

Strategic Affiliation Monthly Newsletter

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FROM THE DIRECTOR OF STATEGIC AFFILIATION - Peter Laipson, PH.D.



On July 17, at the Northwest Tech campus in Goodland, the chairs and vice-chairs of each Affiliation Implementation Team (AIT) will gather for a daylong summit with the Steering and Governance committees. A biannual event – the next is scheduled for January 2025

in Hays – the Summits provide a key opportunity for leaders of the affiliation at every level to hear what other groups have been doing and to think together about prospects and possibilities for the next six months.

While each AIT will have its own accomplishments to report, work to date on the affiliation has focused on five areas:

1. Curricular alignment will create pathways for students completing their AAS (Associate of Applied Science) degree at the technical colleges to pursue a four-year degree at Fort Hays State University. AIT 1 (Nursing and Allied Health) and AIT 3 (Construction) have spent significant time on this goal over the last few months, investigating the content of specific courses and degree requirements to ensure that students are both prepared to complete a four-year degree and able to do so efficiently. AIT 2 (Agriculture) and AIT 5 (IT/Computer Science), established this spring, are beginning similar efforts and expect to complete degree pathways by next fall.

2. Helping students at the technical colleges make thoughtful decisions about how to satisfy general education requirements. A goal of the entire affiliation is to help students use all the time they spend in higher education well. AIT 7 (General Education) has articulated which courses offered at the technical colleges satisfy both gen ed and program-specific degree requirements at FHSU so that students can minimize the time to degree completion and maximize elective options.

3. Enhancing concurrent enrollment opportunities for high school students. Along with the team's work aligning general education internally, AIT 7 has also clarified how regional high school students can satisfy general education requirements through courses offered for concurrent enrollment credit. This additional clarity will provide students matriculating at any of the affiliates more flexibility about their course choices or the opportunity to accelerate their progress toward a degree. In related efforts, AIT 6 (Secondary Partnerships) has created a common concurrent enrollment partnership agreement with regional schools and submitted a proposal, now under study, to standardize the affiliates' concurrent enrollment charges and fees.

4. Sharing ideas, technology, and programming for student support services. AIT 8 (Student Success), an AIT established this semester, is already planning shared activities across the campuses during orientation and throughout the year. AIT 8 also examines the technology each of the affiliates uses to support students with the aspiration to bring it, if needed and feasible, to other campuses.

5. Preparing for the public launch of the affiliation. Even as initiatives are underway, many members of the public are only dimly aware that the relationship among the three affiliates is changing. In late June, pending the approval of the affiliation by the Higher Learning Commission, the affiliation will have its public launch. The names and websites of the technical colleges will change; new logos, colors, and fonts will be introduced, and there will be a series of events for both students and the communities in which each campus is located. AIT 9 (Recruitment and Marketing), with assistance from Leo Burnett Worldwide, has been at the center of efforts to envision the affiliation's new brand, and AIT is also reimagining how the affiliates will collaborate in marketing and recruitment. AIT 12 (the IT Study Group) is poised to make all the changes to the websites of the technical colleges and related technology, while AIT 18 (Licensing) is renegotiating relationships with vendors of branded clothing

and products. A Launch Event Task Force is planning events in August and September in Beloit, Hays, and Goodland for students and the community at large.

So what's next for the affiliation? That's up to the AITs, guided by the steering committee and the presidents. But here are a few ideas:

- Thinking creatively about how the affiliates can cooperate where they historically have competed. Though each of the affiliates remains an independent institution, the shared goal is to work together for the good of students, the local communities, and regional businesses. So, it will make sense to reimagine past practices. For instance, each of the three institutions offers concurrent enrollment opportunities, many of which overlap. How might we collaborate for the benefit of everyone involved? Similarly, each of the affiliates has faculty who are experts in some fields that the others don't. Could the three institutions find ways to share that expertise to everyone's advantage?
- Opportunities for partnerships with industry in the form of mentorships, apprenticeships, or even new degree programs. Informed by the external industry representatives serving on the affiliation teams and regional organizations devoted to community and economic development, how could we partner creatively with industry to ensure that students and businesses in the region thrive?
- Creating learning opportunities – catered to community or workforce needs -- that may result in a credit, a badge, certification, or micro-credential. Some of the AITs are already planning offerings at one or more of the tech colleges of interest to students at all campuses (getting trained for a commercial driver's license, for example). What other offerings might we envision that provide either students or community members the knowledge and skills they need to pursue a specific career opportunity? And how could we harness the collective resources of all three institutions to serve as wide a range of learners as possible?

Strategic Affiliation Initiative Timeline

