



## 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 do we mean by institutional integrations?**

We are examining how some universities could combine their operations and academic programming to affordably and sustainably expand student opportunities. Combination would entail integrating universities into a single accredited entity with a unified leadership team, a single faculty and staff, a single academic program array, a unified enrollment strategy, and a single budget—all while respecting local institutional identity.

### **Is this part of System Redesign?**

Yes. Integration is an important means of supporting System Redesign through stabilizing the system financially and ensuring our universities together are able affordably to meet the changing needs of all Pennsylvania's students, communities and employers.

### **Will any institutions close as a result of integrations?**

No. Institutional integrations are designed to prevent closures. Integrated institutions are meant to foster more academic opportunities for students in critically important regions of Pennsylvania and in critically important program areas. To do nothing would potentially endanger the universities financially and severely reduce academic opportunities.

### **What authority does the State System have to explore these integrations?**

Act 50 of 2020 was approved by Pennsylvania's General Assembly with near unanimity and was signed by the Governor in June 2020. The Act provides the Board of Governors with authority to restructure the State System's institutions through a consultative and transparent process that includes outreach with local stakeholders and elected state leaders. For more on Act 50, please [click here](#).

### **Why is the State System exploring institutional integrations now?**

Because the well-known financial challenges faced by the System have grown to a point where they now threaten our ability to serve all Pennsylvanians, irrespective of their zip code, with high quality, affordable higher education. Integrations give us the best chance to continue this mission and to expand the breadth of educational opportunities available across the state.

**What are the next steps in the process?**

We are at the beginning of a multi-year process and are currently engaged in a financial review to determine if institutional integrations make sense. (This first step is expected to be completed in October.) A deeper financial review as well as an implementation plan is expected to be developed between October 2020 and April 2021. Once an implementation plan is presented to the Board of Governors, a public comment period of 60 days will begin during which the System will host multiple public hearings. Additionally, quarterly updates to committees in the General Assembly will take place before the Board considers final approval of potential integrations.

**How close are we to having integrated institutions?**

The earliest the Board of Governors could approve an integration plan is July 2021. The earliest integrated universities could welcome students is the Fall semester of 2022.

**Will institutions have to abandon their local identity?**

No. We enter into this process understanding how important it is to respect the value of institutional identities and what they mean to stakeholders like students, alumni, donors, faculty, staff, trustees, and more. This process is intended to honor local identity while creating something new through institutional integrations.

**Who has a voice in this process?**

Everyone. We have already begun outreach to stakeholders and will continue to do so throughout the process. If this effort gains approval from the Board of Governors in April 2021, there will be a public comment period for at least 60 days, including multiple public hearings. Throughout this process, students, faculty, staff, administrators, trustees, legislators, and other members of the community are being consulted.

**Will students attending these universities be able to finish their studies and earn their degree?**

Yes. In fact, this effort is intended to expand the academic supports and opportunities available to students by taking advantage of the greater scale that results from institutional integrations. This provides our institutions the best opportunity to continue providing a quality education at an affordable price for students.

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

The process of integrations is a long one, and we are just at the beginning of it. It would be premature to speculate on potential employment impacts of any multi-institution integration, and we remain committed to allowing the data to drive those decisions.

**What will happen to the councils of trustees for each integrated institution?**

Trustees are firmly embedded in these conversations and will be throughout the long process, which is designed to answer questions such as this.

**Why are you considering these six universities, and are you considering any other multi-university integrations?**

The choices reflect the data, which suggest there could be significant benefits from them working together as regional partners. Some of these benefits might 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 (thanks to scale) that enhance financial sustainability.

The data we have are not leading us to consider any other integrations at this time.

**Are these integrations beneficial to the other eight universities?**

Yes. While the System has traditionally featured 14 largely independent public universities, we are a single corporate structure. If one or more are struggling financially, that burden is shared across the System. So, all State System universities have a vested interest in the success of all our institutions.

**Initially, the State System was exploring three possible integrations of two universities each. Now it is looking at two larger integrations of three institutions each. Why the change? Why not consider four universities for integration?**

The right scale is key to the success of integrations. We aim to achieve a scale that will provide for students the full breadth of academic programming, while also setting the stage for greater efficiency and cost savings than a smaller university could achieve by itself. The initial financial review showed that three-university and four-university integrations could achieve a similar level of success. Given the complexity of the process, we are focusing on a more manageable three-institution integration.