

COLLEGE *for* **Creative** STUDIES

Inter-Institutional Course Sharing

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ABSTRACT

This brief report provides a summary of the opportunities and challenges presented by College for Creative Studies involvement in an inter-institutional course sharing consortium. The Council of Independent Colleges Online Course Sharing Consortium (CIC-OCSC) structure and processes were used to inform the content of this paper, as CIC-OCSC's success is demonstrated via numerous recent citations in education journals. Findings indicate that inter-institutional course sharing could provide a fount of benefits to the College, including revenue generation and reduction of existing costs, increased retention, and improved student experience. However, concerns related to the dilution of a "CCS brand experience" and student community development may require further consideration and response.

INTRODUCTION

The College seeks to develop more efficient systems and methods to provide a quality education experience to its students and innovate in its mode of education delivery and practice. The opportunity to share course delivery with other institutions presents a method to meet these goals, as well as bolster the College's financial position and build a more holistic student experience.

Inter-institutional course sharing allows students to take approved online courses from other institutions and apply them directly to their CCS requirements. Were the College to become a member of a group such as the Council of Independent Colleges Online Course Sharing Consortium (CIC-OCSC), student courses and grades would be transcripted through CCS based on its consortium membership, allowing for seamless use of financial aid funding, including federal funding. The College would buy a seat for the student in their chosen consortium class at a lower rate than the CCS tuition charged. The difference in the amounts - between the tuition paid and the purchase price of the online course - is revenue for the College.

CCS could also opt to become a *Teaching Institution* with CIC-OCSC. In doing so, other colleges would be able to buy seats in existing, approved, online CCS courses that are not filled to capacity. CCS would offer these seats at a reduced rate to the consortium and the amount paid would be additional revenue for CCS.

The impact of this program, both positive and problematic, requires consideration and would be largely dependent on the amount of course sharing authorized.

EXISTING CONCERNS

Like many institutions of higher education around the world, the College for Creative Studies is in a difficult financial position. The majority of the College's revenue stems from traditional degree program tuition paid by students who are encumbered by the current global financial crisis, the student debt crisis, and a dearth of employment opportunities upon graduation. The number of traditional college-age students lowers each year, both in the state and the nation, and the institution's programs have not yet achieved optimal resonance with adult learners. The cost of running the institution increases each year, but as the College's tuition is already higher than many prospective students and their families are willing or able to pay, increasing tuition to improve revenue is not a good option.

However, the College does have opportunities for growth that it has to plumb.

- Classes are typically not filled to capacity and have open seats.
- The College's strong brand reputation makes it a curiosity - many do not wish to attend a full art and design degree program, but are interested in contact or some form of collaboration.
- Out-of-sync transfer students, those needing to complete pre-requisites, those wishing to accelerate their curriculum plan, those wishing to recover from low GPA or academic warning status, and those interested in a comprehensive roster of summer courses might make use of additional course options, were they offered.
- Students who wish to enroll in a certain number of credit hours to achieve a certain status for financial aid (part-time, full-time) may only choose from a tight grouping of course selections that may not meet their needs.

COLLEGE GROWTH THROUGH INTER-INSTITUTIONAL COURSE SHARING

Given its strong reputation, the structure and processes of the CIC-OCSC were used to analyze the benefits and detractions of CCS's involvement in an inter-institutional course sharing consortium. Hence, the information provided in this section reflects that program's content.

How does it work?

A *Teaching Institution* member of the CIC-OCSC offers left over seats of selected online courses at a low price point (\$550-\$700 per seat) to the consortium.

Members of the consortium who have approved that particular course for their students may enroll a student in the online course. The student is charged full tuition by their *Home Institution* and may pay in the same way that they pay for all their courses - financial aid, including Pell grants, may be applied.

Student courses and grades are transcribed through their *Home Institution*. Meaning, unlike a transfer course, students will have a grade on their transcript as though this course was taken at the *Home Institution*.

The *Home Institution* pays the agreed upon amount to the consortium; the rest is revenue.

The *Teaching Institution* earns the agreed upon tuition amount per consortium student and fills otherwise empty seats.

The consortium currently consists of more than 200 member institutions and has more than 3,000 courses available. This allows *Home Institutions* to marry student need with course need in terms of start and end dates, content, etc.

Institutions can decide if they want to solely be *Home Institutions* or *Teaching Institutions* as well.

The College will be offered syllabi, faculty credentials, and often, course outcome examples, when considering which courses to accept for their students. If CCS decides to be a *Teaching Institution*, it will provide this same information to the consortium for any online courses they are opening to other members.

Financial Implications

The annual fees for consortium membership are \$1,000 for *Home Institutions* and \$3,000 for *Teaching Institutions*.

For every CCS student that enrolls in a consortium courses, CCS will receive the difference in amount of the CCS tuition the student pays for that course and the cost of the course through the consortium (\$550-\$700). A 3-credit undergraduate course at CCS currently costs \$4,617. The College would receive \$3,917-\$4,067, minus discounting and administrative costs, for every consortium class taken by a CCS student.

If CCS were to be a *Teaching Institution*, the College would earn an agreed upon tuition rate (\$550-\$700) for every consortium member student who attends a course with open seats.

Increasing revenue to the College through consortium membership while maintaining the current tuition rate for students has deep ethical implications. Possibilities for related student benefit include:

- Lowering overall tuition rates for the following year based on consideration of each year's revenue generation.
- Strategic pricing could be implemented, lowering tuition for consortium classes or bundling consortium classes with CCS courses at a different rate for 12-18 credits.
- If consortium courses will only be used at the Freshman/Sophomore level, students at those levels could be given a reduced tuition rate.

Impacts

Consortium membership is a step toward a new vision for postsecondary degree provision. This new vision, and the rationale behind it, will require communication and to a point, negotiation, with the campus community. The current framing of higher education program delivery has concrete cultural footing; the changes on the horizon are seismic

and will require a shift in how the community views the responsibilities inherent in helping students reach their potential and their role within that paradigm.

Inter-institutional course sharing would change myriad aspects of the College's culture. Dependent on the extent to which courses were shared, this impact could be extensive. An abbreviated list of benefits and concerns for the shareholder groups is offered in the table below. Some are listed twice as they could impact more than one group.

	Benefits	Concerns
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More course options would be available, both in terms of scheduling for required courses and electives (were CCS to approve elective options from member institutions). • The increase in scheduling options may help students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - who wish to accelerate their degree plan. - who are out of sync due to transfer credits. - who wish to continue their studies in the summer. - who seek pre-requisite courses when they are not available at the College. - who are trying to recover from a low GPA or academic warning status. • Students may use consortium courses to reach full-time or part time status to aid in their financial aid allotment. • Seamless registration and payments would be offered to students through CCS. • Students would not need to question whether the credits would be accepted as they do with transfers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consortium classes could impact the unique College identity and dilute the CCS academic experience. • Students would have less in-person contact with CCS faculty and staff, impacting relationship building. • Long-term project based assignments can be challenging in a virtual environment. • Different institutions have different cultural norms - this could prove problematic in terms of expectations.
Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty will develop contacts and network with individuals from other institutions. • Faculty reputations could increase given contact with students from other institutions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the College performs as a Home Institution and allows students to take courses elsewhere, this will reduce the number of courses taught at CCS and the need for faculty to teach them. • If the College performs as a Teaching Institution, then there is the opportunity for courses to fill completely, increasing the burden on faculty teaching those courses. • If the College performs as both a Home AND Teaching Institution, both of the above bullets are concerns. • Long-term project based assignments can be challenging in a virtual environment. • Different institutions have different cultural norms - this could prove problematic in terms of expectations.

	Benefits	Concerns
College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revenue sharing between institutions would offer financial benefits. • CCS could possibly lower tuition based on program success and revenue generated. • The program offers a broader curriculum than what is currently available at the College. • Faculty diversity is likely to be enriched based on staffing at other institutions. • This program would most likely lead to a reduction in CCS faculty, specifically Adjunct Instructors, presenting cost savings. • The program provides opportunities to innovate and collaborate with other institutions, specifically other AICAD schools. • Low enrollment could be minimized with CCS courses shared in the consortium. • There is some evidence of an increase in retention through the use of inter-institutional course sharing (see Joo paper in References). • No additional staffing (including IT) is necessary. • Program membership could increase enrollments that might otherwise go to community colleges which would decrease the number and need for complex transfer and articulation agreements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consortium classes could impact students' identification with the College and dilute the CCS academic experience. • There would be less in-person contact between students and CCS faculty and staff, which could impact relationship building. • Different institutions have different cultural norms - this could prove problematic in terms of expectations. • The required coordination/integration of the program will place work on staff, though CIC-OCSC emphasizes that it is not burdensome.

Launch Considerations

Items that would need fuller consideration were the College to decide to join an inter-institutional course sharing consortium include the following.

- Accreditation requirement alignment is a paramount concern; the College will need to work with NASAD and HLC to ensure that all concerns are managed.
- Courses from other institutions approved for CCS credit will need to be agreed upon by a work group representing the academic division. As has been seen with transfer credits and CCS-provided required Liberal Arts and Foundation courses, alignment with the expectations of all Department Chairs is challenging.
- Clear and coherent communication of consortium membership to faculty and students.
 - Consortium membership ultimately indicates cutting Adjunct Instructor positions, providing much needed reduction of costs for the institution, but a loss of employment for community members.

- Students will learn that the College is paying less for consortium classes than the student pays in tuition and using this difference as a revenue source. An explanation of how students would benefit would need to be forefront in the messaging.
- A process would need to be developed to manage poor consortium course experiences and student-teacher disagreement in courses not offered through CCS.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

Joining a consortium that would allow the College to share courses with other institutions while increasing student opportunity and generating additional revenue makes sense. An inter-institutional course sharing model has benefitted many other small institutions and could improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the College's educational experience. Though there could be problematic repercussions from joining such an alliance, namely the dilution of the CCS academic experience, the strength with which future alums embrace the CCS brand identity, and the ultimate loss of faculty positions, proactive strategies to control for these concerns could be developed prior to program launch.

Given the consistency of content offered in introductory required Liberal Arts courses, it makes sense that the College would begin this program by considering consortium courses that could take the place of DEN107 Composition I, DEN108 Composition II, and DEN239 Survey of World Literature. Courses that would cover the same ground as DNS230 Math Skills could also be considered.

If considering membership as a *Teaching Institution*, CCS might consider offering its Art History courses to others in the consortium, given its brand reputation in this area.

At the February 12, 2021 AICAD President/CAO Roundtable Meeting, the idea of developing a consortium for inter-institutional course sharing was offered. If the College wished to move forward with offering or accepting Foundation, discipline-specific, or even graduate-level courses through a consortium, working with the AICAD group and asking that they either join CIC-OCSC, or develop a separate consortium, would increase the likelihood of appropriate rigor and content consideration.

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