

Strategic Affiliation Monthly Newsletter

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FROM THE DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC AFFILIATION - Peter Laipson, Ph.D.

From the affiliation's inception, one of its primary goals – a key element of its “north star” – has been to improve the experience of students at all of our institutions. In the last few months, several AITs have worked to realize that goal by creating more efficient and frictionless paths among the three partners, both for students who are already part of

Tiger Nation and for those who are planning to join it. Building on the work of the academic implementation teams, which have focused on creating transfer opportunities between and among the affiliates, some more recently established AITs have been forging the tools to help students take advantage of all our collective resources as easily as possible.



One example is the Recruitment and Marketing AIT, which is constructing a template for the academic AITs to show advisors at all three partners which courses students must complete to pursue a pathway from the technical colleges to a four-year degree at FHSU. Once completed, this document will ensure that a student earning an AAS in Construction at Fort Hays Tech | North Central and wanting to pursue a BS. in Construction Management at Fort Hays State will get the precise guidance they need to accomplish that goal.

Another example is the Registrar AIT, which is working on making registration across the affiliates as easy as possible. This involves coordinating with the Admissions offices of all three institutions so that, following the directive of the Governance Committee, students pay only the application fee of the affiliate institution in which they first enroll. It also involves finding ways to track students across the partner institutions to ensure the credit transfer process is frictionless.

A third example is the combined efforts of the Secondary Education and General Education AITs, which have collaborated to provide guides for high school students contemplating attendance at FHSU. The documents they have produced, called the “Fast Track to FHSU,” show prospective FHSU students how they can save time and money by completing almost all their FHSU general education requirements through concurrent enrollment in courses offered at the technical colleges. The two AITs are also working to expand the roster of concurrent enrollment courses, especially for small schools in western and central Kansas that historically have limited access to these resources.

These examples are far from exhaustive. The Student Success AIT is considering how to share services available at one of the affiliates with one or both of the other partners; the LMS Task Force is working on making Blackboard, the learning management system at FHSU, available to the technical colleges; and the Institutional Research AIT is figuring out how to gather data on a range of student populations so that we can determine how the affiliation is helping students achieve their goals and how it needs to be improved. And the list goes on. What they all show, however, is the shared commitment by faculty and staff at all of the partners to serving students well and ensuring that they can take advantage of all the opportunities of the affiliation with minimal additional effort.



Five questions with Affiliation Implementation Team 10 (Registrar) Co-chair Kelsi Broadway

1. Why was your AIT created at this relatively early point in the implementation process of this Affiliation Initiative?

Kelsi: Our work is complex and essential to the overall success of this initiative. We touch every part of the student records and support infrastructure at all three institutions, from student registration to credit and transcript analysis. Since each of our institutions employs different systems and processes in delivering registrar services, we need to evaluate and align, where possible, our processes to provide the efficiencies we envision.

2. What are the initial challenges your team is focusing on?

Kelsi: We know we need to develop an understanding of the duties, responsibilities, and organizational structures at our three institutions with regard to the registrar and admissions processes. We also need to identify additional stakeholders whose work impacts registrar-related work on each campus. Through an initial SWOT analysis and discovery of duties and responsibilities, we have identified some focus areas and objectives for the next few months.

3. The “True North” of our Affiliation Initiative, the overarching goal of this movement since its inception, has always been to deliver solutions that serve the students of rural Kansas. How is your group working to ensure you stay focused on this true north?

Kelsi: A key supporting principle of our efforts is our commitment to placing our students’ needs first and meeting them where they are in their educational journey. One of the first objectives was to determine who qualifies as an “Affiliation Student” and then develop processes and systems to track and assist them as they move between our institutions throughout their educational experience.

4. Your team's work will naturally intersect with the work of other AITs. Are there any AITs you are working with now as you begin your implementation?

Kelsi: One AIT stakeholder group we have already been working with in our implementation efforts is AIT 9, the Recruitment and Marketing team. That is a big one, especially as it impacts the application fee initiative. Still, several others can help us deliver the structure and processes we envision, including AIT 12, the IT Study Group, as questions about transcript processing and delivery were addressed. AIT 17, the Institutional Research team, has also been involved in an early collaboration effort because they focus on essential data collection and analysis across all three institutions.

5. It might appear to the casual observer that your team and the other AITs are somewhat out there on your own to navigate this very complex implementation process. Is this an accurate observation?

Kelsi: No, it is not. Peter Laipson, Joey Linn, and Corey Isbell lead the Affiliation Steering Committee, and their leadership has been essential in helping us prioritize and coordinate our work with the other teams. When we have questions or need clarification, they respond very promptly so that we can move forward. The way the three presidents and the Steering Committee have structured this initiative empowers each team with the flexibility and freedom to pursue solutions while providing guidance as necessary.

