



The State University  
of New York

## ***Getting Down to Business:***

### ***Interim Report of the Chancellor's Online Education Advisory Team***

***December 2012***

## Executive Summary

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The Chancellor’s Online Education Advisory Team was established as part of the implementation of *Getting Down to Business* phase of the Power of SUNY Strategic Plan. SUNY Chancellor Nancy Zimpher’s charge to the Advisory Team was clear: establish SUNY as the preeminent and most extensive online-learning environment in the nation.



Chancellor Zimpher chaired the Advisory Team, leading discussions with this high-level group representing broad stakeholder interests across SUNY including: student, faculty and workforce development needs; strategic enrollment management; access, time and cost to degree; and, more. University-wide programs reporting to Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost David Lavalley, including the Office of Library and Information Services, Center for Professional Development, Center for Online International Learning, SUNY Learning Network and the Innovative Instruction Technology Grants program staff were also represented. The connections between the work of the Advisory team and broader Power of SUNY goals were immediately clear. An enhanced online presence for SUNY strengthens the University’s ability to tailor programs to meet workforce needs and responds to student mobility challenges by facilitating greater access to required coursework—both drivers for improved time to degree completion and a greater number of degree completers overall.

Importantly, the Advisory Team had an impressive foundation upon which to build. SUNY has been a pioneer in online learning since the launch of the SUNY Learning Network (SLN) in 1994 at Empire State College. SUNY’s approach to online learning is (and will continue to be) grounded in quality instruction provided by SUNY faculty.

Now reporting to the system Office of the Provost, SLN provides a complete support infrastructure for online faculty development and course design, course management software, technical infrastructure, and help desk services for faculty and students, as well as marketing services to campuses on an opt-in basis. SUNY offers a rich online environment that offers over 90 Associate degrees, 40 Bachelor degrees, 20 Masters Degrees, over 35 certificate programs, and more than 7,000 courses, all fully online. SUNY has made significant investments in order to keep pace with the consumer-driven proliferation and use of mobile devices: from laptops to smart phones and tablets.

Even with this success, it became clear that there were countless unexplored opportunities for collaboration, economies of scale and innovation. There were unexplored opportunities to leverage SUNY’s “systemness” for the benefit of students, faculty, staff, the state of New York and the world.

The Advisory Team recommends “Open SUNY” be officially adopted as the name of SUNY’s new online learning initiative. The term Open SUNY represents an *opening up* of the educational opportunities that SUNY can provide through the enhancement of existing—and development of new—online education resources, courses and degree programs.

Open SUNY has the clear potential to establish SUNY as the preeminent and most extensive online learning environment in the nation by providing affordable, high quality, convenient, innovative, and flexible online education opportunities for the citizens of the State of New York and beyond. As a collaborative online educational network, the Open SUNY Online Consortium (SUNY campuses and SUNY system offices) will draw on the Power of SUNY to connect students with faculty and peers from across the state and throughout the world, and link them to the best in research-based online teaching and learning environments, practices, and resources. Dedicated to providing access to open and online learning opportunities, Open SUNY will connect learner and community needs and will allow the State University of New York to bring this concept to scale like no other college, university, or system in the United States.

The Advisory Team recommends the following Strategic Goals under the auspices of Open SUNY:

1. Increase access to SUNY degrees by leveraging SUNY-wide program mobility initiatives to improve degree completion and time to degree by establishing University-wide access to coordinated degree completion programs.
2. Consistent with SUNY Strategic Enrollment Management and Shared Services initiatives, develop and deliver a targeted set of online degree and certificate programs in support of continuing education and workforce development needs for key industries driving economic development across the State.
3. Leverage Empire State College's nationally recognized prior learning assessment (PLA) services and openly extend them to all students to support degree completion.
4. Scale up innovation and research of online environments and in the provision of faculty and student support services, to ensure quality delivery that improves educational outcomes.
5. Extend SUNY’s educational and cultural opportunities throughout New York, nationally and internationally.
6. Reduce the cost barriers to education and research through economies of scale by adopting and producing Open Education Resources (including some courses), Open Access Journals, Open E-Textbooks, and Open Courseware.
7. Provide a robust set of federated services and infrastructure to support quality online learning and promote student success, by embedding collaboration and

communication tools to build communities that assist students with navigating services that support learning outcomes across the system.

8. Offer workforce development programs in online formats and environments that serve the needs of working adults that are responsive to business and industry communities and that partner with Regional Economic Development Councils.
9. Integrate credit-based, discipline specific faculty-supervised experiential education to improve instruction, assess teaching and learning, and interact with communities and cultures beyond the academy.

Additionally, the Advisory Team identified specific program components that should be considered as part of the overall Open SUNY initiative. The Advisory Team recommended that SUNY System Administration identify specific campus or organizational partners to help advance the establishment of services associated with these programs. The program components include:

1. **Open SUNY Online Consortium**

Comprised of courses from SUNY campuses across the system taught by SUNY faculty, the Open SUNY Online Consortium will collectively offer the most extensive array of online courses and degree programs in the country. This unified approach to online education will provide learners with cost effective options to compete with the rising costs of higher education and enable students taking courses across multiple SUNY institutions to receive financial aid from their home institution.

2. **Open SUNY Degree**

The term Open SUNY degree refers to functional coordination of policies and practices that "systemness" will allow for, not the actual degree conferrals that are the role of the campuses. The Office of the Provost will seek out campuses to offer new, high needs, online degree programs that will not necessarily require the host campus to develop or provide all the necessary courses to meet credit requirements to confer a degree.

3. **Open SUNY Complete**

Open SUNY will lead a SUNY-wide project to support degree completion for students who seek to return to college after a significant absence (commonly referred to as "stopped out"). The Open SUNY Complete program will identify and support former students who wish to return to SUNY to earn and complete a degree. This will occur through use of market analyses and outreach to students who are now considered beyond the normal reach of the originating enrolling college, using a variety of cooperative strategies between SUNY institutions.

#### 4. **Open SUNY Resources**

Open SUNY Resources will build on existing digital repositories, making vast amounts of high quality, credible material available to faculty and learners, while simultaneously staking ground as a world leader in creating new resources by leveraging the vast expertise available across SUNY disciplines.

#### 5. **Open SUNY PLA (Prior Learning Assessment)**

Increasingly, people acquire and assimilate knowledge both internal and external to the academy. Recognition of the latter, when applied toward college level learning, provides greater access to higher education, decreased time to degree completion, increased retention and completion rates, and significantly lower costs to students. Open SUNY PLA will provide services to campuses that do not wish to establish their own prior learning assessment processes.

#### 6. **Open SUNY Workforce**

A SUNY-wide strategy for the use of online learning in support of workforce development and adult/continuing education can strengthen SUNY's role as an economic driver throughout NYS and provide access to SUNY higher education specifically for potential employees, employees and employers statewide (and nationally, who will be attracted to all that SUNY and New York have to offer).

#### 7. **Open SUNY International**

Open SUNY International will provide a network for learning by linking faculty and students from around the world, demonstrating SUNY's commitment to international education. In partnership with the Office of Global Affairs, Open SUNY International will provide new opportunities for SUNY students to engage in international and intercultural learning.

#### 8. **Open SUNY Research**

Open SUNY Research will continue a long tradition of scholarship related to innovation, student access, and learning in open and online environments. Previous support from the Office of the Provost has fostered an active and ongoing research and development agenda with more than 150 conference papers, book chapters, peer-reviewed journal publications, monographs, and presentations directly related to SUNY Learning Network and online education initiatives. Open SUNY Research expands this work and will be supported by a combination of SUNY-wide innovation grants, external funding, formal initiatives, advisory group efforts, and campus-based research activities.

## 9. Open SUNY Learning Commons

The Open SUNY Learning Commons will be a set of technology applications and online environments to support all Open SUNY services and components.

Facilitating communication across campuses, the Learning Commons will bring the user-friendliness of social media applications to the SUNY community. It will leverage advanced open source and commercially available online learning tools, while building communities of practice for students and faculty.

Finally, the Advisory Team recommends that it remain intact until it is able to establish implementation plans and business models for each of the above recommendations and initiatives and to establish an ongoing advisory structure to oversee the evolution of Open SUNY. The Advisory Team hopes to complete its work prior to the fall 2013 semester. The estimated timeline for deliverables is:

- April 2013 – Long term project and implementation plan;
- June 2013 – Budget and business plan, including organizational structures; and
- June 2013 – Recommendation on an Advisory Structure.

## The Charge from Chancellor Zimpher

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*Open SUNY has the potential to be the nation's most extensive distance-learning environment. It will provide innovative and flexible education. It will network students with faculty and peers from across the state and throughout the world and link them to the best in open educational resources...we'll look to our campuses already deeply invested in on-line learning; to an expansion of the SUNY Learning Network; and to the role Empire State College can play in certifying prior work and learning experience to create SUNY's online university.*

- State of the University Address (2012)

To drive SUNY to an innovative and coordinated approach to online learning, the Chancellor established the Online Education Advisory Team as part of the implementation of *Getting Down to Business* phase of the Power of SUNY Strategic Plan. The Chancellor chaired and actively participated in discussions with this high level committee representing broad stakeholder interests across SUNY including: student, faculty and workforce development needs; strategic enrollment management; access, time and cost to degree; and, more. University-wide programs reporting to Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost David Lavalley, including the Office of Library and Information Services, Center for Professional Development, Center for Online International Learning, SUNY Learning Network, and Innovative Instruction Technology Grants program group staff were also represented

The advisory committee recognized that SUNY has been a pioneer in online learning since the launch of the SUNY Learning Network (SLN) at Empire State College in 1994 as part of a major Sloan Foundation grant. Now reporting to the SUNY Office of the Provost, SLN provides a complete support infrastructure for online faculty development and course design, course management software, technical infrastructure, and help desk services for faculty and students, as well as marketing services to campuses on an opt-in basis. SUNY currently can take pride in offering a rich online environment that offers over 90 Associate degrees, 40 Bachelor degrees, 20 Masters Degrees, over 35 certificate programs, and more than 7,000 courses - all fully online. Over the past decade, online learning has evolved from providing convenient and flexible access to a variety of instructional models into a diverse and innovative blend of programs and services. Every aspect of instruction is now infused with web-based technologies and practices, social media and mobile learning. The marketplace has created an online ecosystem of social interaction where students *expect* to connect and share course materials and communications with classmates and faculty from mobile devices carried in their pockets. SUNY has made significant investments to keep pace with the consumer-driven proliferation and use of mobile devices: from laptops to smart phones and tablets.

However, the challenge of keeping pace with evolving technologies pales when contrasted with the need to re-work longstanding policies and practices that govern SUNY's current online programs in order for the University to bring its online offerings to the next level. SUNY, the most comprehensive system in the country, is not unique or alone in meeting these challenges, but it must now "get down to business" and continue its growth of well-designed online course and degree offerings by removing the remaining barriers to student access. SUNY will embody "systemness" by opening up access to the University

Campus-based online learning efforts have been both creative and entrepreneurial. Breaking the mold of traditional semester boundaries, students are now enjoying the opportunity to earn additional credits toward their degrees through online access to summer, winter and "bridge" sessions. While individual campus strategic or tactical goals may serve each campus well, the lack of SUNY-wide coordination has resulted in duplication of effort, few degree ladders for online students, and missed strategic opportunities for the SUNY System, students, employers and the taxpayers who support this effort.

During this decade of experimentation and growth, a number of new competitive opportunities have emerged in the marketplace. Not all of these offerings are cost-effective, sustainable or indeed even trustworthy in terms of student retention and degree completion. SUNY is a long-trusted source of quality public higher education for resident students. SUNY's geographic footprint alone has made education very accessible to New York's continuing education and adult learning population for workforce development, lifelong learning and enrichment, as well as becoming increasingly attractive to out-of-state and international students.

The Chancellor's Online Education Advisory Team researched and discussed the future of online education both internal and external to SUNY, as well as emerging practices broadly adopted by for-profit, private and public education sectors. Representatives from Empire State College provided a comprehensive and focused proposal to extend online and open education within SUNY, from which the group began to expand ideas and consider additional elements to assist the Chancellor with a bold vision for Open SUNY.

The underlying fabric enabling fresh ideas to emerge rests on two key 2012 success stories: Student Mobility and IT Transformation. New student mobility and cross registration policies create an environment for the development of new SUNY online degrees regardless of a single institution's ability to offer all credits necessary for a degree in an online format. This approach leverages expertise and guidance of faculty from across the state combined to create agile new programs that respond to New York's workforce and economic development needs. These opportunities, however, would be left unrealized without transforming student information systems, IT infrastructure and networks to facilitate certificate and degree planning, progress and completion. This is an integral part of the Open SUNY vision - enabling students with the opportunity to log-on and access their academic careers increasingly in the same manner in



which they interact in the rest of a digital world. Cognizant of the increased debt burden students are realizing in pursuit of higher education, coordinated and seamless student information systems will also facilitate access to financial aid and advisement, through use of a digital concierge as part of the SUNY Learning Commons system.

Open SUNY will be defined by innovations in open and online learning. Faculty members within SUNY are now organizing to create SUNY Open Textbooks and Open Educational Resources (OERs), which will provide high quality, engaging digital online content, while dramatically reducing costs to students. At the national and international levels, we have seen the emergence of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), and early adopters within SUNY are offering MOOCs for both credit and non-credit to current students and lifelong learners. Exemplar SLN faculty have been opening their online courses for observation by other SUNY faculty with permissions to adapt, remix, or reuse elements of their online course designs for more than 10 years. Opening model SUNY online courses to the world is the next logical step in the program's evolution. Open SUNY will be defined by its attention to increased flexibility and innovation while maintaining the type of quality instruction and credentialing that is internationally respected. The term "Open" will serve as an anchor for a variety of emerging services that will support open education resources: open journals, open textbooks, open courseware, MOOCs, and more.

This document details the plan formulated by the Online Education Advisory Team, and includes:

1. Efforts and initiatives already in development such as services provided by various University-wide programs such as the SUNY Learning Network (SLN), Center for Professional Development (CPD), and the Office of Library and Information Services (OLIS);
2. Activities already underway as part of the Faculty Advisory Council on Teaching and Technology (FACT2) Task groups;
3. Projects that have been funded by Innovative Instruction Technology Grants (IITG); and
4. Organizational and operational enhancements that will make achievement of goals possible.

## The Open SUNY Value Proposition

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The impact of Open SUNY will be measured by its contributions to:

- Enhancing and supporting academic excellence of faculty and students;
- Reducing the time required for degree completion;
- Reducing the overall cost of obtaining a SUNY degree;
- Meeting workforce and societal needs;
- Increasing SUNY completion rates;
- Increasing the number of online learners;
- Enhancing the profile of SUNY as an innovative leader in teaching and learning;
- Continuing to reduce a collective carbon footprint; and
- Increasing student and faculty international engagement through online interaction.

Higher education is a major component of job creation and economic development. In order to meet the goals articulated by President Barack Obama, the Lumina Foundation and others, access to affordable and flexible higher education across all population sectors is essential. Governor Andrew Cuomo has demonstrated his faith in SUNY as the key provider of diverse, relevant and high-quality learning to any motivated citizen in New York State.

The State University of New York is the largest system of place-based and online education in the United States. With 64 colleges and universities, SUNY has long been a prominent and accessible college “around the corner.” With the advent of online education over the last two decades, SUNY now delivers more than 200 complete online degree and certificate programs with thousands of fully online courses and 100,000+ enrollments annually. Given that across the US, one in three students (six million) are now studying online, SUNY is no longer just “around the corner” in a local community, it is delivering education throughout the world leveraging Web 2.0 and mobile technologies.

College degrees, earned in traditional or online environments, continue to be recognized as the single most effective path to economic, intellectual and social advancement, with degree recipients having significantly higher lifetime earnings. Many colleges across the country are engaged in a reflexive reaction to the emergence of Massively Open Online Courses (MOOCs) to bolster access to certain courses. SUNY will learn from these new environments (giving credit to areas where SUNY is the source of innovation), will improve upon them, and will remain true to its public mission. Open SUNY will be a vehicle for experimentation in MOOCs (as well as the

next “big thing”), but it must have degree credentialing as a core mission to continue providing flexible and cost-effective access to world-class education while supporting the other functions of a great university system.

Open SUNY will be achieved through collaboration, “systemness,” and economies of scale supported through rational policies, recognizing that the physical borders that once limited access to college are long gone. To continue as a leader in online and open education, we should acknowledge that SUNY’s greatest asset is, and will be for many years to come, access to increasingly affordable college degrees taught by SUNY faculty that make a profound difference in the lives of students. Open SUNY will provide a consortium of degree options and components to support and reinforce the University’s great public mission.

This advisory group recognizes the increasing ubiquity of technology and connectivity, the availability of high-quality open educational resources, and the notable enrollment success of for-profit institutions in seeking out opportunities that traditional higher education has for too long dismissed. The emergence of solutions within state and multi-state alliances across the U.S. suggest that:

- Open SUNY will build on all that has been learned about distance, online, adult and open learning, and the effective use of emerging technologies to support pedagogy.
- Leveraging its systemness, SUNY will federate common online services and resources, facilitate open data exchange and reporting, share educational resources and expertise, and promote open and accessible networks in order to gain system benefits, while also supporting individual institutional needs.
- As a result of this comprehensive Open SUNY effort, the State University of New York will emerge as a recognized leader in serving open and online learners not only in every community of the state, but nationally and globally, truly manifesting the Power of SUNY.

If SUNY does not move to new approaches with intent and synergism, there is no question that other providers (including those whose motives and/or commitment to quality are unclear) will continue to do this work and opportunities for job growth as the result of investment in the higher education sector will not be maximized.

## Open SUNY Vision, Mission and Strategic Goals

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### Open SUNY Vision

Open SUNY has the potential to be the preeminent and most extensive online learning environment in the nation. As a collaborative online educational network, the Open SUNY Online Consortium will draw on the *Power of SUNY* to connect students with faculty and peers from across the state and throughout the world, linking them to the best in research-based online teaching and learning environments, practices, and resources. Open SUNY will be dedicated to providing access to open and online learning opportunities that connect learner and community needs, and will allow the State University of New York to bring this concept to scale like no other college, university, or system in the United States.

### Open SUNY Mission

Open SUNY will expand SUNY's online learning environment by providing new online courses, new targeted degree programs, improved avenues for degree completion, and comprehensive student and faculty support services. Open SUNY leverages the experience and knowledge of SUNY campuses and faculty already deeply invested in online learning and also provides mechanisms to enable institutions new to online instructional delivery to strategically enter the environment. Open SUNY will align several University-wide programs and initiatives by fostering partnerships with campuses, providing services and support for open and online learning and assessment and certification of both prior work experience and learning, to establish a world-class online university.

Open SUNY will provide leadership at the system level for the effective planning, promotion, development, delivery, expansion and support of online courses and programs. Open SUNY will enhance and extend SUNY's brand by:

- Adopting and leveraging established best practices and metrics for online teaching and learning SUNY-wide;
- Using collective resources to pursue inter-campus opportunities through cooperation when economies of scale apply to keep access to education affordable;
- Providing scalable, supportable innovative learning environments proven to engage 21st century learners;
- Expanding innovation and research through a combination of SUNY-wide grants, formal initiatives, advisory group efforts, and campus-based research activities;
- Utilizing online environments to engage students at a global level, providing opportunities for intercultural and international scholarly interaction;
- Connecting the University's vast library of academic support resources, via online and mobile technologies, to better serve learners across the globe; and

- Offering an array of online education and training programs to support critical workforce development demands by supporting working adults and those seeking employment.

### Open SUNY Strategic Goals

Open SUNY will deliver on specific goals as articulated through the Power of SUNY's innovative instruction transformation team efforts, combined with the work and vision of other strategic transformation initiatives. Open SUNY will:

1. Increase access to SUNY degrees by leveraging SUNY-wide program mobility initiatives to improve degree completion and time to degree, by establishing University-wide access to coordinated degree completion programs.
2. Consistent with SUNY Strategic Enrollment Management and Shared Services initiatives, develop and deliver a targeted set of online degree and certificate programs in support of continuing education and workforce development needs for key industries driving economic development across the State.
3. Leverage Empire State College's nationally recognized prior learning assessment (PLA) services and openly extend them to all students to support degree completion.
4. Scale up innovation and research of online environments and in the provision of faculty and student support services, to ensure quality delivery that improves educational outcomes.
5. Extend SUNY's educational and cultural opportunities throughout New York State to national and international student populations.
6. Reduce the cost barriers to education and research through economies of scale by adopting and producing Open Education Resources (including some courses), Open Access Journals, Open E-Textbooks, and Open Courseware.
7. Provide a robust set of federated services and infrastructure to support quality online learning that promote student success by embedding collaboration and communication tools that build communities and assist students with navigating services that support learning outcomes across the system.
8. Offer workforce development programs in online formats and environments that serve the needs of working adults, are responsive to business and industry communities, and that leverage and partner with Regional Economic Development Councils to identify and deliver education unique to regions.
9. Integrate credit-based, discipline specific faculty-supervised experiential education to improve instruction, assess teaching and learning, and interact with communities and cultures beyond the academy.

## Components of Open SUNY

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### Open SUNY Online Consortium

The Open SUNY Online Consortium will collectively offer the most extensive array of online courses and degree programs in the country. This unified approach to online education will provide learners with cost effective options by allowing students to take courses across multiple SUNY institutions to receive financial aid from their home institution. The Open SUNY Online Consortium will serve online learners in New York State, across the nation, and internationally, with an integrated online program that reaches learners at every level in their educational journey. Through this consortium of the entire SUNY System, we will offer seamless pathways to online courses and programs at community colleges, four-year comprehensive colleges, research centers, graduate schools, and regional consortia.

Building on the foundation of existing collaborative and independent efforts that have propelled SUNY to the forefront of online education, the Open SUNY Consortium will expand to include all online learning opportunities contributed by each campus. The Open SUNY Online Consortium will also generate new initiatives based on collaborative degree and certificate development within the system.

SUNY's online systemness will spark new innovations with emerging technologies and flexible approaches to learning, while supporting student mobility and improving completion rates. The Open SUNY Online Consortium will support the next generation of open and online teaching and learning through expanded faculty development and training at the Center for Professional Development (CPD) and interconnected teaching and learning centers and libraries, with an emphasis on instructional design and emerging technologies such as MOOCs, ePortfolios, and mobile learning. SUNY will leverage system resources, such as web conferencing software, to share best practices across SUNY, and engage faculty, librarians, and instructional designers in conversations about the latest trends in open and online learning, while providing incentives, such as the Innovative Instruction Technology Grants, to encourage and promote curricular innovations across the system.

Online collaboration between SUNY institutions and business communities will allow new models of experiential education to develop, including enhanced education for traditional students and new education and degree opportunities for adult learners.

While participation in the Open SUNY Consortium will become a SUNY system requirement, each campus retains program administration as before, such as admissions, continuation, and graduation requirements, and each campus will prioritize access of online offerings to its campus-registered students.

Key advantages to a consortium model include:

- Expanded open and online learning opportunities for learners system-wide;
- Increased opportunity to form partnerships among campuses to create and share courses as fully online programs; allowing a campus to rely on consortium offerings for general education and elective courses as part of a major;
- Leveraging a single point of contact for students (or campuses) as they plan course offerings and program development. This single portal will accurately reflect the availability of existing offerings, and eliminate duplication of effort;
- Fostering and enabling interdisciplinary online development across all 64 campuses, including data collection critical to business and learning analytics;
- Expanding the opportunity to create communities of practice in all areas of online course development, delivery, and student services in both distance and blended offerings across the system, including use of shared tools, such as ePortfolio, to support documentation and sharing of learning throughout the education pipeline journey;
- Collective marketing to state, national and global audiences that are likely cost-prohibitive to a single campus; and
- Providing enhanced access to developmental course offerings as a guided “on ramp” for non-traditional students, or “stopped out” adult learners to prepare, renew and develop the skills necessary to succeed in college level learning environments.

### Open SUNY Degrees

Campuses will continue to confer degrees and will continue to make decisions about what new courses and programs to propose for online or blended delivery. The term "Open SUNY degree" refers to functional coordination of policies and practices that "systemness" will allow for, not the actual degree conferrals that are the role of the campuses. The Office of the Provost will coordinate the functions necessary to leverage existing University-wide programs and new partnerships in service to all of Open SUNY. The Office of the Provost will work with campuses and provide incentives to offer new, high needs, online degree programs that will not necessarily require the host campus to develop or provide all the necessary courses to meet credit requirements to confer a degree. University-wide consortia agreements will facilitate financial aid and articulation agreements with the student's home campus. This will require adoption of best practices for faculty development and support, student support, and course quality assurance.

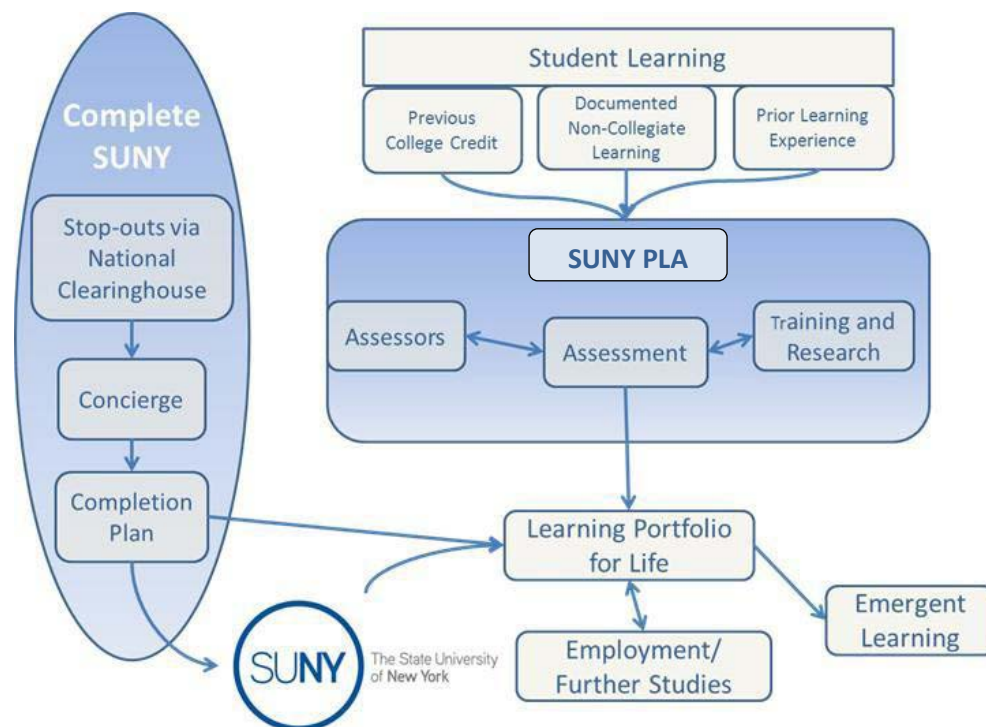
Future Certificate/Degree Programs may include:

- Engineering/Engineering Technologies;

- Health Care;
- Renewable and Clean Energy; and
- Information Technology.

### Open SUNY Complete

Open SUNY will lead a SUNY-wide project to support degree completion for students who seek to return to college after a significant absence (commonly referred to as "stopped out"). The *Open SUNY Complete* program will identify and support former students who wish to return to SUNY to earn and complete a degree. This will occur through use of market analysis and outreach to students who are now considered beyond the normal reach of the originating enrolling college, using a variety of cooperative strategies between SUNY institutions. It will leverage the Open SUNY Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) and Open SUNY Online Consortium properties to encourage students to complete their degree (Refer to Figure 1: SUNY complete model).



**Figure 1: Model of SUNY Complete**

Once identified, a network of SUNY academic advisors with financial aid expertise utilizing call center methodologies will coordinate connection with students who may desire to return to school, but lack awareness of these new opportunities until proactively contacted through this SUNY outreach effort. This centralized intake and advising effort will be supplemented by transfer advisors embedded in all partner institutions. Advisors will assist with mapping



potential student pathways and plan options, and provide support navigating financial aid options; and assisting with:

- Tracking: maintain contact with appropriate advisement and matriculation information in a web-based CRM in support of advising and research;
- Course Development: Open SUNY Complete personnel consult with campuses to identify online courses required for development to support timely degree completion in critical areas (by economic region or specialized curricular area need);
- SUNY PLA assessment processes provide cost effective ways for students to meet degree requirements;
- Reporting course, certificate and degree completion as well as project effectiveness metrics;
- SUNY Empire State College will use a special "SUNY residence" policy to provide individualized degrees for stop-outs whose educational goals have changed. This may include PLA of appropriate learning from applied experience in a related field that can be meaningfully assessed and credentialed.

### **Open SUNY PLA: Prior Learning Assessment**

People continuously acquire and assimilate knowledge both internal and external to the academy. Recognition of the latter, when applied toward college level learning, provides greater access to higher education, decreased time to degree completion, increased retention and completion rates, and significantly lower costs to students. "Non-collegiate" learning can be categorized as documented learning that has been evaluated for college credit from other accredited colleges or nationally recognized organizations such as the American Council on Education (ACE), or the College Level Examination Program (CLEP) or through:

- Formally recognized courses that have not yet been evaluated for college credit (e.g., New York Times courses, MITx studies, Mozilla Badges, and various other formally recognized sources of continuing education offerings)
- Prior experiential learning gained through work/professional development and personal study that is verifiable and/or measurable;
- Emergent learning through ongoing professional development or through other relevant experiences, such as study and application of OERs.

The key to recognizing such learning toward a degree is rigorous evaluation by properly trained learning evaluators. Digital ePortfolios provide learners a proscribed manner from which to document and present prior and accumulated learning for assessment. Such portfolios allow learners to:

- Document all existing (as well as intended) lifelong learning from both internal and external to the academy;
- Reflect upon and demonstrate meaningful scaffolding across acquired learning;
- Align this learning with the intended outcomes of college programs and degrees;
- Provide evidence for admission to, and advanced standing in, SUNY as well as other schools; and to
- Re-purpose materials to share for employment and other applications.

Open SUNY PLA would provide (or leverage):

- A SUNY-wide digital commons for learning portfolio development and retrieval;
- Assessment structures to evaluate verifiable, college-level prior experiential and emergent learning for college credit;
- Recruitment and training of faculty and equivalent field experts for assessments;
- Transcription of the approved college level learning;
- A governance structure to oversee academic consistency and quality;
- On-going research on applied practices to ensure quality and consistency, and development of wider communities of practice of non-collegiate learning assessment. (Refer to Figure 2)

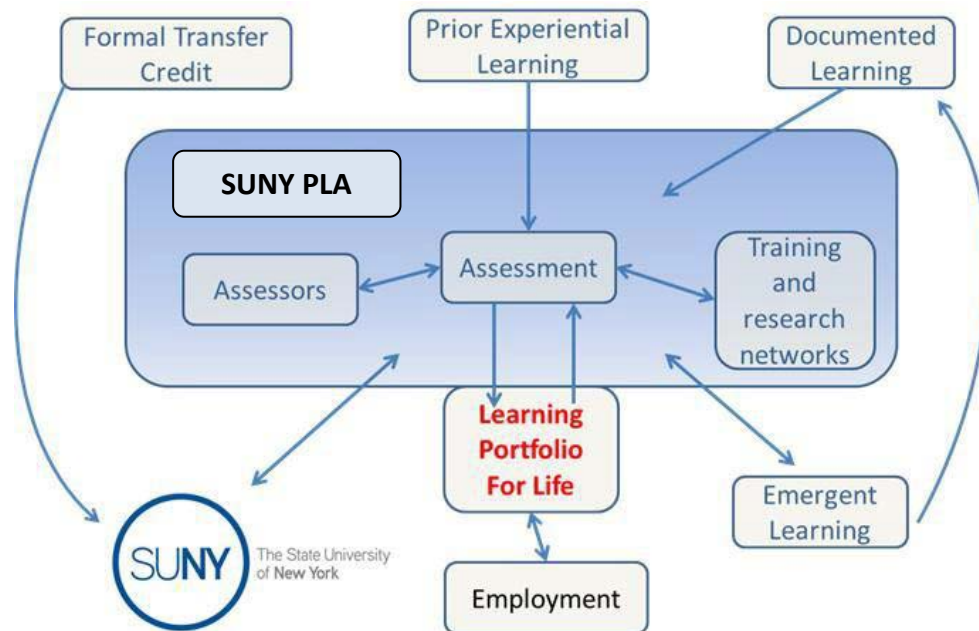


Figure 2: Model of Open SUNY Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)

Within SUNY, Empire State College (ESC) has the experience and capability to quickly launch Open SUNY PLA. ESC's Office of College-wide Academic Review can adapt existing policies for the initial implementation of the prior learning assessment. ESC has a database of more than 1,000 trained assessors and a thorough training program, and has recently received a significant Lumina Foundation Grant to leverage Open SUNY PLA to refine and scale methods to speed time to degree while reducing costs for students.

SUNY led research related to PLA will be featured in *Prior Learning Assessment Inside Out (PLAIO): An International Journal on Theory Research and Practice in Prior Learning Assessment* published at Empire State College.

### Open SUNY Resources

Open Educational Resources (OER) are teaching, learning, and research resources that either reside in the public domain or have been released under an intellectual property license that permits free use or re-purposing of content by others. This may include full courses, course materials, modules, textbooks, videos, tests, software, and any other type of tools, materials, or techniques used to support access to knowledge (Atkins, Brown, & Hammond 2007). A key dimension of the current global open education movement is the development and sharing of open educational resources and courseware.

Open SUNY will build on existing digital repositories, making vast amounts of high quality, credible material available to faculty and learners, while simultaneously staking ground as a world leader in creating new resources by leveraging the vast expertise available across SUNY disciplines. Various campuses are already engaged with national and global initiatives related to OERs in the form of Open Textbooks, E-Portfolios and the SUNY Digital Repository (developed by the SUNYConnect library consortium) or funded by Innovative Instruction Technology Grants to further capitalize on cross-campus resources. These form the nucleus of Open SUNY Education Resources - fulfilling the vision of Innovative Instruction as a "network of networks" by linking with other major OER networks such as: *Open Learn, OCW, OERu, and Connexions*. Taking a cue from MITx, wherein many Open MIT materials can now be used with learner support for application to receive some level of certification, Open SUNY could develop rich digital materials, and link with a network of tutors who will help students requiring developmental coursework for remediation prior to starting or returning to college level learning. Open SUNY coupled with OER resources will "plug the leaks" in the Education Pipeline.

Examples of Open SUNY Resources would include:

- SUNY created consortia multimedia resources;
- Open SUNY Textbooks;

- SUNY MOOCs to be used by campuses in credit-bearing, blended courses;
- Links to a global array of OER in various media that have been vetted and validated;
- Free apps to link students with “learn to learn” metacognition modules and relevant OERs;
- Open SUNY Courseware; and
- The Open SUNY course finder (catalog) of system-wide distance and blended offerings.

### Open SUNY Workforce

SUNY has long made a strategic effort to align its academic programs to the workforce needs of the state. Open SUNY affords the opportunity to extend SUNY’s educational and technical training programs to the state’s workforce and adult-learner populations. Open SUNY creates partnership venues between the business community and SUNY to offer skills-based programs for the adult learner, advanced manufacturing skills for the technician and collaborative work environments for the scientist. New York State is “*Open for Business*” to attract and retain industry to sustain and help drive new economic development. This development is being identified and prioritized through the Governor’s Regional Economic Development Councils (REDC). SUNY is an integral player in the work of these Councils, and Open SUNY Workforce should be recognized as a preferred delivery partner in response to the specific education and training needs of regional economies. In addition to training new types of workforce, most employers financially support incumbent worker development and continuing education programs. A SUNY-wide strategy for the use of online learning in support of workforce development and adult/continuing education can strengthen SUNY’s role as an economic driver throughout NYS and provide access to SUNY higher education specifically for employees and employers worldwide.

Program and service offerings by Open SUNY Workforce could include customized training, computer and technical certification, career exploration services, health care continuing education; and traditional non-credit programs, certificate programs, associate degrees, bachelor degrees and master degrees.

Recommended action in support of Open SUNY Workforce includes:

- Inclusion of professional development (non-credit in workforce development courses) within the SUNY Course Finder (catalog);
- Development and implementation of a system for SUNY campuses to collaboratively design professional development and technical training courses specific to their region while sharing enrollment and revenues;

- Encouraging cooperative development and jointly registered degree programs that address high-demand workforce needs and are high cost to implement and sustain;
- Implementation a system to facilitate review and recommendation of third party providers for online technical training and professional development contracts, and to expedite contract review;
- Formalization of a relationship with Open SUNY PLA to assess workplace and on-the-job learning; and,
- Establishing formal Open SUNY relationships with the Governor’s Regional Economic Development Councils (REDC).

### Open SUNY Research

Open SUNY Research will continue a long tradition of researching issues related to innovation, student access, and learning in open and online environments. Previous support from the Office of the Provost has fostered an active and ongoing research and development agenda with more than 150 conference papers, book chapters, peer-reviewed journal publications, monographs, and presentations directly related to SUNY Learning Network and online education initiatives. This expanded research and development effort will be supported by a combination of SUNY-wide innovation grants, external funding, formal initiatives, advisory group efforts, and campus-based research activities. Research and innovation elements will include:

- *Learning Analytics:* Open SUNY will infuse use of learning analytics to assist faculty and students in identifying barriers to success. This will include predictive data at the course and learning management level, supported by examination of broader trends from student enrollment data and business intelligence. Ultimately, it will empower the student to better understand how to prepare for, and best capitalize on, learning environments.
- *Innovative Instruction Technology Grants:* IITG awards will draw on the intellectual capital of faculty and staff throughout SUNY in support of Open SUNY. These grants are already having a significant impact on the development and integration of new teaching technologies to support pedagogy and course development including Open Education Resources, e-Portfolio, Gaming, e-Textbooks, emerging literacy frameworks (transliteracy) and learning analytics.
- *Open SUNY Research Project:* This project connects with Open SUNY PD to continue to use research to inform practice. It provides support for research of online student and faculty experiences utilizing a variety of complimentary approaches. It supports ongoing and new faculty and doctoral-level research, collaboration, and sharing of best practices within the SUNY community and beyond.

- Leverage and expand SUNY-wide infrastructure for knowledge sharing, building on SUNY-wide units such as the Center for Professional Development. Creative deployment will allow for synergies, dedicated dissemination venues, and additional publications related to Open and Online Education.

Each of these initiatives is anticipated to promote national recognition of the Open SUNY brand, and foster new knowledge and understanding of learning in open educational environments while generating revenue. This facet of Open SUNY will result in external support that will enhance the program as a national and international leader in open education, resulting in a self-sustaining research and an innovation component of Open SUNY.

### **Open SUNY International**

Open SUNY International will connect a global community of learners through faculty partnerships and innovative online and mobile learning environments. Extending the University's reach to international scholars and learners through shared online courses, developed and delivered in large part through the Center for Online International Learning (COIL), SUNY will leverage emerging technologies, OERs and collaborative research opportunities to span and connect globally. Open SUNY International will provide a network for learning by linking faculty and students from around the world, demonstrating SUNY's commitment to international education.

In partnership with the Office of Global Affairs, Open SUNY International will provide new opportunities for SUNY students to engage in international and intercultural learning by:

- Extending the COIL model throughout SUNY and across the world. This model creates co-equal team-taught learning environments where faculty from two cultures work together to develop a shared syllabus, emphasizing experiential and collaborative student learning. The courses give new contextual meaning to the ideas and texts they explore, while providing students new venues in which to develop their cross-cultural awareness. COIL's program currently connects several hundred SUNY students with learners in other countries and is rapidly growing. Open SUNY International will allow us to scale the program to engage thousands of students every year.
- Promoting faculty collaboration and inter-institutional partnerships from around the world encourages online course sharing, and connecting international learners through affordable webconferencing, mobile technologies, and social media.
- Ensuring that SUNY students participating in online programs develop intercultural competence by engaging with international peers through discipline-based, facilitated online interactions.

- Establishing specific Open SUNY international online gateway courses to support and encourage international student recruitment to SUNY campuses.
- Increasing the number of international students enrolled in SUNY online courses, thereby generating additional income to support broader Open SUNY initiatives.
- Enhancing opportunities for language and intercultural learning, including ESL for international students, and languages other than English for locally enrolled students.
- Providing channels to deepen engagement in global education capacity building, including opportunities for partnership with institutions, governments, and associations within the corporate sector.
- Developing short-term virtual study abroad experiences for students who are not able to travel, or as a gateway to actual study abroad (virtual study abroad capitalizes on creative approaches toward developing relationships that meet many of the goals associated with traditional study abroad).
- Formulating online course designs responsive to the needs of students from other cultures.

### Open SUNY Learning Commons

The Open SUNY Learning Commons is a set of technology applications and online environments to support all Open SUNY services and components. The SUNY Learning Commons will leverage advanced open source and commercially available online learning tools, while building communities of practice for students and faculty. This online community brings all of SUNY together to share best practices, brainstorm new ideas, and share with the world innovations in teaching, research, and technology development.

The Open SUNY Learning Commons will guide students and faculty to open and online course offerings and provide resources for degree planning, academic support, community building, interconnected libraries, workforce development and lifelong learning.

Envisioned as a “digital concierge,” a portion of the Learning Commons will provide interactive assistance through online chat, mobile components, and social media applications to build communities. The Open SUNY Learning Commons will be an online space for prospective and current learners to receive answers to their questions about the SUNY experience. The Commons is a complement to, not a replacement of, campus portals. This interactive website will direct learners to the appropriate resources including the academic and student support services necessary to plan, navigate, and complete online instruction. It will also assist students and faculty in navigating degree and course offerings for planning and lifelong learning. The

digital concierge function ultimately will direct contact with the appropriate support services necessary to plan, navigate and complete instruction. It will also support professional development necessary for faculty, instructional designers and other professional staff necessary to deliver quality services.

As previously highlighted in this report, a SUNY-wide ePortfolio system will be part of the Open Learning Commons, providing students with the ability to create, collect, reflect on and share artifacts of learning and experience. Such a system would provide the institution with a means for authentic assessment, and a way to demonstrate student achievement. Because of their nature, e-Portfolios provide the best method for porting student learning and achievement from K-12, to SUNY, to the workforce and lifelong learning. E-Portfolio, as part of the SUNY Learning Commons, has the potential to serve students throughout their lives.



## Refocusing University-Wide Programs to Support Open SUNY

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University-wide programs including the SUNY Learning Network, the Office of Library and Information Services and the SUNY Center for Professional Development will be refocused to provide professional development, technical implementation and support, content management, and customer support services for Open SUNY.

### Professional Development (PD)

A robust and comprehensive professional development program is essential to the success of Open SUNY. Faculty and staff involved in the development, delivery, and support of the initiatives that comprise Open SUNY must be appropriately prepared and supported in order to achieve the systemic impact we seek for online learning.

We will build on the success of the SLN faculty development program and the CPD by introducing a range of professional development and training opportunities designed for faculty and staff in teaching, leadership, administrative, and technical roles to ensure the preparedness and sustainability of all aspects of Open SUNY. The outcomes of Open SUNY Research initiatives will drive professional development programs as we seek to disseminate and apply research findings in the program design, delivery, and support. Open SUNY gives us the opportunity to move theory into practice

A comprehensive professional development program in support of Open SUNY will include:

- **Certificate programs** – a series of competency-based certificate programs designed for faculty and staff in roles that are common across all campuses and designed to help obtain necessary skills and competencies.
- **Communities of Practice** – promotion of and support for communities of practice (for faculty, instructional designers, distance learning leaders, librarians, online learning concierges, technical staff, etc.) with common roles and interests across SUNY to:
  - network with and learn from each other through the sharing of best practices and resources;
  - collaborate across campuses for program design, delivery, and support; and
  - provide mentorship from experienced veterans and experts across the system to new professionals.

### Technical Implementation and Support

Open SUNY will require significant technical infrastructure and integration of campus and Open SUNY systems. A solid and supported technical implementation and management team will be instrumental in ensuring the success of this initiative.

Both the SUNY Learning Network and the Office of Library and Information Services have a long history of implementing and managing large scale technical projects and programs. Working in conjunction with the SUNY Information Technology Exchange Center, the SUNY SICAS Center and campus technical staff, these organizations will coordinate the technical systems and integrations required to make Open SUNY a success.

### **Content Management**

Content is a significant component of Open SUNY. SUNY's library community has been the leader in collaboration within the SUNY system for more than two decades. Working closely with the Office of Library and Information Services, SUNY libraries have successfully navigated the transition from a print to a digital world.

The Office of Library and Information Services will work with the SUNY library community to bring their particular skills in content selection, creation, management and preservation to the Open SUNY initiative.

### **Customer Support Services - Concierge**

As Open SUNY evolves to deliver new technologies and pathways to learning opportunities it is important that customer support services be available to assist students in their use these new environments, especially in service or program areas which may not be specific to a single campus.

The SUNY Learning Network Help Desk currently provides extended hour technical help desk services to approximately 30 SUNY institutions in their use of ANGEL and Blackboard Learning Management Systems. The current help desk services will be enhanced to support Open SUNY elements at the SUNY System level.

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## Appendix A: Environmental Scan

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### Online Course and Degree Consortia

Multiple states and regions of the country have created online consortia to provide students with a gateway to course and degree offerings from multiple institutions. While some, such as California State, are similar to SLN in that they provide system wide access to courses and degrees, others, such as UMass Online and Southern Region's Education Board's Electronic Campus, offer additional degree completion options. Still others offer a full cadre of student services tailored to individual students' needs while others, such as Kentucky, offer options for workforce and teacher training needs. Yet another, Great Plains Interactive Distance Education Alliance, is an online collaborative of institutions that jointly offer Internet-based programs.

- **UMass Online**

<http://www.umassonline.net/>

UMass Online is a consortium of the five University of Massachusetts institutions. This consortium offers online and/or blended courses from all five institutions online in one location. Students are able to complete certificates, associate, bachelor, and doctorate degrees from the varying institutions through the UMass Online portal.

In its second decade, the consortium's original mission was to demonstrate "that distance learning offerings under the stewardship of a quality institution and its on-campus faculty provide a practical, affordable, and enriching alternative to traditional educational models (UMass Online)." The consortium continues to place value on its original mission objectives but is also now focused on demonstrating "that online learning can be a critical factor in bringing economic parity and human rights equality to people and nations where access is restricted because educational resources are scarce or too costly or simply, denied to some or all (UMass Online)." Its mission has evolved to focus on the international call to focus on those disadvantaged by class, race, gender, age, and location; people that Empire State College has 40 years of experience serving.

The degree completion programs allow for students to take 30 credits (10 courses) and transfer in or receive prior learning credit, learning gained from life experience, for 90 credits.

- **Southern Regional's Education Board's Electronic Campus**

<http://www.electroniccampus.org/>

Southern Regional's Education Board's (SREB) Electronic Campus is similar to SLN and UMass Online in that it is a consortium of institutions providing online courses. SREB's Electronic Campus "was designed to provide learning opportunities from accredited colleges and universities that offered courses and programs that exceed SREB's *Principles of Good Practice*(Southern Regional Education Board's Electronic

*Campus*).” It differs in that it includes offerings from hundreds of institutions in the Southern United States as well as the ability to gain extensive information and apply to each of the member institutions. Potential students identify themselves as adult learners, traditional learners, or teachers who need to enroll in courses to meet the needs of state regulations. SREB also runs a degree completion program for adult learners and advocates for policy issues and online learning.

- **Kentucky Virtual Campus**

<http://www.kyvc.org>

The Kentucky Virtual Campus (KYVC) is a consortium of Kentucky institutions who serve adult students, place-bound and time-bound students, employers and employees in business, P-12 students, teachers, and administrators, and traditional students. The KYVC offers certificates, associate, bachelor, and master degrees as well as licensure programs in areas such as accounting and child care.

Students are able to search for courses by program and the given term that they would like to enroll in coursework. They are then able to use a system that is similar to any online shopping experience in that they select courses, place them in a cart, and then checkout.

The Kentucky Virtual Campus has a Distance Learning Advisory Committee (DLAC) which is “is responsible for creating committees and work groups which are charged with the responsibility for planning and recommending policies and procedures for the operation of the Kentucky Virtual Campus (KYVC). The Committee also addresses the coordination of policies, programs, support services, and infrastructure in support of distance education across all Kentucky postsecondary education institutions (Kentucky Virtual Campus).”

- **Canadian Virtual University**

<http://www.cvu-uvc.ca/english.html>

Canadian Virtual University (CVU) is an association of public Canadian universities specializing in online and distance education, and collaborating to increase access to quality assured university education. Many of its programs have dual accreditation in the United States. CVU offers students the opportunity to find online programs and courses through their consortium. Additionally, it offers ease of transfer for students as it has detailed information for students on how to verify transferability to the student’s home institution.

Program offerings are at the certificate, associate, bachelor, master, and doctoral level. Students can search for programs or courses by level, institution, or, subject. Additionally, Canadian Virtual University offers recommended programs for teachers and human resource professionals.

In addition to ease of use and accessibility for students worldwide, Canadian Virtual University offers institutions the ability to create new online courses by using the cadre of courses developed by all CVU partner institutions. It also allows these consortium members the ability to share marketing and student advising.

- **California Virtual Campus**

<http://www.cvc.edu/students/programs/>

While the California Virtual Campus doesn't allow students the opportunity to enroll in courses directly, it allows students to search for programs and courses offered by colleges and universities across California. Students can then apply through the individual institution or through a centralized application site, [CCCApply](#). CVU essentially acts as a statewide extensive course catalog while also offering ease of access to begin the application process at any institution.

Cal State's Online Plan

<http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/03/05/california-state-rolls-out-plan-centralized-online-learning-portal#ixzz1oFKwMMSG>

*The California State University System on Friday released new documents describing its plans for a centralized online learning hub, moving the system closer to its vision of a top-flight virtual campus while drawing skepticism from some faculty.*

*The portal, called Cal State Online, will serve as a gateway to all virtual courses offered by the system's 23 campuses. The goal is to increase capacity at California State, where massive budget cuts have coincided with a rising demand for higher ed degrees. System officials hope a centrally administered approach to online education will enable the university to enroll more online students and turn away fewer qualified applicants.*

*Cal State Online will not outsource course development or instruction to outside providers, focusing instead on promoting existing online courses being offered by individual campuses and encouraging California State faculty to develop new ones.*

*The system is planning a "beta test" for the portal in the fall, followed by a full launch next spring. The long-term goal, according to the new documents, is to "enroll over 250,000 students over the next several decades." (The document does not indicate how many online students it hopes eventually to enroll at one time.)*

*While California State cannot be called a pioneer in distance education, its moves could have national significance. With more than 400,000 students, the system is the largest in the United States. And its online strategy, as well as the parallel efforts of the University of California, could serve as a test of whether a massive public higher ed system under extreme financial duress can use online education to expand access, streamline costs, and keep its faculty happy all at the same time.*

*Cal State Online on Friday posted an [open letter](#) to the university system from Ruth Claire Black, the recently appointed executive director of Cal State Online, along with*

a [draft request for proposals \(RFP\)](#) indicating what kind of services it plans to provide to students and faculty.

*“The goal of Cal State Online is to create a standardized, centralized, comprehensive business, marketing and outreach support structure for all aspects of online program delivery for the Cal State University System,” says the draft RFP. In the open letter, the executive director offers assurances that “participation is optional” for each of the system’s nearly two dozen campuses, “all programs participating in Cal State Online are subject to the same approval processes as an on-campus program,” and “online courses will meet or exceed the quality standards of CSU face-to-face courses.”*

*Meanwhile, faculty members who develop and teach courses for Cal State Online will get extra pay and “will be recognized in the retention, promotion and tenure process where appropriate,” writes Black. The online administrators will respect current union agreements with respect to intellectual property*

*California State faculty have been suspicious of the system’s efforts to expand its online strategy, and for some the new documents offer little comfort.*

*“We have no confidence, based upon past mismanagement of our administration that such an expansive enterprise would be carried out without harm to the rest of the institution,” wrote Teri Yamada, professor of Asian studies at California State University at Long Beach and a faculty union activist, in an e-mail to Inside Higher Ed, after reading the open letter and the RFP.*

*“For example, we have no idea how the proposed online programs through Cal State Online will undercut funding that the 23 brick-and-mortar campuses now receive from their already established online programs run through colleges of extended education,” Yamada continued.*

*But Jim Postma, a professor of chemistry at California State University at Chico and chair of the system-wide Academic Senate, advised his colleagues against prematurely thumbing their noses at Cal State Online. Postma, who is one of three faculty members on the Cal State Online board, says the effort to centralize the university’s online offerings does not imply any changes that would threaten the interests of its faculty.*

*Despite occasional rumors among faculty that portentous administrative decisions had been made without their input, Cal State Online “is just now defining what it’s going to be,” says Postma. “I do feel like we’re at the table and have the ability to help shape it,” he says.*

*In an interview, Black emphasized that Cal State Online will not be hiring outside instructors to teach courses, nor will it be empowered to circumvent existing union agreements with regard to existing faculty. “My goal is not to ‘replace’ anybody,” says Black. “My goal is to add services and [to] augment” campus offerings.*



*Postma says his mild reaction to the implications of Cal State online has caused some tension with his more polemical colleagues. At the last meeting of the California Faculty Association board leaders, “I was somewhat awkwardly put in the position of defending [Cal State Online],” Postma says. “I’m not a big fan, but I know it’s not the devil incarnate or anything.”*

*System officials hope that centralizing its online program administration will help California State catch up to other large public university systems, such as Penn State University and the University of Massachusetts, that long ago assimilated online learning by routing individual campus efforts through a central hub. Penn State World Campus and UMassOnline are now running healthy surpluses.*

*“We’re about 10 years behind everybody,” said F. King Alexander, president of the California State University at Long Beach. “We’ve never put our heads together and said, ‘How much stronger could we be if we were unified on this front?’ ”*

*Alexander estimated that the Long Beach campus turned away more than 40,000 qualified applicants last year. The capacity issue is endemic across the system, he says. In the future, Cal State Online could conceivably form partnerships with other state institutions’ online arms that would make it easier for spillover students to take equivalent courses with other public universities and then seamlessly transfer the credits to California State, Alexander said. “What we’re not going to do,” he added, “is partner with existing for-profit universities to utilize their courses.”*

*Another thing California State is not currently planning to do is outsource to a state-endorsed version of Western Governors University, a nonprofit online institution that awards degrees based solely on demonstrated knowledge and skills, rather than seat time. The California State chancellor’s office invited Robert Mendenhall, the president of Western Governors, to give a presentation to the Cal State Online board several months ago. But Postma says he and his faculty colleagues were not keen on the idea of making the Utah-based institution, which does not use courses or a teaching faculty, an adoptive stepchild of the California State system — [as public institutions in Indiana, Texas and Washington State have done](#).*

*“There’s been a lot of discussion about Western Governors,” says Black. But she says she is sensitive to the faculty concern about that particular model, and “there’s no proposal on the table to partner with Western Governors or anything like that.”*

*Rather than eliminating all regimentation in favor of a self-paced model, Cal State Online is anticipating a more traditional academic schedule comprising eight-week-long terms, with a universal start date at the beginning of each term.*

- **Great Plains Interactive Distance Education Alliance (Great Plains IDEA):**  
<http://www.gpidea.org/>

A collaborative of 12 accredited institutions who jointly offer online programs. Students select the consortia institution in which to apply, enroll, and pay tuition. Member institutions choose which programs they affiliate themselves with, provide

full institutional review, and are able to maintain individual course numbering even though they meet a common core standard. The collaborative has a governing body that meets regularly and also has an annual meeting for all member institutions. While creating and offering curriculum jointly, each partner institution maintains authority to recruit, admit, and graduate students.

- **University of Wisconsin MBA Consortium**  
<http://www.wisconsinonlinemba.org/about/>

This consortium is comprised of four University of Wisconsin system universities. The program uses multi-disciplinary, team-taught modules and the curriculum's flexibility allows students to customize their degree. While the MBA Consortium degree is offered from the four institutions, one institution acts as the managing partner including admissions, advising, financial aid, registration, and graduation.

- **University of North Carolina System Online**  
<http://www.online.northcarolina.edu>

The system web site has some specialized portals that allow for more particular offerings beyond degree listings. Portals are developed for those looking for teacher education programs, military and veteran's programs, a targeted program for math and science for high school students, adult students and community college students.

- **Online Western New York Learning Alliance (OWL)**

A regional alliance among the western region community colleges: Corning, Erie, Finger Lakes, Genesee, Jamestown, and Monroe; wherein a working adult student may earn an affordable, accessible online degree or certificate by pooling courses taken from any one or a combination of the alliance institutions. The consortium will allow for one-stop "concierge" service for online students at all participating institutions which will allow member institutions with the ability to share and pool online degree information, identify key programs, advisors, and other services.

## Blended Learning

- **University of Missouri System**

Similar to the evolution of SLN through the Open SUNY proposal, The University of Missouri System, a consortium of all thirteen public four-year universities in Missouri, will engage cross-institutional collaboration to create blended learning courses. Each institution will take the lead in redesigning a high-enrollment gateway undergraduate course to improve student learning, persistence, and program completion as well as to reduce the costs of instruction. The redesign initiative will be guided by the principles and practices of the National Center for Academic Transformation (NCAT). This consortium was funded through a Gates Foundation and Hewlett Foundation grant.

## Degree Completion

The following consortia offer solutions for students to complete a degree in a fast, affordable manner while earning a degree with academic integrity. The majority of these consortia engage students in prior learning assessment through a course that allows them to create a portfolio of prior learning experiences, similar to the SUNY Complete and SUNY REAL proposals.

- **UMassOnline**

<http://www.umassonline.net>

Returning students with 90 or more credits can earn a Bachelor of Arts by completing 30 credits (10 courses) completely online. The program is packaged so that students benefit from a well-rounded, integrated learning experience that provides a foundation in academic skills as well as a focus on interdisciplinary content. This model is similar to Empire State College's current transfer/PLA policy that allows students to transfer 96 credits and complete 32 credits (8 4-credit courses).

- **State of Texas**

<http://www.gradtx.org>

Like UMassOnline and the proposed SUNY REAL, Grad TX allows returning students to earn a bachelor's degree by utilizing transcript credit and prior learning assessment. Grad TX provides students with an online transfer tool that allows students to preview how their credits could count toward a bachelor's degree at one of eight participating Texas universities. Grad TC offers individually tailored advising and financial aid services.

- **System of Georgia**

<http://www.georgiaonmyline.org/adultlearner/>

Nine campuses form the University of Georgia System form the Adult Learning Consortium. The consortium focuses on services, such as prior learning assessment, that assist students in obtaining their degrees. The Georgia ONmyLINE website allows students to complete courses and degrees from the nine campus consortium.

- **Western Governors University**

<http://www.wgu.edu/>

Western Governors degrees are based on competencies as opposed to credit hours. Degrees are completed online, as is prior learning assessment that allows students to complete competency-based work in an accelerated timeframe. WGU utilizes mentors who, like mentors at Empire State College and the proposed advisor model for SUNY REAL, guide their students toward the achievement of their educational goals and degree attainment, thus assisting with student retention and persistence.

- **Center for Adult Learning in Louisiana**

Seven institutions provide students with options to complete degrees in 17 highly employable degree programs. The Center offers targeted student services to assist with student success.

- **Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education**

[http://cpe.ky.gov/policies/academicinit/adult\\_learner.htm](http://cpe.ky.gov/policies/academicinit/adult_learner.htm)

The Kentucky Adult Learner Initiative aims to assist adult learners in attaining their educational goals. The main objectives are to: create policy recommendations for the state and institutional levels to support adult learners as well as assist institutions in serving the needs of adult learners. They do so by providing adult learner resources, as well as providing an ACE/CLEP workshop and an Adult Learner Summit.

## **Workforce Development**

These institutions and consortiums have programs that focus on student employability and community workforce needs.

- **Community College of Vermont**

<http://www.ccv.edu/APL>

Community Colleges of Vermont offer courses, certificates, and workshops tailored to fit the needs of businesses in a variety of industries in the state of Vermont. In addition, CCV offers a Governor's Career Ready Certificate Program that focuses on work-ready skills.

- **Minnesota FastTRAC**

<http://www.mnfasttrac.org/approach.html>

Minnesota FastTRAC (Training, Resources, and Credentialing) seeks to make Minnesota more competitive by meeting the common skills needs of businesses and individuals. Fast TRAC integrates basic skills education with career-specific training to fill high-demand jobs. FastTRAC partners with state, local, and national partners in order to align workforce needs with long-term employability for adult learners.