create the SIU System Online Course Exchange, which launched in fall 2023, opened eyes on both campuses as to what was possible through collaboration. Building on the success of this project, SIU Carbondale and SIU Edwardsville are in the process of co-creating undergraduate certificate programs with shared courses that leverage the two campuses' academic strengths.

"It's a snowball effect because it has led to the campuses working on other projects unrelated to the course exchange," said Dr. Gireesh Gupchup, vice president for academic innovation, planning and partnerships for the SIU System. "That's because people on each campus have gained confidence in one another. That's a real positive for the system and for the students we serve."

INSTITUTIONAL PRIORITIES: FISCAL AND STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES FOR COURSE SHARING

Institutions and systems are responding to tight fiscal environments by seeking financial and operational efficiencies. This includes making the most of their existing resources.

Many travelers are familiar with HotelTonight, the app that allows last-minute planners to book a same-day hotel room at a discounted rate. The platform helps fill rooms that would otherwise go unsold, increasing hotel income while also offering value to those consumers willing to wait until the last minute to book.

Higher education institutions are realizing that unfilled seats, like unsold hotel rooms, represent a revenue opportunity, and they are adopting or expanding their use of course sharing to fill these seats. Some systems are looking at supply and demand systemwide, finding ways to create cost savings by taking advantage of open seats at one institution to meet demand from another institution.

One interviewed system, for example, noted that statistics seemed to be popular at one institution, often requiring additional sections. Another institution in the system, however, had experienced a drop in enrollment and had open seats. As the vice chancellor explained, "To try to reduce our own overall budget, we started looking for online courses to share to help reduce each other's bottom line. So if I needed more stat sections, which seemed to be a popular area, I was always needing additional faculty, while the other institution had open seats. And so we try to backfill them through those online sections."

In some cases, course sharing can be an unintentional revenue generator. For one rural community college, course sharing did not begin with revenue as a primary goal, but unexpected demand for their online chemistry course allowed the college to unlock some additional funding. According to the registrar, "This is definitely a good thing in terms of revenue."

Montana State University System:

Resources for Rural Institutions

Montana is a vast state with a small population. As a result, the state turned to online courses decades ago — Montana State University launched a graduate-level program for teachers in 1993 offered "via telecomputing networks." In addition, the state, with the goal of being a good steward of taxpayer dollars, made preventing "unnecessary duplication of courses at the units of the system" part of the responsibilities of the Board of Regents for the Montana University System. Both of these preconditions made the Montana University System a strong candidate for effective course sharing: By bringing all online courses to all students in the system, one internal analysis determined that the number of available courses for undergraduates would double.

Regional community colleges, in particular, operate at a small scale and must be selective about offerings. "We would never have sufficient opportunity, sufficient enrollment demand to run some of the courses that our own students have picked up from other partner campuses," explains Erin Niedge of Miles Community College in Miles City, Montana.

The Montana University System focused on creating a solid course-sharing system, beginning with three initial institutions, before considering expansion to a statewide model. According to Joe Thiel, the Montana System has "started with a small pilot where the focus was really on regular meeting and troubleshooting rather than on scale with students." Montana had common course numbering prior to beginning the course-sharing pilot, which also helped smooth the pilot implementation process. The system chose a third-party vendor to support the online course exchange. "We wanted to make sure all the pipes are built effectively, rather than getting a big thing out to the world," Thiel explained.

By getting the fundamentals right and working on controlled, gradual implementation of the course sharing, Montana has created a course-sharing pilot that provides value for students while expanding access to courses for students across the state.

University of Hawai‘i System:

Building a Culture of Student Success

To promote success for its 50,000 students, the University of Hawai'i (UH) System has built two critical pieces of infrastructure. The first is a policy that allows all students to take courses at any of the system's seven community colleges. (Between 5% and 10% of students register cross-campus each semester.) The second is STAR GPS, the systemwide course registration program that charts the most direct course to completing an academic program.

When students register for classes, STAR GPS helps them find classes at any UH campus that count toward their credential so they can remain on track. This system works smoothly when classes have been articulated between campuses. But sometimes STAR GPS urges a student to take a class that's "unofficially articulated" — one that fulfills a student's pathway but lacks formal articulation. In those instances, the system in real time prompts the registrar at a student's home campus to articulate the course so the student will receive course credit and financial aid. The system prioritizes connecting community college students to courses necessary for their degree path that they might not have access to within their home institutions, smoothing both the path to graduation as well as to a four-year institution, if desired.

"At times, we need to gently guide people toward a desired direction," said Gary Rodwell, an IT specialist at University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and the lead programmer for the STAR GPS app. "For example, we might point out to a registrar that a course has already been articulated at three other campuses and provide concrete examples. That approach is usually effective, because in education, everyone ultimately wants to do what's best for students."

REMOVING BARRIERS: IMPROVING PATHWAYS AND SMOOTHING PROCESSES

Institutions work hard to optimize scheduling, trying to ensure that access to courses isn't a barrier to retention and completion. But even the most thoughtful course scheduling may not meet every student's needs.

For example, one associate vice chancellor noted that an institution in its system assessed the number of students needing a course for the next year that wasn't in the normal course rotation. The institution found 1,000 students within 12 credit hours of graduating who needed a course that the institution would not offer. But as the associate vice chancellor noted, "Those thousand students needed over 100 different courses. There's no way you can spin up 100 new courses in a time when they don't fit into your normal course rotation. The other problem is that there are reasons those courses are not included on the schedule. That could be you don't have the faculty, you just can't fit it in, or you've got one student instead of 20."

Matching students via course sharing with the off-schedule courses they need not only improves speed to graduation — it may support retention. As Senior Associate Vice Chancellor and Chief Transformation Officer Shonda Gibson from the Texas A&M University system noted, "We know that course availability is not the only issue that causes students to stop or pause their studies. But we also know that it is one of the contributing factors we need to address."

Individual students, in some cases, have taken the initiative themselves to find the courses they need, often by seeking a corresponding course at a nearby or online institution to fill the gaps. In the case of geographically proximate institutions, course sharing is formalizing — and simplifying — what students already do.

In the case of two institutions in the Texas State University system, for example, students were often applying to both the two-year institution and the neighboring four-year institution and, according to those interviewed, sometimes even taking full course loads at both institutions simultaneously.

By formalizing course sharing, the two campuses can better track co-enrollment, guide students more effectively on the courses they need and remove barriers (like needing to go through the entire application process for multiple institutions). In addition to improving the process for students, this can also improve the process for the institution. As one registrar noted, "Even before we joined this, we would have students from all of these other campuses find us and apply just as a visiting or a nondegree student for the semester … And so there was a kind of a work burden on our admissions and registration staff for the processing of those admissions applications, handling the advising and registration side of it and everything else."

EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES

Colleges and universities teach an extraordinary range of courses, with some institutions specializing in niche areas or building a reputation for excellence in a particular domain.

The institutions in the Washington, D.C., area offer one example. As Andrew Flagel, president and CEO of the Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area, noted, "It is terribly inefficient in a region like ours for institutions to offer upper level Coptic languages, when Catholic University has the best Coptic program in the world. Or upper level American Sign Language, when Gallaudet has the best program in the world. You could share that resource. It makes sense to collaborate on really interesting degrees and programs in really thoughtful ways, and not doing so is a massive missed opportunity. Or consider Howard University and [the University of the District of Columbia]. Every student who wants to could have an extraordinary HBCU experience as part of their degree. We have the opportunity to do exceptional things leveraging cross registration."

Or consider Georgia, which created the Georgia Film Academy to take advantage of its growing film industry and prepare students to work in related fields. Courses are available to enrolled students at a wide range of public institutions across the state.

In other cases, course sharing opens up opportunities to continue on a particular academic path. The Hawai'i University System, for example, uses course sharing to create a more seamless connection between two- and four-year institutions. The system found that, in at least one case, students looking to transfer from a community college to the School of Education at a four-year institution required a prerequisite only available at the four-year institution. Course sharing enabled students from the community college to access that course at the four-year institution, removing a barrier and allowing them to enroll in the School of Education as a transfer student. Southern Illinois University, meanwhile, is considering creating a shared postbaccalaureate certificate, with coursework shared between the two institutions in its system.

Beyond these three primary motivations, system staff noted several other benefits as well. Tristan Denley, deputy commissioner for academic affairs and innovation at the Louisiana Board of Regents, noted that Louisiana needs more graduates with cybersecurity skills. As he explained, instead of simply building a program at one institution, as systems have done in the past, this course-sharing approach offers the advantage of spreading opportunities all over the state. This allows students from various institutions and majors to access cyber coursework rather than being limited to a specialized program at a single institution.



Louisiana Board of Regents:

Expanding Opportunity Through the Louisiana Cyber Academy

To meet growing statewide need for cybersecurity professionals, Louisiana faced a choice: support a single institution to develop a new cybersecurity program that would be geographically limited to a single campus or develop a program that could be utilized across the state to meet broader demand for cybersecurity skills. Recognizing the limitation of a place-based program, Louisiana chose the latter.

Utilizing course sharing, the state developed the Louisiana Cyber Academy (LCA), a collaborative initiative developed under the Louisiana Board of Regents' leadership that brings together faculty and resources from multiple public colleges and universities across the state.

The LCA launched this spring with six institutions — Bossier Parish Community College, Baton Rouge Community College, Grambling State University, LSU Shreveport, Nicholls State University and Southern University at New Orleans. Participants include two- and four-year institutions from all four of the state's higher education systems, spread out geographically across the state.

The goal of the collaborative is to deliver fully online cybersecurity courses aligned to the National Initiative for Cybersecurity Education workforce framework. The courses, which faculty from these six institutions co-create and teach, are designed to prepare students for high-demand industry-based cybersecurity certifications and build toward Louisiana's Cybersecurity Transfer Pathway.

LCA courses are intentionally designed for flexibility. Students from any of the partner institutions can enroll in the courses without having to transfer, apply for admission multiple times or navigate disjointed advising systems. Each course is mapped to state-defined competencies, and participating institutions agree in advance to honor academic credit earned across campuses.

"The Cyber Academy represents a shift from competition to collaboration," said Dr. Tristan Denley, chief academic and innovation officer at the Louisiana Board of Regents. "It's about designing a statewide system that meets learners where they are — whether they're a community college student in rural northern Louisiana or a university student looking to deepen their technical skills."

Through the LCA, students can begin a pathway at a two- or four-year institution, earn industry-aligned credentials and seamlessly transfer into a bachelor's program — all while staying on track for graduation. They can also combine their cyber skills with coursework from a variety of other undergraduate majors.

"We're not just expanding access to courses — we're expanding access to futures," Denley said. "By embedding course sharing into a systemwide framework, we're building a Louisiana where every student has a pathway to succeed in the digital economy."

What: Determining the Courses to Include and Accept

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to choosing courses for a course-sharing initiative. Institutions and systems interviewed took different approaches to choosing how many and which courses to offer (and which courses to accept) as part of a course-sharing initiative, coming to different decisions after balancing questions of complexity, competition and value to students.

As Shonda Gibson of Texas A&M University System shared, "I remind the institutions every day: You are 100% in control. You decide which institutions you're going to work with … you decide which courses you're going to make available. You decide which students you're going to make this available to. You're 100% in control of the entire project. Nobody puts pressure on you to do anything."

The University of Hawaii System, on the other hand, takes a more prescriptive approach. Its course sharing builds on the work of its STAR GPS system: a custom-built registration system that shows students the courses they need to graduate and helps students find those courses at any institution they are eligible to register at.

If a student enrolls in a host campus course (through course sharing) that isn't currently articulated, STAR GPS sends a note to the home campus registrar asking the registrar to articulate the course.

Considerations:

- **Course equivalency:** For several systems, determining course equivalency and articulation (e.g., how and whether a course should count for credit at the home institution) placed a natural limit on how many courses could be offered. Crosswalking courses across institutions takes time and requires involvement from both administrators and faculty who often already feel strapped for time.
- **Prerequisites:** Some systems noted that offering only intro-level classes simplified the course-sharing process, because they didn't need to ensure that students enrolling at the host institutions had already taken specific prerequisite courses. Other systems noted that specialized graduate-level courses offer some of the best opportunities for course sharing, given that demand at a home campus may be limited and the most niche offerings may need additional students to even be offered.
- **Competition:** Many systems noted faculty concern that course sharing would lead to declines in students taking their home institution's courses in favor of a similar course at a host institution.
- **Student Perception:** One interviewee noted that institutions were wary of adding their most popular courses to the course share list out of concern it would lead to frustration. If courses that are frequently oversubscribed to/have waitlists even at the home institution are added to a list of shared courses, it may frustrate both students at the home campus, who believe the home institution is opening the course to non-full-time students while they are on a wait list, as well as students from other institutions who repeatedly try to enroll and find there is no availability.
- **Existing Demand:** At least two systems began with data, identifying courses that students already took at a host institution, even prior to formal course sharing, and using those courses as a starting point for course sharing.

The breadth of courses offered across the systems as a result of these considerations generally fall into four approaches:

- **Select:** A relatively limited set of courses have been agreed to by faculty and articulated across other institutions in the system/consortium.
- **Several:** A larger set of courses, potentially determined by a specific set of criteria (e.g., all intro-level courses; all courses in a particular department).
- **All:** Any course (or any undergraduate course) is available at least for consideration. Note: Course availability doesn't mean open access. Even if all courses are listed on the course share, advisors or others may not sign off on allowing a student to take the course if it isn't part of their course of study or if there are other available options at their home institution.
- **Special:** Course sharing is focused on a particular program that was developed cooperatively between campuses (e.g., the Georgia Film Academy).

Of course, choosing the courses offered is not the only lever institutions can use to control the course exchange; institutions can set the number of seats they want to make available in each course, can ensure that their home campus students have adequate time to enroll prior to courses opening up on the course share, or can set a maximum number of credits that students can earn via course share.

How: Financial Aid, Tuition and Cost Sharing, and Technical Considerations

Course-sharing programs can impact a wide range of departments, including student support, IT, institutional research, and accounting and finance. In addition to the more technical components of course sharing, like determining the rate at which the home campus will need to reimburse courses, there are some basics around timing and policies to consider. Participating institutions may operate on different academic calendars, have different deadlines for enrollment or add/drop periods, or may have different policies for weather-related closures. Ensuring students are aware of dates that may differ from their home institutions can help set them up for success.

TUITION, FEES, AND FINANCIAL AID

A common refrain from many of the systems and institutions was a desire to keep courses within the course share accessible for students by ensuring that they would be affordable and that a student's financial aid would cover them, where relevant.

- **Tuition:** In systems or for institutions with banded tuition (e.g., one tuition level for 12-18 credits), many systems interviewed developed structures to allow students to enroll in course-sharing courses at no additional cost to the student (other than course-specific fees/books), assuming they stay within their credit hour band. (Note: Information on how institutions charge and reimburse one another is covered in the section on institutional finances). In cases where students pay per credit hour, students may face higher or lower costs for course-sharing courses, depending on the host institution's tuition.
- **Fees:** In many cases, students pay only the fees at their home institution. At least one system found that students were initially being charged fees at every institution where they took a course; to fix this, the system created an exception in its fee policies for students enrolled in courses through the course share. The question of fees becomes slightly more complex if books and materials are bundled into fees (as part of an inclusive access model, for example) at some institutions in the course share but not at all institutions.
- **Financial Aid:** Systems often mentioned using a financial aid consortium agreement — which in many cases predated course sharing — to ensure that students could use their financial aid for courses accessed via course sharing. Home institutions maintain the responsibility for disbursing federal financial aid and for compliance related to Title IV funds. Other course-sharing programs avoided the need for a financial aid consortium agreement by taking responsibility for payment away from students altogether, determining reimbursement rates and invoicing one another on the back end. Under this model, students pay their normal tuition rate to the home institution, and the home institution handles payment to the host institution.



Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education:

Making Financial Aid Frictionless

The course-sharing process for students should be no more difficult than registering for and taking classes on their home campus. The Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) removed a persistent barrier to a seamless experience by creating a financial aid consortium that encompasses all 10 state-owned four-year universities.

In the early days of PASSHE's course-sharing program, students who took courses at other universities were billed separately and at different rates and were forced to navigate the confusing process of applying their financial aid across multiple institutions. But PASSHE leaders realized that frictionless financial aid that eliminates student frustration is a fundamental pillar of a positive course-sharing experience. By creating a systemwide consortium, the student's home institution handles the billing and financial aid. Students now receive only one bill each semester.

"We do not want our students to incur additional cost because of course sharing," said Diana Rogers-Adkinson, PASSHE's vice chancellor and chief academic officer. "We're the low-cost higher education option for Pennsylvania. We want to support our students as effectively as possible, and this is one tool for doing so."

Overview: Financial Aid Consortium Agreements Between Eligible Institutions

Courtesy of Blue Icon Advisors, NASFAA Consulting

A consortium agreement is a written arrangement between a home institution where a student is enrolled in an eligible program of study and a host institution, where the student may take additional coursework. The home institution is responsible for ensuring the host institution is Title IV eligible and capable of delivering coursework of comparable academic quality.

The agreement can apply to all students or be tailored for a specific student or group of students. While there is no required format, the following elements must be included and disclosed to students:

- Name and location of the host institution
- Course delivery method that the host institution uses
- Portion of the program that the home institution does not provide
- Estimated cost of attendance for coursework at each institution
- Institution awarding the final credential
- Student's enrollment status at both institutions
- Institution responsible for disbursing aid and monitoring student eligibility

The written agreement must include and define who is responsible for required procedures of:

- Calculating financial aid awards
- Disbursing aid
- Monitoring satisfactory academic progress (the home institution must include all credits in the quantitative calculation)
- Tracking student eligibility
- Documenting and retaining records to support decisions
- Performing required calculations and returning unearned Title IV funds if the student withdraws

These defined elements are crucial for maintaining institutional compliance. Timely and effective communication is essential to monitor student eligibility and respond promptly to changes in enrollment status. For instance, institutions may need to quickly update records in the National Student Loan Data System, adjust financial aid awards, and/or complete Return of Title IV Funds (R2T4) calculations and refunds.

ARTICULATION, REGISTRATION AND TRANSCRIPTION

At most institutions, courses that students take through the course share a duplicate (also called "dummy," "ghost" or "marker") course at the home institution. Students enroll in a course at the host institution; then the registrar at their home institution enrolls them in the dummy course at the home institution — a process that is often manual. This ensures that their course credits will appear as if they were earned at the home institution rather than being transfer credits.

Each of the courses offered via the course share is articulated at the home institution: evaluated to determine how it should transfer and how it applies toward degree requirements. Most often, the registrar's office works with the academic departments to articulate each course. Ensuring that only articulated courses appear on the course exchange prevents students from taking a course that won't help them on their academic path.

Effective articulation and data sharing can also support reverse transfer, which is a requirement in some states. As one system leader noted, "Being able to award those credentials to students is incredibly impactful — and a win for our entire system. At one of our state colleges with fewer than 2,500 students, reverse transfer led to 232 credentials being awarded. That's a remarkable outcome."

After completion of a course, the resulting grade is transcripted — often manually — by the home school registrar. While smaller institutions interviewed indicated that this isn't too big of a burden, larger institutions with more students utilizing course sharing may seek ways to improve or automate this process.

Considerations:

- Some institutions use a particular designation within their dummy course numbering; doing so may have the added value of allowing for better analytics on outcomes for students utilizing course sharing.
- While the host institution reports and transcripts grades to the home institution, the decision of whether to include those grades in the GPA or Latin Honors calculation is up to the home institution.
- In some cases, host institutions suppress transcripts (e.g., refuse to release a transcript to confirm attendance) for visiting students out of concern that the credits will be duplicated; institutions interviewed noted that this can then cause problems with coursework being validated (e.g., A transcript won't be shared to validate, if requested).

Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area:

A Financial Model Built to Last

Sixty years ago, presidents from five Washington, D.C., higher education institutions entered into a partnership to support coordination across graduate programs and research, enabling students to cross-register in courses at partner institutions. Today, the Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area represents 17 institutions, including public and private institutions, federal higher education institutions (including those run by the Department of Defense), and two HBCUs.

The wide range of institution types and tuition levels could have thrown a wrench in course sharing. But an innovative financial agreement helps ensure that every institution is better off as a result of course sharing. The model doesn't utilize a financial aid consortium but instead relies on a tiered system of payments between institutions. A student only ever pays tuition directly to their home institution (at the home institution rate), and financial aid remains the responsibility of the home institution.

The financial model ensures that institutions end up better off as a result of course sharing, whether they're sending or receiving students. A receiving institution fills a seat, bringing in revenue (even if it may be discounted relative to their normal tuition), and the sending institution brings in more in tuition from that student then they spend in reimbursement to the teaching institution.

As Dr. Andrew Flagel puts it, the repayment structure system makes it easy for students to use course sharing. "The student is never out of pocket… they need not worry about financial aid, as it's from the home institution. There's no need to worry about sharing [financial] data."

The downside of this model is the complexity. Institutions reimburse one another on a tiered system. This approach helps maximize revenue across a wide set of public and private institutions, but it's also difficult for members to model, and can lead to misunderstandings with institutional leadership about the costs of course sharing. As a result, the Consortium is exploring a flat cost model that preserves the best aspects of the original system.

Regardless of the exact repayment structures and rates of repayment, incentives need to be aligned for both the sending and receiving institutions, which is the crux of the Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area model. Demonstrating that each institution benefits financially, while also benefitting students, will remove barriers to adoption and utilization.

INSTITUTIONAL PRICING AND PAYMENTS

While institutions and systems have worked hard to make the financial side of course sharing relatively seamless for students, this often is deceptively simple compared to the back-office decisions on the reimbursement process (also called "charge-backs") and rates from one institution to the other.

Institutions and systems are using a wide range of pricing models, with tuition determined in a number of ways:

Description	Home Institution	Host Institution
Rate equal to (or a percentage of) the home institution tuition.	Charges 100% of tuition. Shares a fraction (e.g., 75% of the per-credit-hour cost). Keeps 25% of the tuition for a course it doesn't have to teach.	Receives 75% of whatever the home institution per-course tuition is for a seat that would otherwise be unfilled.
Rate equal to (or a percentage of) either the home or host institution, whichever is lower.	Shares a fraction (e.g., 75%), unless the host institution charges less tuition, in which case the rate is even lower for the home institution; If the host institution has lower tuition, the home institution may end up spending less and keeping more than 25% of the student tuition.	Receives either 75% of the home institution per-course tuition or 75% of its own per-course tuition, whichever is less.
Blended rate so that all courses in a systemwide course share have the same cost regardless of the host/home institution.	Pays a set rate, which should still be lower than the per-course tuition.	Receives a set rate.

These are only a few of the many models; in fact, some systems are currently allowing course sharing without reimbursements. Consortia that include a wider range of institution types and tuition levels may also use tiered rates, where institutions reimburse one another at low, medium or high levels depending on each institution's tuition levels.

Reimbursement levels may also vary depending on the class level: for example, reimbursing at a lower tuition rate for 100- or 200-level courses but higher rate for 300 or higher coursework.

In at least one case, coming to an agreement on a reimbursement rate has proven a challenging sticking point, preventing two of the institutions in the system from participating with one another. In general, however, institutions and systems have found a solution that ends with each institution ending up better off.

As one campus leader explained, "I think that for all of the inbound students that we get from the other campuses, if we had been able to enroll them all directly, as perhaps nondegree-seeking students, we probably would make more money that way. The tuition and fees that we charge are at a higher per-credit amount than that agreed-upon average that the system charges. However, we don't think we would have realized these enrollments without that, and we had the capacity."

"Whether you're sending or receiving a student, you're making money," explained another leader, whose institutions use a tiered system of payments, each slightly lower than the tuition rate of either the sending or receiving institution. "You never spend more to send a student than you receive from them in tuition…and the receiving institution makes money because it's an open seat they're filling."

Another state system lead shared the same sentiment, though their system uses a blended reimbursement rate that is consistent across institutions. "We wanted something that ideally had revenue shared but didn't have any institution sharing revenue that they hadn't gathered. And so we [assessed] average revenue gathered per student credit hour delivered to resident and non resident students."

In one case, the system decided to — at least temporarily—pause charge-backs altogether. "We kind of assumed we were probably moving the same $98 around," the system leader shared, reflecting on the charges back and forth between institutions. The system plans to do an analysis later to determine whether there are significant differences in net income/expenses of each institution and whether they need to "settle up on the back end."

State support for institutions offers an additional source of funding. In many states, funding to higher education institutions is based on the number of credit hours students take, translated into full-time equivalents. Depending on the state's higher education funding formula, either one or both of the institutions in a course-sharing agreement can receive additional funding as a result of the additional credits taken.

Considerations:

- Geographic residency requirements, particularly for community colleges, can complicate the determination of a reimbursement rate. A student may be in city (or in county) for one institution but not another in the course share.
- Counties or other jurisdictions may also have regulations limiting the ability to offer certain (e.g., lower) tuition rates for out-of-state or out-of-county students.



INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

Because course sharing necessitates the exchange of student information — and potentially access to a host campus's **learning management system (LMS)** for online courses — institutional IT teams are integral to implementation.

Student information systems, as the system of record for all student data, are an important part of the process for course sharing. The home institution needs to share basic information about students needs with the host institution (thus avoiding the need for the student to submit all of this information a second or third time), and then the host institution needs to share back information related to the course (grade, attendance, etc.) to the home institution following completion of the course.

Because of the movement of student information, data governance must also be part of the conversation. Systems and/or institutions need processes to obtain student consent to share their personally identifiable information with the host campus as well as procedures for securely sharing any student data back to the home campus.

Once enrolled in a course, a student participating in course sharing may need access to the home campus LMS, digital libraries or other platforms; IT teams may need to be involved to ensure visiting students have the proper digital credentials to access any of these. Depending on the platform or work flows used, creation of some of these credentials may be automated.

From a data and institutional research perspective, developing a process for tracking utilization of course sharing, through either tagging students who enroll in a program or through coding of dummy/ghost courses, can enable valuable insights. Setting up the structure to track longitudinal outcomes (e.g., persistence or completion rates for those who have used course sharing vs. those who had a similar academic path but didn't use course sharing) enables institutions to quantify the impact on students, in addition to tracking the financial outcomes (e.g., reimbursements to host institutions vs. income from other institutions).

Coding or otherwise tracking students in the **student identification systems (SIS)** also enables institutions to ensure that they are counting only home students in their enrollment data shared with National Student Clearinghouse and others.

Considerations:

- Systems reported value in creating (or having) a universal identifier for students, particularly within course-sharing consortia where institutions have different SIS. Multiple systems/institutions working to implement course share are also working to either adopt a single SIS across their system or are working to update their SIS to get it back to baseline (i.e., up-to-date and able to connect to the SIS instance of other institutions using the same platform).
- Access to the LMS (e.g., getting logins for students created in a timely way) and unfamiliar user experience with the LMS posed challenges in some implementations. Institutions should identify how LMS credentials are currently created and how to facilitate their easy creation for course-share students.

    At least one system requires positive confirmation of attendance for classes; the LMS might capture attendance and the host institution will need to share that with the home institution.

- Additional tech platforms — early warning systems, for example — have not yet been integrated for most of the systems interviewed for this guide (e.g., information about student performance in a course offered at a host campus does not automatically flow into the home campus early warning system), though some systems or institutions noted that this may be something to explore later in their implementation.

    As one system lead noted, there is a question of whose system — home or host — should be flagging students for intervention, which hasn't been finalized: "That's a piece that hasn't yet been figured out."



COURSE-SHARING PLATFORMS

The systems interviewed used a range of solutions to facilitate course sharing, including purpose-built proprietary platforms, sophisticated homegrown platforms, and more manual workflows and process management. Each comes with trade-offs; systems should consider their current resourcing (e.g., financial considerations, human capital constraints) as well as the anticipated overall demand when considering the approach.

Systems and institutions should also reflect on their current practices when considering course-sharing approaches. For example, if the institution is serving a large student population and already has a number of platforms for efficiency or automation, the registrar may more acutely feel the more manual processes of course sharing. As one institutional registrar shared, "I know it's been frustrating for some of the larger, better resourced campuses in the state in terms of the receipt of the credits back in and how those are transcripted, but we do that manually anyway just because of our structure and size."

Approach	Description	Pros	Cons
Third-Party Systems	Technology solutions built for course sharing that offer a digital course catalog and supports, payments, and reporting, like Quottly or Acadeum.	Offer support for implementation, making them relatively turnkey (and potentially faster) compared to other approaches; likely easier for students to navigate compared to an ad hoc/manual approach.	Ongoing cost; utilization may need to be relatively high to make the platform cost financially viable.
Homegrown System	Purpose-built course-sharing platform developed by a higher education system.	Built to be exactly what is needed; no annual/monthly fee; easier for students to use compared to an ad hoc/manual approach.	Likely time-consuming and costly to develop; requires in-house development capacity.
Ad Hoc/Manual	Set of work flows, process automations, or procedures to follow for both students and administrators.	Lower cost; can improve over time and be flexible; low utilization may be a benefit vs. downside.	Time-consuming for registrars and potentially student advisors; likely more complex for students to navigate.

As a system lead who led the exploration process to choose an approach noted, "What we figured out was that most systems who home-built something [rather than using a third-party vendor] required a pretty big central team to manage it … So we focused on [finding] a tool that is very easy and user friendly for students and removes as many barriers as possible on that end but then integrates into our student information system in a way that minimizes manual effort."

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Who: Faculty and Student Buy-In and Adoption

Course-sharing initiatives often start with a working group that includes both system-level and institutional leaders from a range of departments: registrars, bursars, student success professionals and business/finance leaders, in addition to faculty representatives.

While the size of the initial working group varied across implementations studied, nearly every working group included representatives from the system level, registrars from campuses, chief financial officers (CFOs) or business officers, and other campus representatives (which may include bursars, faculty and IT staff).

Texas A&M University System:

Tapping into Communities of Practice

Building a course-sharing ecosystem isn't for the faint of heart. For starters, it's complicated because it involves multiple stakeholders across nearly every part of the institution, each with their own thoughts about how course sharing should — or won't — work. When the Texas A&M University System began construction on a systemwide course-sharing program, it assembled communities of practice among different stakeholders to tap into their specific expertise.

"Communities of practice are critical," said Shonda Gibson, senior associate vice chancellor and chief transformation officer for the Texas A&M system. "It makes the project go quicker and more effectively when you have 10 registrars or 10 advisors sitting around the table, comparing notes, and identifying common problems and challenges they can work on together."

This initial collaboration around course sharing can lead to ongoing conversations that identify other issues, such as the need to update policies or adjust academic portfolios to better accommodate shifting student demand. For instance, course-sharing conversations led to the discovery that an upper-division course at one institution was under-enrolled because of a blocked transfer pathway at another.

"By assembling these communities of practice, you're able to foster an environment where you continue to grow and innovate," Gibson said. "If you can bring more people together to talk about how students are using course sharing, you're going to find more innovative practices."

Level	Title/Office	Example of Possible Roles/Responsibilities
System	Chancellor/ Commissioner	Set the strategic vision; support adoption of course sharing.
System	Vice Provost and/or Deputy Commissioner	Guide development of course sharing; convene stakeholder groups; act as mediator across institutions; support ongoing implementation.
Institution and/or System	Chief Financial Officer	Understand and approve the financial aspects (e.g., tuition rates for course-share students; implications for institutional budgets).
Institution and/or System	Online Learning Office	Support implementation for institutions hosting students via online courses.
Institution	Registrar	**For the home institution:** Create dummy courses and enroll students, and transcript grades upon course completion. **For the host institution:** Ensure student information is received/complete; ensure students are enrolled accurately; send the transcript back to the home campus. **For both:** Ensure accuracy and effective processes within the student information system.
Institution	Bursar and/or Financial Aid Office	Disburse student aid to the host campus; maintain documentation on eligibility, facilitating return of federal student aid if necessary (e.g., Return to Title IV).
Institution	Faculty	Evaluate courses at host institutions for articulation; teach students coming from other institutions to study.
Institution	Advisors/ Student Success	Identify course sharing as an option for students in need of a course and/or approve course-share courses that a student chose (e.g., to ensure it is applicable to their degree program or that they have the necessary prerequisites).
Institution	IT	Support creation of new automations or workflows to facilitate information sharing and approvals and/or acquisition and implementation of a new platform for course sharing; troubleshoot host student access to platforms (e.g., LMS).

Of course, every system is different; those with more robust online learning programs may tap the team working on online initiatives to spearhead course sharing from a system level, while a system that has built out its own digital platform for course sharing may find that the IT team needs to play a more central role.

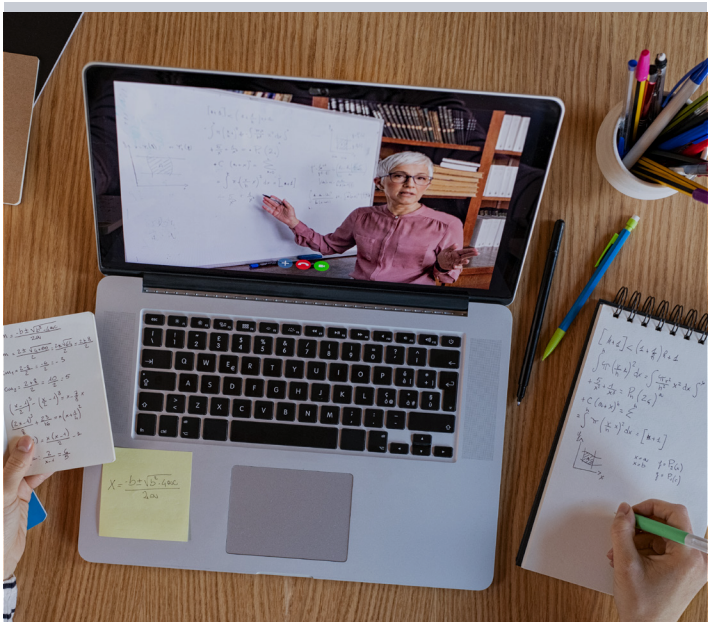
Each department brings its own perspectives to the table: CFOs or business officers may worry about the perceived additional cost (when sending students) or may push for higher reimbursement rates from other institutions (when receiving students). Faculty may be concerned that students will choose to enroll in host campus courses rather than enrolling at their home institution or may push back on articulating certain courses from a host institution. Registrars, often already stretched during peak times of enrollment, may worry about adding more to their plate.

Even those campus offices without an active role in course share may benefit from being included in some conversations to help them understand how course sharing will — or won't — impact their work. One system staff member mentioned connecting to accreditation liaisons to proactively discuss why course sharing would not impact their accreditation.

"My advice would be to start with the people, policies and processes rather than starting with the technology," explained the lead for course sharing across a large group of institutions. "I do think that technology is key, but I thought technology would push the other three, and that did not prove to be the case."

Creating buy-in for course sharing requires an appreciation for the independence of departments and campuses, building the case for course sharing as a tool that furthers the goals of administrators, faculty and institutional leaders.

"We leverage insights into human behavior to gently guide people toward desired actions," one system lead explained. "In education, you'll rarely find someone who says, 'I don't care about students.' So, when we frame it as, 'This will help a student get the support they need,' it naturally encourages adoption."



Student Adoption

The student experience using course share varies significantly across systems. As noted earlier, in some cases, course sharing simplifies something that students are already doing, enabling them to take a course without applying directly to another institution. But in other cases, students aren't aware of the option, and advisors must play a more active role in surfacing the opportunity.

Once aware of course sharing, students have to find the course they need. Again, approaches range from a self-serve model, with students able to see the list of available course-share offerings, to an advisor-led model, where an institution may only publish a list of courses on an intranet site not visible to students. One system renames courses from host schools with the home school equivalent course name to help students understand how a course-sharing course fits into their requirements.

Even within a self-serve model where students can explore available courses independently, institutions can set up policies or procedures to ensure that any course a student chooses fits their academic pathway (and, if they choose, institutions can also redirect a student to a home campus course instead, if there is one available).

In either model, institutions participating in course share should agree on where they will publish the list of courses, when they will add courses, who can view the list and how often it will be updated.

Getting Started

Before institutions can move towards a course sharing model, they should develop a clear plan of action for their engagement. In order to plan and prepare, systems and institutions should:

1. Define your "why."

- Develop clear value propositions that implementing teams can share internally with administrators and faculty to create buy-in for the concept of course sharing.
- Effectively articulate the financial impact of "buying" and "selling" space in courses as well as the value of course sharing as a net-positive for both students and faculty.

> "Some [institutions] are going to be more importing [of students]. Some are going to be more exporting. Some are going to be more about efficiency, some more about marketing. That's all fine. But you've got to figure out your 'why,' just like you would with the establishment of a branch campus."
>
> — **Andrew Flagel**, Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area

2. Convene a representative working group.

- Gather a set of stakeholders, representing the system/consortium, campuses, and a range of operational and academic functions.
- Determine a primary individual responsible for the success of the course-sharing initiative (likely someone at a deputy chancellor, assistant provost or similar level).
- Ensure leadership (including the Board of Regents or similar) are supportive.

3. Understand the starting point related to technology, policies, and procedures.

- Map the existing process and timelines for registration across each participating campus to identify points of commonality, areas of difference, and potential areas for modification.
- Map existing tech infrastructure related to student enrollment, registration, and success.
- Review relevant policies, regulation, or legislation.
- Consider creating a universal ID for students if one does not exist.

> "The implementation of a universal ID would likely be my top recommendation. A shared ID creates a perception of unity … even if full alignment isn't yet in place and that perception can serve as a foundation to build true integration."
>
> — **Gary Rodwell**, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

4. Consider a small pilot focused on getting things set up before moving to scale.

- Consider beginning small, either with a subset of institutions for a pilot or a subset of highest-need courses. In particular, with complex state systems incorporating a wide range of institutional types (e.g., R1, community college, other four-year) of the system, consider starting with a subset of campuses with shared need, geographic proximity, or some other connective tissue.
- Begin developing the infrastructure (new policies, procedures and technologies) that will enable course sharing; allow for iteration and modifications based on what is working well and what is not.
- Understand that some functionality can be added over time.

> "We started with a small pilot where the focus was really on regular meetings and troubleshooting rather than scale with students. So we're thinking mostly about how do we make sure that all of the pipes are built effectively rather than hey, let's build something and get it out to the world. We started with three institutions and ... have slowly chipped away [to improve] what's most manual about this process."
>
> — **Joe Thiel,** Montana University System

5. Create shared deadlines, and communicate them with students.

- Each institution can retain its own academic calendar, but participating institutions should agree on deadlines for course enrollments and ensure both students and advisors are aware of those timelines, because they may differ from the home campus.
- Set (and uphold) deadlines for reporting enrollment information and reconciling financially.
- Ensure registrars, advisors and students all understand the deadlines involved and process for making any changes.

Conclusion

Course sharing is a powerful tool to empower institutions to tackle financial challenges while creating greater access and opportunity for their students, increasing student satisfaction and bolstering retention and graduation by connecting them to crucial courses that would otherwise be out of reach. The implementation process, however, requires clear-eyed vision and careful planning at the institutional level as well as open communication between administration, faculty, IT and students.

The considerations, which swing from the academic to the fiscal to the technical, are significant; but within course sharing is the potential to strengthen and broaden any institution's course catalog. The challenge of erecting a course-sharing system may seem daunting, but the model can dramatically open up opportunities for new revenue and system collaboration in the long term. Systems and institutions should embrace the flexibility of course sharing as a feature, not a bug, and use it to their advantage in creating a course-sharing system that meets institutional needs and objectives.

Course-Sharing Readiness Assessment

The following set of questions is intended to support higher education institutions in identifying the components they should keep in mind when considering adoption of course sharing. This is not intended to be a checklist, with answers to each required to begin the process. Rather, it's intended to be a starting point for exploration, identifying potential blind spots or areas that may create otherwise unexpected challenges.

Equally important, the answer to the yes-or-no questions below doesn't need to always be yes to consider the system ready for course sharing. Some of these questions may be answered through the process of implementing course sharing; others may not be necessary to tackle in a pilot program, particularly if it involves only a few institutions. However, as a general guideline, if you find it difficult to answer a majority of these questions, or if this list creates more concerns than answers, you may want to work on laying more groundwork (e.g., creating a financial aid consortium, or choosing a vendor that might be able to provide support with some technical aspects) before moving forward with a student-facing pilot.



System Readiness

Category/Area	Questions to consider	Notes
Strategy	• How does course sharing support your system's mission, vision, goals and values? • Do you have a designated point person or team responsible for overseeing the adoption or development of course sharing across your institutions? • Do you have metrics to evaluate the use of or impact of the use of course sharing across your system? • Do you have a process for considering the financial impact of course sharing for your system?	
Legislation and Administrative Rules	• If you are a public system, are there state or municipal laws or policies regarding tuition rates (e.g., preventing discounting or preventing the setting of lower tuition rates)? • Are there aspects of tuition and fees that a Board of Regents (or similar board) can modify? • Are there any state laws related to public institutions that could support the use case for course sharing (e.g., Montana's law that the Board of Regents "shall prevent unnecessary duplication of courses" within the state system)? • Are there considerations related to union contracts for faculty to be mindful of?	
Change Management	• Can you create a working group with representatives from every institution and the system to identify potential challenges and support implementation? Who should participate? • How might you build buy-in among campus and system stakeholders for the reason you're adopting course sharing?	

Technology Readiness

Category/Area	Questions To Consider	Notes
Student Information System (SIS)	• Are all institutions involved in course sharing using the same SIS? If not, how might student data be added/connected? • Is there currently a process for getting student approval to share student data with a different campus? If not, what would it take to create one? • Is it possible for completion data from the host institution to flow directly back into your SIS from the host campus, or will someone need to input it?	
Learning Management System (LMS)	• Are all institutions involved in course sharing using the same LMS? If not, are there any resources to help students from a different institution navigate a new LMS? • What is the process for getting student accounts in the LMS for students enrolling via course share? Who owns this process?	
Early Warning Systems	• Are any or all of the institutions using an early warning system for student success? Are there any potential impacts of course sharing on an early warning system (e.g., students being flagged unnecessarily)? • Which institution (home or host) will be alerted if a student shows signs of needing intervention?	
Student Identifiers and Access	• Is there a common student identifier used across the entire system? (While not required, it can simplify the data sharing across institutions.) • Are email addresses consistent across the system? If not, will visiting students need to receive host school email accounts to access certain campus platforms?	
Course-Sharing Platform	• Will you partner with a third-party platform (e.g., Acadeum, Parchment), build your own portal or platform, or support course sharing manually/with a series of somewhat automated workflows? • How will financial reconciliation work between campuses? Will it be part of a course-sharing platform, or will it be manual?	

Operational Readiness

Category/Area	Questions To Consider	Notes
Registration and Articulation	• How will courses be articulated? What are the expectations for faculty related to course articulation? • Will you use dummy courses so that courses appear as if they came from the home institution vs. transfer credit? • What are the time expectations for receiving grades from the host institution and transcribing them?	
Financial Aid	• Do you already have a student financial aid consortium? • Will students be responsible for paying the course-sharing institution, or will institutions reconcile on the back end? • How will credits be monitored for compliance purposes (e.g., full-time status, return to Title IV)?	
Student Success and Advising	• Will advisors be responsible for surfacing course sharing as an option for students? • Will advisors be responsible for approving course-sharing courses chosen by students? • Will advisors play a role in ensuring students have the necessary prerequisites to be successful in a course-sharing course?	
Data Governance and Reporting	• Do you have metrics to evaluate the use of or impact of the use of course sharing across your system? • How will students and/or shared courses be coded to enable longitudinal data analysis? • Will student data from course-share students be coded in such a way to avoid counting them in enrollment numbers (e.g., for reporting to National Student Clearinghouse)?	

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