

What is Achieving System Integration (ASI)?

ASI is a multiphase process to transition Seattle Colleges from its current organizational structure to a more efficient and integrated system that allows us to improve our service to students and the community. It is driven by two of Seattle Colleges' guiding principles:

1. Organizational Excellence
2. Balancing Integration and Differentiation

Organizing as a single, unified entity is a more effective way to leverage our resources and make a significant impact on Seattle and the regional economy. ASI can also offer more tools to address the declines in enrollment and state funding.

ASI will affect our administrative structure, staffing patterns, and operations. It will tie the colleges and district together more effectively and better coordinate services to students and our external partners. Once complete, students should be able to move smoothly within and across our colleges. ASI will necessitate a change in our organizational culture, but it should yield long-term benefits, improve our financial viability and service, and allow colleges to retain their distinct identities and connections to the unique communities around them.

Large-scale changes to the organization and culture require discipline and focus over a long period of time. Patience will be required as we create these new systems and processes together.

What is the expected outcome of ASI?

Our belief is that through diligent, thoughtful, and well-organized work, Seattle Colleges will become more competitive externally and more coordinated and coherent in our internal operations. We also want to reduce operational costs while maximizing efficiency. Any savings made will be used to make strategic investments that position us for the future.

As just one example, we could focus on expanding our enrollment base in order to secure our long-term future. Investing in sound strategies to increase enrollment with Seattle public high school students, working adults, disconnected youth between the ages of 16 and 24, online learners, and students in our corporate or customized training programs will help achieve this.

Why is ASI an imperative for Seattle Colleges now?

Two reasons:

1. We want to position Seattle Colleges for the future.
2. We are facing unprecedented internal and external pressures.

What are some of the pressures we face?

A significant budget shortfall

Since the enrollment high point during the 2010–2011 academic year, we have seen a continuous decline in local and international student enrollment. We are also experiencing accelerated changes in technology, intense regional competition, a shift in local demographics, shrinking state funding, and changes in the state funding model.

Taken together, these factors have resulted in a \$9 million reduction in our budget and a projected deficit ranging from \$8 million to \$10 million in the upcoming years. During the same period, our employee base has grown by an equivalent of 50 FTE. Our income and revenue have fallen over the past several years. We did not, however, reduce our expenditures commensurately—a reality we now have to face.

Increased competition

More than a third of community college students with Seattle ZIP codes go to colleges outside our district. One way to become more competitive with these schools is to ensure that our students have a high-quality and coherent learning experience at all our campuses. This requires that we simplify and integrate our programs and processes. We must be coherent internally to be competitive externally.

Higher community expectations

While Seattle Colleges has enjoyed strong community support, Seattle’s government, business, and civic organizations expect us to be much more relevant, agile, and coordinated in providing instruction and workforce training. Unifying our overall direction and coordinating strategies will enable us to be more innovative and timely with solutions to community’s pressing needs.

How does this relate to our strategic planning and other initiatives?

“Organizational Excellence” and “Balance of Integration and Differentiation” are two of our guiding principles. Organizational Excellence is also a significant part of our strategic planning.

Our ASI efforts will focus on the cost, efficiency, and effectiveness of our administrative processes. This is a necessary precursor to any actions directed at achieving organizational excellence.

Who will be involved in the process?

1. Board of trustees—As Seattle Colleges’ governing body, our board of trustees will continue to steer the overall direction, set policy decisions, and provide high-level guidance.

2. Seattle Colleges employees—A high level of engagement by faculty, staff, and administrators is key to achieving ASI's outcomes. We encourage all employees to become involved by taking time to review documents and video presentations, attend listening sessions, respond to surveys, and provide constructive feedback. Employee engagement will help ensure that we have received the best ideas and strategies for strengthening Seattle Colleges now and for the future.
3. Steering committee—The Chancellor's Executive Cabinet appointed a steering committee last December. Chaired by Mary Ellen O'Keeffe, vice chancellor of Education, Research, and Planning, the steering committee has representatives from the faculty, staff, and administration from the colleges and district office. The committee is charged to work with Floten Consultancy to review organizational structure, staffing patterns, and business processes. The committee will submit to the chancellor its recommendations for consolidation and realignment.
4. External consultant—We have contracted with Floten Consultancy to review the administrative organization and make recommendations. Since mid-February, Jean Floten has conducted consulting sessions with faculty, staff, and administrators from the college campuses and district office. She has also completed the initial review of major data points (expenditures by administrative area and student-faculty ratios of Seattle Colleges compared with state averages) and reviewed the administrative structures of multi-college districts in Washington and other states. These data points will serve as reference benchmarks for designing a system that is effective, efficient, and responsive—one that allows Seattle Colleges to serve students and communities in a sustainable and transformative way.
5. External panel—Eleven community leaders have been invited to serve on an external panel. Members represent leaders from business, industry, city government, education, and the judicial system. With their diverse expertise and insights, the panelists will provide advice and counsel, share best practices, and review recommendations.

What are the process and timeline?

This phase of the ASI process has four steps:

1. Study and recommendations: Research and data-gathering on non-instructional operations. This is being conducted by the consultant, steering committee, and external panel. This is due the end May 2017. The result of this step is a list of areas that should be further evaluated for consolidation.
2. Communication and feedback: All data and recommendations will be made available to employees. The final list of recommendations will be circulated to employees for comments in spring quarter.

3. Final decision: The Chancellor's Executive Cabinet and the board of trustees will review employee comments and recommendations before making a final decision.
4. Implementation: During summer and fall quarters of 2017, an implementation plan will be developed for each of the areas identified for consolidation. Implementation activities are anticipated to start in early 2018.

What principles will be used to guide the ASI process?

In October 2016, the board of trustees formally adopted "Guiding Principles for Strategic and Operational Decision Making." These principles are guiding our organizational review:

1. Student Success
2. Organizational Excellence
3. Balance of Integration and Differentiation
4. Financial Sustainability

Will ASI affect my employment, and if so, how?

The ASI effort is an examination of our organizational structure and administrative effectiveness. Although it may have some effect on alignment of positions, the current budget shortfall will have the biggest impact on the number of employees. Budget cuts are certain and a reduction in force is likely.

In anticipation of these budget cuts, college presidents and vice chancellors have taken earnest measures to reduce operational and personnel costs, including division and/or program reorganization, consolidation of personnel functions, reassignment of duties, etc.

Since January 2017, no open position has been filled automatically. Each has been thoroughly reviewed to determine its criticality to operations by members of the Chancellor's Executive Cabinet.

How can I stay informed of ASI progress?

New website and presentations

There are many ways for faculty, staff, and administrators to stay engaged with and informed of progress of the ASI initiative. We are in the process of developing a website dedicated to ASI and strategic planning. Once the website is complete, an email announcement will be made. The website will serve as a resource for ongoing updates and communication about ASI.

In the meantime, faculty, staff, and administrators are encouraged to review the chancellor's Concept Paper and to view a recent video presentation by Chancellor Pan and Floten. Both are available on the Chancellor's Office web page under Chancellor Pan's Presentations.

Listening sessions and email//in-person feedback

Chancellor Pan, the college presidents, and Floten Consultancy are scheduled to conduct “listening sessions” at each of the three colleges and SVI. Faculty, staff, and administrators are invited to attend any of the following listening sessions and ask questions or provide input:

- SVI: April 17, noon to 1:30 p.m.
- North: April 19, 12:30 to 2 p.m.
- Central: April 19, 3 to 4:30 p.m.
- South: April 26, 1:30 to 3 p.m.

In addition, faculty, staff, and administrators with specific questions or recommendations are welcome to visit with or email Chancellor Pan, Jean Floten, or one of the college presidents.