Online and Hybrid Course Prioritization Guide

10 Strategies for Promoting Enrollment Growth and Student Success

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Introduction

A Disciplined Approach to Online Initiatives

Institutions of all shapes and sizes are investing significant sums to expand their portfolio of online and hybrid courses without specific institutional priorities in mind, often resulting in a mix of arbitrary, subscale offerings. This creates an unsustainably expensive disconnect between the institution's online portfolio (largely steered by unit-level interests and capacity) and its overarching interest in using technology to increase access, improve student success, and grow revenue.

This guide will help institutional leaders prioritize scarce resources devoted to online and hybrid course development toward the most promising available opportunities. By targeting specific curricular "gaps," institutions can improve retention, reduce time-to-degree, regain or expand their share of currently enrolled student credit hours, or even attract new students to existing programs.

In the pages that follow, we detail five online or hybrid curricular strategies that improve student success and expand access, plus five strategies that help to grow revenue through new enrollment. The strategies are organized in descending order by potential impact, with the largest opportunities for either success gains or enrollment revenue profiled first in each section.

Following the strategies, we have included a prioritization table to help you compare each strategy's accompanying costs, implementation difficulty, required buy-in from campus stakeholders, and overall impact.

Improving Student Success and Expanding Access

Bottleneck Course Redesign	Remedial Ramp-Up Courses	Online Course Consortia	Withdrawal Redirect Courses	Online Orientation Modules
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Growing Revenue Through New Enrollment

Online 2+2 Pathways	Summer Course Recapture	Online Dual-Credit Courses	Military Portal Programs	Open Course Trials
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Appendix: Prioritization Table

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How to Use This Guide

This resource is designed to guide provosts, vice provosts, deans, and directors of online and continuing education through the process of identifying, understanding, and capitalizing on the biggest opportunities to enhance enrollment growth and student success through online and hybrid course offerings.

Each strategy profiled consists of most or all of the following components:

Problem

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Describes common problem(s) facing students, faculty, or administrators that targeted online or hybrid offerings might solve. Each strategy in this guide has been selected because of its proven capacity to either improve student retention and time to degree or attract new students.

Strategy

Describes the particular curricular strategy that (when implemented carefully) addresses the problem above.

Opportunity Diagnostic

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Guides the institution through various data-gathering and analytical exercises that can help size the potential for increased student success (retention and graduation rates), new enrollment, or cost savings. These analyses may require coordination with academic and administrative units, as well as institutional research. Ultimately, these diagnostic tools are designed to help leaders prioritize their investment in the strategies included in this guide and make the case for action to key stakeholders.

Implementation Guidelines

Details the most important development steps and common barriers to success associated with the relevant strategy. This section will list tips from early adopter institutions that will help leaders accelerate adoption and structure support in an optimal format.

Case Study

Finally, each strategy will conclude with a brief case study from an exemplar institution, illustrating the key concepts and reporting results to date.

Consult the appendix at the end of this guide to compare strategies and select those with the greatest potential for your particular institution or academic unit.

Bottleneck Course Redesign

Rethinking the Instructional Model to Expand Capacity and Improve Success

Problem

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High-enrollment, lower-division undergraduate courses are typically the most difficult challenge within the "iron triangle" of **cost, access, and quality** in higher education.

- **Cost**: Large enrollments necessitate additional instructors and classroom space, straining faculty capacity and institutional resources

- **Access**: Many of these courses create "bottlenecks" in the curriculum, particularly as required prerequisites are accompanied by wait-lists and high failure rates

- **Quality**: Unbundling and redesigning the instructional model creates legitimate concerns about pedagogical rigor, particularly when success rates are already unsatisfactory

Strategy

Target the institution's most challenging curricular "bottlenecks" for blended course redesign, **transitioning away from a traditional lecture-based model toward one that combines web-based content delivery with face-to-face interaction**.

This alternative model allows for a reduction in per-student costs by increasing section sizes and eliminating one or more in-class meetings, while often improving success rates through the use of small-group exercises (typically led by teaching assistants or peer instructors within a larger class) and gradual, mastery-based assessment.

Opportunity Diagnostic

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Most institutions engaged in bottleneck course redesigns measure their success according to three key metrics:

1. A reduction in the drop/fail/withdraw (DFW) rate for the course, measured against previous offerings or another concurrently offered version

2. An increase in the enrollment cap for the course per term

3. A reduction in instructional cost per student headcount (typically calculated by dividing instructor compensation per course by the number of enrolled students)

> **Advanced**—Measure **cost per successful student** (dividing total instructor compensation by the number of students who received a passing grade). **Track performance in subsequent courses** to gain even greater insight into a course's impact on student ability.

To estimate the potential for improvement along these assessment metrics, require course design proposals to include projections of capacity (increases in section size) and cost savings per student, as measured against the previous term's course. Conduct analyses at the end of each term to assess performance against projected goals, including cost per successful student and DFW reductions.

The National Center for Academic Transformation (www.TheNCAT.org) has helped to coordinate over 150 course redesigns since 1999. It found that institutions reduced their instructional costs by an average of 34%, while 72% of institutions showed improved student learning outcomes.

Bottleneck Course Redesign (cont.)

Rethinking the Instructional Model to Expand Capacity and Improve Success

Implementation Guidelines

Well-intentioned blended learning initiatives often fail to achieve the desired course conversion or student success results because of an imbalance between central administrative oversight and ground-up faculty support.

One method of balancing both the interests of the institution and the curricular flexibility desired by faculty is to administer a **provost-level grant program for course design innovation**. By using targeted investments through an RFP process, the administration avoids interfering with uninterested instructors, while ensuring that willing faculty have plentiful support and recognition throughout the redesign and assessment process.

UNC CHARLOTTE

Exemplar Redesign Grant Initiative

Redesign grant programs should prioritize proposals that meet the following criteria:

- Redesigns entire courses within a department, rather than individual sections
- Targets general education, introductory, and/or prerequisite gateway courses
- Targets courses with historically high DFW rates
- Targets high-enrollment courses
- Demonstrates support from departmental faculty, chairs, and deans
- Includes a plan for financial sustainability and/or an overall reduction in costs
- Describes how the course will use technology to reduce costs and improve outcomes

Once eligible courses are selected for revision, it is critical to **provide faculty with resources and expertise to guide them through best practices in blended pedagogy** in order to maximize the likelihood of the desired reduction in instructional cost and improvement in learning outcomes. Without adequate guidance, revamped courses may prove to be a daunting and difficult experience for both faculty and students, hampering progress across the institution.

EAB research has surfaced **three high-level characteristics common to successful "high-tech, high-touch" blended instructional models** that can help inform the design process:

1 Interactive Software

Active learning and adaptive sequences encourage content retention and mastery

2 Individualized Support

On-demand assistance from tutors or peers ensures continuous, personal feedback

3 Structured Progress Incentives

Success based on gradual progress, not high-stakes final

UCF

Exemplar Blended Learning Support

The University of Central Florida, a national leader in blended pedagogy, has compiled a Blended Learning Toolkit (blended.online.ucf.edu) that includes extensive resources designed to accelerate faculty comfort with and implementation of alternative instructional models.

Bottleneck Course Redesign (cont.)

Rethinking the Instructional Model to Expand Capacity and Improve Success

Case Study

The University of North Carolina at Charlotte's physics department faced a combination of disappointing success rates and strained capacity in several of their introductory courses, providing the perfect context in which to ask whether an alternative instructional model might **not only improve outcomes, but also allow for more students without adding additional classrooms or faculty**.

By replacing their traditional two-lectures-per-week model with a blended model including online content modules, pre- and post-class quizzes and exercises, and a teaching assistant-led problem solving session, faculty were able to reduce the drop/fail/withdraw rate by 12%, expand the enrollment cap by 45%, and achieve significant cost savings per student in the space of one semester.

This new model also reduced the anxiety and limited long-term retention problems associated with high-stakes midterm and final tests by **focusing on periodic mini-examinations** throughout.

UNC CHARLOTTE

Introductory Physics Redesign

Faculty　　　　　*TAs / Peer Mentors*

| Pre-reading | Pre-quiz | Lecture | Practices | Lab Session | Homework |

Pre-Lecture Prep　　　　*e-Tutor*　　　　*e-Tutor*

Embedded Videos　　　　*Mini-tests*
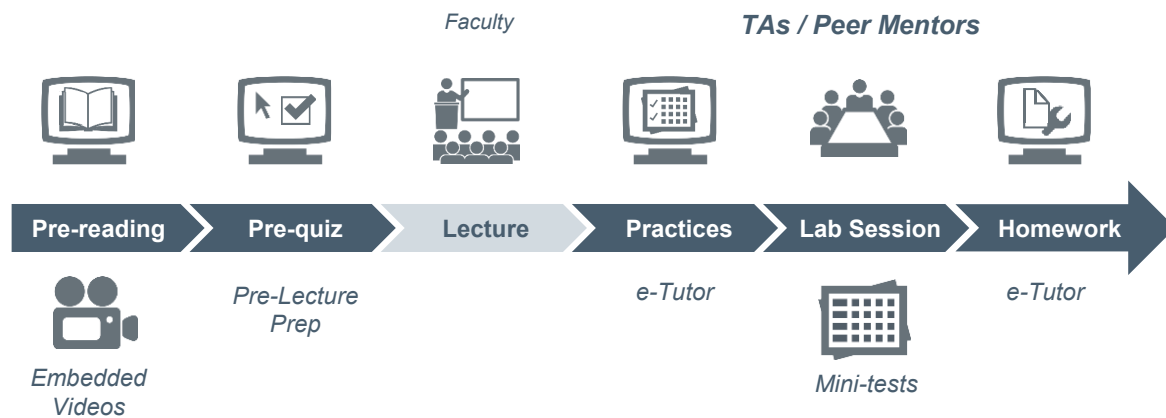
12% Reduction in DFW rate　　**45%** Increase in enrollment cap　　**31%** Cost savings per student

Each year, the provost's office provides $30,000 in redesign funding per course for three to five faculty teams, with preference given to large-enrollment introductory courses with high DFW rates. The winning teams then engage with UNC Charlotte's Center for Teaching and Learning to create a full proposal for the provost's review, build and carry out the new course format, and assess their results during and after the term.

For greater detail on UNC Charlotte's "Large Course Redesign" process, see their Center for Teaching and Learning's **web portal** (teaching.uncc.edu), which features analyses of past projects, current RFP outlines, and a form for faculty to request a consultation.

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Remedial Ramp-Up Courses

Giving Freshmen a Head Start on Prerequisites

Problem

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Even at highly selective institutions, **many freshmen arrive on campus ill-prepared for particular introductory courses required for program eligibility or progression**. Math tends to be the biggest culprit, stopping aspiring STEM majors in their tracks and forcing additional remediation, which is costly and time-intensive for both the institution and the student.

Further, **some states restrict financial aid for students taking remedial coursework**, creating an additional barrier for both in-need students and institutions hoping to recruit and retain them.

Strategy

Offer introductory prerequisites in an online or hybrid format to incoming freshman during the summer, allowing interested students to hit the ground running upon their arrival in the fall. These "boot camp" or "ramp-up" offerings are most effective in an accelerated, online format that allows students to enroll prior to arriving at the physical campus.

Opportunity Diagnostic

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To estimate the potential remediation opportunity available to your institution prior to fall matriculation, follow the analysis below:

Institutional Research:

1. How many freshman require remediation each year in math and/or English?

2. How many students drop, fail, or withdraw from first-year English and STEM courses?

3. Combine the results from #1 and #2 and multiply by the number of credits a student would attain if successful in first-year prerequisites or the number of credits a student might be expected to add to their course load if exempted from remediation.

Freshmen requiring math remediation

+

Freshmen requiring English remediation

+

Freshmen DFWs from Intro English and Math

×

Credits delayed due to remediation

+

Credits lost due to DFWs

=

Potential increase in credits attained through successful summer remediation
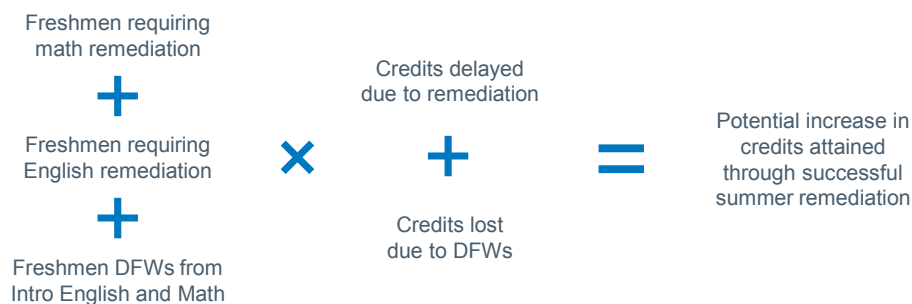
Sizing the opportunity: California State University - Fullerton, our case study institution, had 4,526 students in their 2012 freshman class, of which 1,722 (38%) required remediation; 554 (32%) of those students completed all remediation required in math and/or English that summer and were college-ready in math and English at the start of the fall 2012 semester; the rest gained experience or partial credit and continued remediation in the fall.

System-wide, approximately 60% of incoming CSU students require remediation, amounting to about 25,000 students. Extrapolating CSU Fullerton's success rates over that population, as many as 12,500 students could be expected to successfully complete one of the requirements in the summer.

Remedial Ramp-Up Courses (cont.)

Giving Freshmen a Head Start on Prerequisites

Implementation Guidelines

☑

Program Design: Remedial courses offered in pre-matriculation summer format need to be offered in multiple, flexible formats to maximize the share of target students who are willing and able to enroll.

- **Multiple modalities**: Offered entirely online, blended (web-based content plus lectures with face-to-face discussion, coaching, and assessment), and entirely face-to-face (for students living nearby or moving in early)

- **Multiple intensities**: Offered in a shorter 1-2 unit format and a longer 3-4 unit format to suit varying schedules and readiness levels

- **Stackability**: Shorter units "stack" with others to fulfill full remediation requirement and exempt students from relevant units in longer format courses

- **Multiple levels**: Several incrementally advanced tracks for students entering with varying levels of ability

- **Multiple paces**: Online coursework available in synchronous and asynchronous formats to suit both busy students and those needing significant engagement

Financial aid: Need for remediation is highly correlated with financial need. In states and systems in which institutions aren't able to distribute aid to students taking remedial coursework, an additional source of funds may be needed to help students unable to pay. *California provides fee waivers for students below a certain ability to pay threshold.*

Student Awareness and Engagement: CSU Fullerton has a New Student Orientation Team that coordinates registration holds on incoming freshmen and sends personalized emails to each student for each subject needing remediation.

Proper Tracking: The New Student Orientation Team also administers a placement test (in addition to the CSU's standardized math and English entry tests) to track remedial students into the best option.

Serving Place-Bound Students: Allow students to sort the summer catalog by course modality, making it easy for students who are unable to travel to campus to select from the relevant online options.

Advanced—Integrating Multiple Institutions: Ensure price consistency between articulation partners to prevent price shopping and perverse competition. Further, ensure that student information and registration systems are updated to track applications, student locations, and grades smoothly in a shared database.

Advanced—Integrate with ESL Pathway: Partner with institutional English as a Second Language (ESL) programs to offer summer remediation in blended language format in conjunction with ESL requirements.

Advanced—Partner with feeder high schools: Some institutions work with high schools to offer early remediation courses to incoming students in the spring of senior year.

Remedial Ramp-Up Courses (cont.)

Giving Freshmen a Head Start on Prerequisites

Case Study

Over 60% of first-time freshmen enrolled in the California State University (CSU) System require remediation in either English, math, or both subjects. As an added challenge, institutions in California are restricted from giving financial aid to students to use for remedial coursework. In 2011, the Office of the Chancellor announced the Early Start program, which requires that students scoring below "college ready" thresholds on the statewide placement test begin remediation in the summer prior to enrolling at a CSU campus. It also requires each campus to develop Early Start offerings.

As a result, institutions now have to manage a balancing act: enforcing compliance and remediating as many students as possible, without creating an additional barrier for students who otherwise would have enrolled in the fall (and paid full tuition).

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
FULLERTON

Spring	**Summer**	**Fall 2012**
Students take English and math placement tests	*Students requiring remediation begin coursework*	*Significant increase in college-readiness among matriculates*

CLICK HERE
EARLY START
COURSE LISTINGS

Entry-Level Mathematics (ELM)

F2F   Online

English Placement Test (EPT)

Asynchronous   1 or 3 units

4.3% Increase among college math-ready freshmen

46.8% Increase in number of students remediated in math

73.2% Increase in number of students remediated in English

CSU Fullerton's response was to maximize potential pathways for incoming students by offering multiple course formats: face-to-face, online, self-paced, 1-unit/15-hour, and 3-unit/45-hour. The 1-unit (math only) and 3-unit (math and/or English) courses count toward achieving remediation. As an alternative to attempting courses required for remediation, a 1-unit/15-hour experience course in math and/or English was offered to allow students to prepare in summer to be successful in remedial courses in the fall.

Online courses were critical in reaching place-bound, working students.

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Online Course Consortia

Achieving Curricular Scale Through 'Seat Share' Arrangements

Problem

!

Most institutions have difficulty matching instructional supply perfectly with student demand term after term; inevitably, some courses end up with waitlists and others with too few students to justify a section. This difficulty manifests most clearly in the following contexts:

Insufficient Lower-Division Capacity

ECON 101

Introductory courses that meet general education requirements or serve as major program prerequisites typically fill quickly, making it difficult to add enough instructors or classroom space to meet demand

Insufficient Upper-Division Demand

ECON 395   POSC 450   ANTH 359
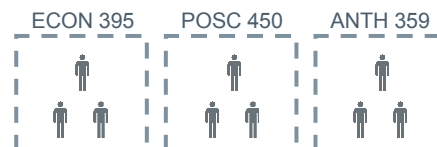
Upper-division electives in niche fields are difficult to justify with only two or three registrants, and students seeking specialized courses are sometimes left with few options on campus

Strategy

Institutions can address these problems by **sharing seats in online courses among multiple institutions**. Though difficult in execution (see "Implementation Guidelines" for guidance), this strategy allows wait-listed students access to free seats offered by other campuses while enabling full upper-division course sections where none might have existed on at individual partner institutions.

Opportunity Diagnostic

?

Lower Division

To assess the need to augment your own offerings with virtual seats in partner institution courses, collect at least three to five years of lower-division enrollment data and **identify the number and titles of courses averaging over 90% seat capacity and those with wait-lists**. Weigh the administrative and operating costs of online consortia against the instructional and space costs needed to meet demand in high-enrollment courses.

Consider potential revenue from introductory offerings that are noticeably under capacity as well; many online course-sharing partnerships allow provider institutions to collect fees for each student added from other campuses, creating an additional revenue source to compensate for typically empty seats.

Upper Division

The best opportunities for consortial offerings in the upper division typically come from the following areas:

- Less commonly taught languages (LCTLs)

- Sparsely offered major electives

- Sub-scale departments potentially strengthened by other institutions (enabling full majors or joint programs)

- Niche institutional specialties in demand among other institutions

Even small baccalaureate colleges have earned between $500,000 and $2 million in revenue from participation in online course consortia, enabling many to invest in greater online infrastructure and play an increasingly bigger role as a consortial provider.

Online Course Consortia (cont.)

Achieving Curricular Scale Through 'Seat Share' Arrangements

Implementation Guidelines

Whether in instruction, research, or administration, large-scale inter-institutional partnerships often fail to live up to their initial promise due to operational obstacles. Each institution must see the financial benefit of cooperation, and clear steps should be taken to overcome technical challenges associated with differing calendars, student information systems, and fee structures. Where successful, online course consortia tend to follow these guidelines:

Cost and Revenue Sharing: Many consortia plan to operate on the "honor system," avoiding explicit rules governing payment between institutions with the hope that costs and benefits generally even out. This is rarely the case, however; **some institutions will offer many more seats than others, and some will send more students than others to those seats**.

▪ **Create a tuition-share model** that effectively incents institutions to participate (both provider and consumer), and covers the administrative costs of any coordinating body.

  – Flat fee per student: The Online Consortium of Independent Colleges and Universities (OCICU) collects a $775 fee per enrolled student from the student's home institution; distributes 70% of the fees to the provider institution, and keeps 30% to cover administrative costs. In this model, the fee must be kept low enough to encourage student home institutions to include as many partner courses as possible in their catalog (rather than investing in additional faculty and sections), but high enough to encourage provider institutions to offer additional sections.

  – Set price and distribution: The University System of Georgia's eCore program charges its own unique tuition rate to students, returning 40% of revenues to the administering institution (which provides development support), 40% to the faculty home institution, and 20% to the student's home institution.

Curriculum and Registration: Choosing the right mix of courses and routing students in need to offerings from other institutions are common roadblocks on the way to scale.

▪ **Allow for institutional autonomy**: Overly prescriptive rules governing course specialization and curriculum tend to turn faculty off. Many larger consortia allow for duplication and leave enrollment "to the market." Given proper financial incentives that reward careful seat utilization, institutions tend to focus on in-demand areas, making unnecessary sections less likely.

▪ **Consider approved courses to be "home credits"**: Consortia built on the expectation of course-by-course credit articulation struggle to get off the ground. Any courses approved to be included should be considered equivalent to home institution courses, and listed in the registration system as such.

▪ **Consortia offerings should be transparent to students**: Students are unlikely to find offerings available from other institutions in special web portals or separate systems; included courses should be findable alongside normal offerings and emphasized by advisors and registrar staff on campus.

  – When possible, **eliminate student-facing differences in pricing, fees, and processes associated with shared courses**, which create unneeded obstacles. Critical differences between institutional policies should be dealt with through administrative policy and revenue sharing, not passed on for busy students to navigate.

Online Course Consortia (cont.)

Achieving Curricular Scale Through 'Seat Share' Arrangements

Case Study

Scaling the General Education Core

In 1999, the University System of Georgia (USG)'s Board of Regents called for the development of **eCore**, a shared, fully online core curriculum. Courses in this program can be offered by any USG institution (the "administering institution"), taught by any USG faculty member (the "faculty home institution"), and taken by any USG student (attending the "student home institution"). Administrative services are centralized and are self-sustaining, requiring no additional state funds.

Distributed Financial Model

40% Faculty Home Institution

40% Administering Institution

20% Student Home Institution
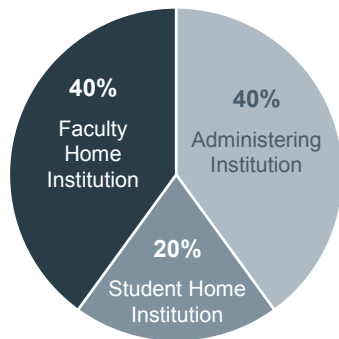
Tuition Generated from eCore Enrollment

$5M

$0M

2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013
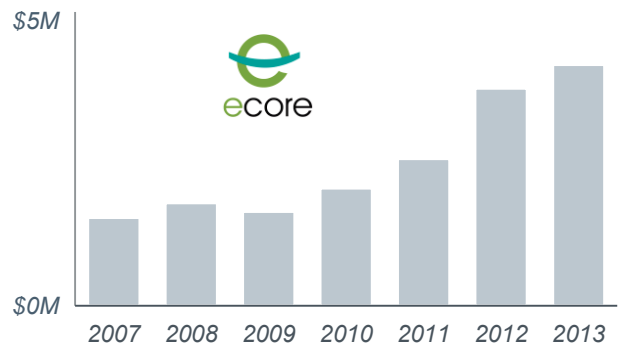
Matching Supply and Demand in the Upper Division

The Online Consortium of Independent Colleges & Universities brings together 84 institutions (typically small, private, religious colleges) to share a wide online course catalog. This allows members with previous experience in online course development and excess seat capacity (of which there are about 10) to earn additional revenue from members seeking to provide curricular breadth to students without additional instructional costs.

Existing Online Infrastructure	**Central Coordination**	**Little Online Investment**
Excess Seat Capacity	*Robust Collective Catalog*	*Insufficient Breadth in Catalog*

OCICU Online Consortium of Independent Colleges & Universities *Managed by New Ventures of Regis University*

Provider Institution **Network Administrator** **Student Home Institution**

$3,500 initial fee; $1,000 per term → $ ← $3,500 initial fee; $1,000 per term

Selected provider courses listed in home institution catalog →

← Provider receives 70% of student fees $ Institution pays $775 per student
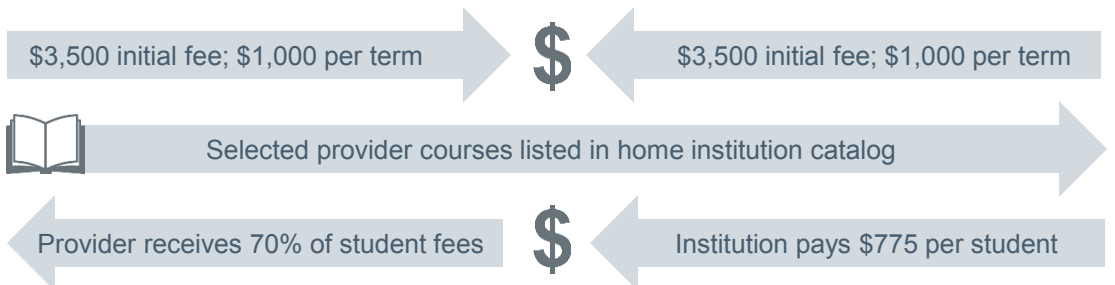
Source: www.OCICU.org; www.eCore.usg.edu; eCore 2012 Factbook; EAB interviews and analysis.

Withdrawal Redirect Courses

An Alternative Pathway to Keep Students on Track

Problem

!

When undergraduate students drop a traditional, full-term course or withdraw after the drop deadline, they often encounter several obstacles that may delay their academic progress:

- Falling below full-time enrollment status and losing financial aid eligibility

- Delaying completion of a critical prerequisite by one or more terms

- Struggling to catch up in new courses after missing the first several class sessions

Strategy

Offer accelerated online courses for students who drop or withdraw early in a term, allowing them to maximize their course load, prevent delays in degree progress, and enroll without burdensome schedule constraints.

Opportunity Diagnostic

?

To estimate the impact of course withdrawals on student persistence at your institution, institutional research staff should ask the following questions:

✓ How many students lose financial aid eligibility each term due to falling below full-time status?

| Number of students who lose full-time status per term | ✖ | Tuition + fee revenue from credits required to graduate | = | Potential lost revenue if students do not complete |

✓ How many students drop or withdraw from a course in the first five weeks of a term and fail to register for another?

| Number of students who withdraw and don't replace a course | ✖ | Tuition + fee revenue from missed enrollment | = | Potential lost revenue from course withdrawals |

✓ How many late-admit or late-registration students fail to register for necessary courses?

| Number of students who fail to meet registration deadline | ✖ | Tuition + fee revenue from missed enrollment | = | Potential lost revenue from missed registration deadlines |

✓ How many of the above students eventually drop out entirely?

| Number of students who leave after losing FT status | ✚ | Number of students who leave after dropping a course | ✚ | Number of students who leave after missing deadlines | = | Graduates potentially lost to course withdrawals / deadlines |

✓ What is the first- to second-year retention rate and graduation rate for each of the above subsets, as compared to the average?

| Average first- to second-year retention rate | ▬ | Average first- to second-year retention rate of above students | = | Potential first- to second-year retention boost from redirect options |

Advanced

Correct for differences in academic preparedness, GPA, and financial aid eligibility when comparing these students to others to isolate the impact of individual course withdrawals

Withdrawal Redirect Courses (cont.)

An Alternative Pathway to Keep Students on Track

Implementation Guidelines

Course Selection: When selecting candidates for an accelerated course option, prioritize lower-division courses that (a) have large enrollments, (b) enroll a higher-than-average share of students that are receiving financial aid, (c) meet a general education requirement, and (d) are prerequisites required in a major or program.

Faculty Allocation: Department chairs should assess the capacity of current faculty to offer additional "withdrawal redirect" sessions:

- How many faculty fall short of their planned course load each term?

- Which of those faculty are able to teach prioritized courses?

Advising: Proactive and timely intervention from advisors is critical in locating at-risk students, informing them of accelerated, online alternatives, and placing them in the best option prior to the secondary term period.

- The University of Alabama advertises "Fall II" courses in posters around campus and through advisor notifications to ensure student awareness.

- Restrict registration for withdrawal redirect courses to the students who need them most by limiting or prohibiting proactive registration (prior to the start of a traditional term). This avoids cannibalization of existing courses and over-enrollment of students registering for convenience, rather than necessity.

> **Advanced**—Automate the process by creating an automatic email message to students who drop, withdraw, or miss the registration deadline, notifying them of the institution's portfolio of accelerated alternatives. This reduces the burden on advisors to identify and reach every eligible student.

Incentives: Many institutions lack financial incentives for offering individual online courses during traditional terms (revenue splits with units, course development funds, overload pay, or per-headcount bonus pay may apply only to full academic programs or intersessions, for example), which can make it difficult to grow and sustain withdrawal redirect options over time. It is important to anticipate this situation and provide adequate incentive for both units and faculty to accommodate demand, either through targeted seed funding or by making these courses eligible for existing reward programs.

Administration: Often, there is no central "owner" or coordinator of traditional term online courses, as is typically the case for summer sessions or continuing education programs; adoption and implementation is left to each academic unit. The provost's office must therefore play a role in coordinating and sustaining this activity across campus to ensure that students have the broadest menu of options available. In most cases, the College of Arts and Sciences will play the most important role in lower-division general education, so its involvement is key to success.

Withdrawal Redirect Courses (cont.)

An Alternative Pathway to Keep Students on Track

Case Study

Several departments at the University of Alabama have addressed the challenges associated with withdrawals by creating accelerated, online course options for students who drop or withdraw within the first 5 weeks of a 15-week term. Designated as "Fall II," this shorter session is not visible to students during initial registration to prevent them from proactively opting into the abbreviated online format intended for the students in need of a flexible alternative.

Advisors notify at-risk students of "redirect" option

THE UNIVERSITY OF
ALABAMA

Traditional 15-Week Course

Add/Drop Deadline

Proactive registration not allowed

Online 10-Week Course

3-Week Registration Period

Course Prioritization: High-demand prerequisites, general education courses, and introductory pre-med courses

Benefits

✓ Students avoid losing financial aid eligibility

✓ Doesn't use valuable classroom space

✓ Keeps students on track for graduation

While it can be difficult to match instructor supply with last-minute student demand each term, department chairs have been relatively successful at predicting the most likely withdrawal candidates and appropriate online alternatives, drawing on a supply of available faculty able to teach high-enrollment courses.

As student performance analytics improve, both faculty and advising professionals will have more tools at their disposal (LMS triggers, early alerts, risk scoring) to provide the optimal mix of withdrawal redirect options for students in shorter and shorter time windows.

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Online Orientation Modules

Preparing Students for Success in Online Learning Environments

Problem

!

Students enrolled in courses with a significant online component are often unprepared for (or even unaware of) the technical requirements and proficiencies expected of them, resulting in difficulty navigating the course structure, extensive early-term troubleshooting by instructors, and even dropped coursework.

Small, low-effort fixes aimed at addressing student preparedness, such as those listed below, typically fail to alleviate the problem:

- **Self-Readiness Checklist**: Intended to screen out students for whom online learning is not likely to be effective, but merely "informational" and focused primarily on study habits

- **FAQ List**: Intended to provide a self-service resource for common technical and practical questions, but purely reactive and dependent on student initiative

- **Video Tutorial**: Intended to illustrate course logistics in a visual format for greater engagement, but seldom viewed and insufficient to assess readiness

Strategy

Create one or more online orientation courses to simulate web-based learning, troubleshoot technical problems, and familiarize students with each component of the online course environment.

Opportunity Diagnostic

?

While large retention gains and tuition revenues are not likely to be at stake, online programs still suffer consequences when insufficient attention is paid to student preparedness:

Wasted class time and student / faculty interaction on technical issues

- **Survey faculty**: What share of student questions concern technical or logistical issues?

Negative student perceptions

- **Survey students**: How difficult was it for you to navigate this course on a scale of 1 to 5?

Lost or missed enrollments

Drop/Fail/Withdrawals (DFWs) as a result of technical problems or logistical difficulties in completing online coursework

- **Survey DFW students**: Did technical or logistical problems contribute to your difficulty?

Missed enrollments from students hesitant to register for online courses and unable to acclimate to the learning management system in a low-risk environment

- **Survey students**: Would you consider an online course? If not, why not?

Online Orientation Modules (cont.)

Preparing Students for Success in Online Learning Environments

Implementation Guidelines

The design, structure, pace, and administration of an online orientation course are critical to its success in ensuring student readiness. The following **10 characteristics of successful orientation courses**—exemplified by Brandeis University's School of Graduate Professional Studies, our case institution—should guide the development process on your campus.

1. **Self-paced**: Asynchronous modules allow students to start and finish the course at their convenience, maximizing flexibility and minimizing the instructional expense.

2. **Built in standard learning management system course shell**: The orientation module provides an identical experience to fully online courses at the institution, familiarizing students to the organization and mechanics of its particular LMS.

3. **Frequent availability**: Modules are offered for at least three weeks prior to the start of each term (when volume will be highest), and remain available for reference until graduation.

4. **Linked to course registration**: 100% completion of full course is required to begin online coursework; registration lists are checked on the first day of classes. This ensures that the students who need the most assistance (who wouldn't be likely to find a web tutorial on their own) find and progress through the requisite material.

5. **Low intensity, but comprehensive**: The ideal orientation requires only a few hours of work by the student (ensuring that the length or difficulty of the modules does not discourage or delay enrollment), while covering all necessary components of the online learning experience.

6. **Tests course activity**: The modules require students to perform the same activities they will be required to perform in class—posting on forums, submitting assignments, completing quizzes, etc. This ensures their familiarity with the mechanics, while making the material more engaging through active learning.

7. **Tests technical compatibility**: Students are required to install, update, and test the various web-based applications and software required in courses, preventing last-minute technical issues and reducing faculty time spent on troubleshooting.

8. **Accessible solutions for common problems**: The orientation should include a frequently asked questions bank and easily located instructions for students struggling with the LMS. Brief video tutorials on common LMS features can also serve as supplements.

9. **Faculty monitoring**: A point person is assigned to oversee student progress and completion, as well as answer any questions during the orientation.

10. **Promoted by advisors**: Students curious about online learning or in need of a refresher are pointed to the next online orientation module by advisors.

Online Orientation Modules (cont.)

Preparing Students for Success in Online Learning Environments

Case Study

Brandeis University's School of Graduate Professional Studies has developed an online orientation course applicable to all online courses offered at the institution. The course, which can be completed in three to six hours by most students, includes six modules that introduce the class to the school's online learning approach, the technical requirements needed to participate in all course activities, the Moodle course shell structure, and various policies associated with web-based instruction (such as proctoring and academic integrity rules).

Brandeis University
Graduate Professional Studies

1 Overview of the Moodle Learning Environment

2 Being a Proactive Online Learner

3 Communicating with Staff and Faculty Online

4 Library Resources

5 Academic Integrity

6 Synchronous Learning Tools

✓ Practice Self-Tests
✓ Tech Compatibility
✓ Test Assignment Uploaded

Availability

Available 3 weeks prior to each term until graduation

Support

Faculty member monitors activity and answers questions

Intensity

Six modules; requires 3-6 hours to complete course

In addition to better preparing students for online learning, the course also supports community building among classmates. Social forums provide a space where students completing the self-paced course may introduce themselves and share their thoughts about upcoming courses. This helps them feel less isolated and lays a foundation of virtual communication that will be expanded upon at the course, program, and school levels.

New instructors also benefit from the orientation through experiencing firsthand what their students will face, and must complete each module before teaching their first online course.

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Online 2+2 Pathways

Partnering with Community Colleges to Streamline the Transfer Experience

Problem

!

General articulation agreements fill file cabinets at nearly every four-year college and university, but **seamless transfer pathways designed in partnership with community colleges are still relatively rare**. Potential transfer students typically face an **overly complicated admissions and credit transfer process**, often ending up with dozens of excess credits and unnecessary course repeats or opting to enroll at proprietary institutions with more marketing dollars and alluring recruitment pitches.

Strategy

Develop fully articulated online transfer programs with partner community colleges and leverage joint advising networks (ground-based and via data-sharing) to ensure effective student transitions.

When successful, online 2+2 pathways deliver significant benefits to each institution involved and the students who complete:

- Student completes full bachelor's degree on time with no repeated courses, often at a reduced cost

- Community college attracts place-bound, bachelor's degree-seeking adults and gains completions through reverse articulation policies

- Four-year institution attracts successful transfer students without adding physical capacity or excessive marketing costs

Opportunity Diagnostic

?

Community college transfers constitute a significant potential enrollment market in the US; three million community college students transfer to four-year institutions each year, and surveys indicate that 60% to 80% of all first-year community college students intend to transfer and attain a baccalaureate degree.

To diagnose the potential market and internal readiness at your institution, consider the following parameters:

Local pipeline analysis:

- Do local community colleges enroll significant online populations? Which ones?

- What are the predominant transfer destinations of nearby community college students? What share of transfers enroll in online programs?

Internal readiness and capacity:

- Do we offer online completion programs that are in high demand among community college transfers in the region?

- Are the relevant faculty and department heads willing to streamline and potentially automate the credit articulation process?

Online 2+2 Pathways (cont.)

Partnering with Community Colleges to Streamline the Transfer Experience

Implementation Guidelines

Individual articulation agreements rarely go far enough to ensure awareness and effective communication among students, advisors, and institutional leaders. The following practices will help turn agreements into full-fledged online degree partnerships without overburdening faculty or straining the enrollment management budget.

Automate reverse articulation: Granting an associate's degree to transfer students who fulfill the requirements after transitioning to a four-year institution provides two important benefits:

- Gives the students' originating community college credit for a successful completion as state and federal pressure to demonstrate outcomes intensifies

- Boosts student confidence and morale while ensuring they leave with a credential in the event of temporary or long-term attrition

To eliminate the need for students or advisors to "opt in" to an associate's degree, run a student information system report each term to identify students with community college credit who have completed the requirements.

Records matching those requirements should then feed into notifications to the responsible community colleges' registrar offices, which can coordinate the formal degree award process.

Automate credit articulation: Prospective transfer students suffer when each course on their transcript is evaluated on an unpredictable, one-off basis. By integrating self-service transfer information into the pre-application process and making efforts to scale articulation workflows, institutions can begin to serve incoming students more effectively and at lower cost.

- **Build a course equivalence database** of previously reviewed and accepted credits to centralize and accelerate credit evaluation and generate pre-enrollment articulation reports for students.

- **Establish departmental articulation standards**, allowing admissions and enrollment management staff to evaluate individual courses and elevate any ambiguous or questionable outliers to faculty.

Extend advising support: Many institutions wait until transfer students arrive on campus to review credit articulation and degree plans; by pushing high-touch interaction with potential transfers into their first two years at partner colleges, advisors can prepare students much more effectively for their transition and prevent confusion over degree requirements.

- **Send staff to partner college orientations** to conduct financial aid workshops and sign interested students up for mailing lists.

- **Share prospective transfer student caseloads** with partner college advisors at the 30 to 45 credit mark to help students anticipate requirements.

Create a dedicated pathway web portal: Investing in a unique landing page for 2+2 pathway programs allows both partner institutions to reach a much broader potential market of students and locate all necessary program information in one central portal.

Old Dominion University and Northern Virginia Community College maintain a compelling gateway page (dl.odu.edu/plus/partners/nova/) that links to relevant program information, admissions criteria, and institutional contact information.

Online 2+2 Pathways (cont.)

Partnering with Community Colleges to Streamline the Transfer Experience

Case Study

Marketing Planned Degree Pathways

In 2012, Old Dominion University and Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) agreed to build on existing articulation agreements by **streamlining and marketing four full 2+2 programs (criminal justice, human services, psychology, and nursing)**. Old Dominion expects to gain 50 to 100 students each year through this partnership, which **guarantees admission to NOVA students who maintain a qualifying GPA during their first two years**. NOVA has a very large student population, so its status as a "preferred partner" is critical to Old Dominion's enrollment strategy.

NOVA
Northern Virginia
Community College

OLD DOMINION
UNIVERSITY

21,000 online
course enrollments

*Aligned curriculum
helps students plan*

*Guaranteed admission
with 2.5 GPA*

Criminal Justice   Psychology

Nursing   Human Services
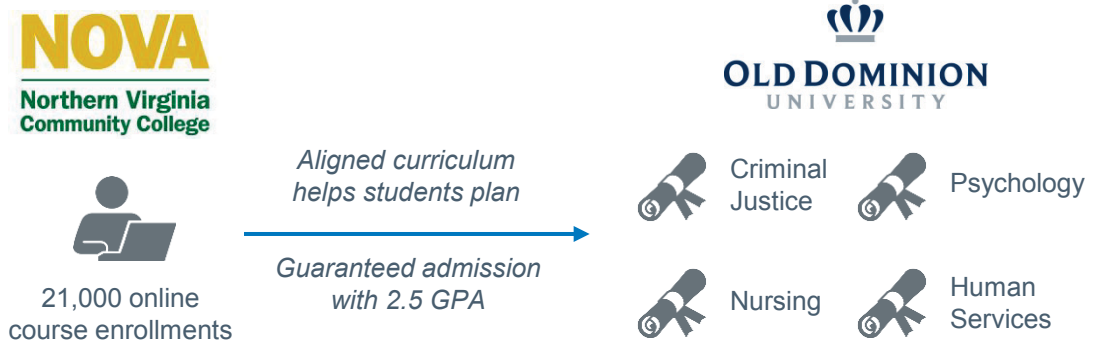
Supporting Transfers Through Wraparound Services

The University of Central Florida, which draws heavily from the Florida community college system, began investing more deliberately in advising support for transfer students in 2006 through a program called DirectConnect, which uses **shared advising caseloads and CRM management with partner colleges to ease the transition to the university**.
Up-front investment in expanded advising services has paid off in the form of over 14,000 transfer students since the program's inception in 2006.

14K *Students have entered UCF through Direct-Connect since 2006.*

DiRECT CONNECT TO UCF

18% *Proportion of UCF's transfer students admitted through DirectConnect*

UCF staff lead workshops at community college orientations, sign students up for mailing list	UCF advisors share caseload after 30 credits; students contacted via CRM	UCF takes over advising responsibility after 45 credits to ensure transfer readiness	Institutions share transcripts, test scores to reduce burden on students; advisors consistently encourage potential transfers
High School	**1st Year**	**2nd Year**	**Transfer**

Source: EAB interviews and analysis

Summer Course Recapture

Regaining 'Share of Student' from Competing Providers

Problem

!

Today's students have an unprecedented array of options for individual course credit, resulting in so-called **"swirling" enrollment**: bringing in coursework from AP courses, early college, community colleges, foreign language institutes, or online providers. This behavior means that colleges and universities will increasingly compete over "share of student," as fewer and fewer undergraduates take all 120+ credits at one institution.

This phenomenon is particularly acute during summer and winter sessions, when students are most likely to shop for flexible, online offerings to fit their schedule and pressing curricular needs.

Strategy

By identifying and analyzing the courses most commonly transferred in from other providers after an intersession period, institutions can regain lost enrollment share and prevent further credit leakage over time.

Opportunity Diagnostic

?

To calculate the approximate revenue lost from intersession transfer credits, follow the steps below:

1. Compile at least two years (preferably five or more) of summer and winter session transfer data through the registrar's office and merge into one spreadsheet

2. Calculate average lost revenue per year via the following equation:

$$\frac{\text{Total number of intersession transfer credits requested} \times \left(\text{Per-credit-hour fee for online summer courses} + \text{Additional fees levied by institution per credit hour} \right)}{\text{Number of years in sample}} = \textit{Average online intersession revenue lost per year}$$

This equation will give an institution a rough estimate of the revenue potential available, though **numerous factors will complicate the scenario**, including changes in tuition and fees, varying tuition rates for in- versus out-of-state or part- versus full-time status, and so on.

An institution receiving 5,000 credits worth of intersession transfer requests over five years, at a rate of $300 per credit, plus a $60 technology fee per credit, has potentially lost $360,000 on average each year in enrollment revenue.

This problem is especially difficult for smaller, higher-priced, tuition-dependent institutions where students are most likely to search for less expensive credit opportunities, either from community colleges, nearby public universities, or online providers. Still, **even large public institutions are increasingly reporting significant credit leakage** (measured by average course load per term, per completion, or total headcount/total student credit hour ratio).

Summer Course Recapture (cont.)

Regaining 'Share of Student' from Competing Providers

Analysis Guidelines

Once an institution has assembled the data, it is important to label each intersession transfer request by subject, course title, number of credits fulfilled, and transfer institution.

Year	Subject	Course Title	# Credits	Institution
2007	Political Science	History of the Supreme Court	3	XYZ University

These variables allow the institution to conduct an in-depth analysis of the data to identify important patterns and commonalities that can inform curricular prioritization:

Eliminate rare courses from consideration: Courses transferred in *less frequently than once per year* should be removed from an analysis designed to identify the best opportunities for summer course development, given scarce resources.

For registrar: How many of the transferred courses do we also offer? Of those, how many do we offer in the summer? How many do we offer online? Which institutions accounted for the most outsourced courses?

For institutional research: How do the transferred courses differ from our offerings— summer, per credit price comparison, modality, length of term, location?

Implementation Guidelines

1. Consider tying online course development funds (for departments, colleges, and individual faculty) to courses with the highest enrollment potential and competitive viability after conducting the above analysis.

   ✓ Often, introductory courses, general education courses, and major/program requirements represent the largest opportunity for recapture.

2. Prioritize areas that would involve only a modality or term shift, rather than new faculty or classroom capacity. There may be some courses that cannot be accommodated.

3. Focus on courses and disciplines that are more easily replicated in an online format.

   ✓ Math, finance, and basic writing courses tend to be more transferable than those requiring laboratory work (organic chemistry) or extensive group communication (foreign languages)

Advanced—Analyze competitor institutions' summer offerings to identify gaps that your institution might fill, encouraging enrollment from beyond your campus.

Summer Course Recapture (cont.)

Regaining 'Share of Student' from Competing Providers

Case Study

Stonehill College, a small, private, Catholic institution in Easton, Massachusetts, began an analysis of intersession transfer requests in fall 2013, using five years of summer and winter session data.

After eliminating courses transferred in fewer than five times over that period and studying patterns among those most frequently taken, the registrar and provost's office identified several specific courses for development in online or hybrid format to be offered during intersession periods.

STONEHILL
C O L L E G E

Data Collection and Sorting	**Competitor Analysis and Prioritization**	**Intersession Course Development**

2008	2009	2010	2011	2012

Summer Course Catalog

2014

Online + Hybrid
- POSC 101
- FIN 201
- BUS 102
- MATH 220

Leaders at Stonehill hope these new courses will not only attract students who might otherwise have enrolled at another institution, but **also aid struggling students looking to improve their GPA**; intersession courses transferred in from other institutions are not factored into a student's institutional average.

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Online Dual-Credit Courses

Leveraging Web Delivery to Expand the High School Recruitment Pipeline

Problem

!

Increasingly competitive high school recruitment pipeline: Most institutions are spending more and more each year to maintain the size and selectivity of their freshman class.

Price sensitivity among students and parents: Economic pressures and proliferating credit options have led to savvier consumers in search of the most cost-effective route to a degree.

Heightened focus on time to degree: Students and policymakers have brought new attention to four- and six-year graduation rates, creating a new imperative for institutions to encourage timely progress and flexibility in credit articulation.

Given the need to reach qualified high school students earlier, many colleges and universities have developed dual credit courses, typically taught by approved high school instructors or by institutional faculty. In the traditional four-year setting, however, two barriers prevent expansion of these programs:

- Faculty are often skeptical of high school instructor quality and curricular fidelity

- Both students and faculty are often unwilling or unable to travel to an alternate campus for individual courses during academic terms

Strategy

Offer online dual-enrollment courses (either asynchronous or through synchronous video conferencing technology) through feeder high school partnerships.

Potential Benefits:

- Institution builds new recruitment channel as students gain (a) exposure to faculty and curriculum, and (b) transferable credit at the institution.

- Institution fills excess seats in courses and (potentially) gains new revenue using only existing faculty and curricular capacity.

- College-ready high school seniors obtain college credit and access locally unavailable curricula at a significant discount from full tuition.

Opportunity Diagnostic

?

Policy	*Estimating Return on Investment*	
First, look to your state's current policies on dual credit to guide program development and ambition. The Education Commission of the States (ecs.org) provides guidance about relevant policies and procedures, including payment rules, credit-granting policies, and reporting requirements.	**New Enrollment** Given the low (or free) price point required to compete for dual-credit enrollment, institutions use conversion of enrollees to applicants and later matriculants as the primary ROI metric. Number of seats available ✖ Expected conversion rate ✖ Undergrad tuition & fees	**Tuition & Fees** If the institution is able to charge tuition and technology fees to participating high schools or students, it may recoup much of or even all of its program costs. Per credit hour fee ✖ Expected credits taken ➕ Tech and support fees

Online Dual-Credit Courses (cont.)

Leveraging Web Delivery to Expand the High School Recruitment Pipeline

Implementation Guidelines

Building effective workflows between academic departments, academic technology support units, and dozens of different high schools can be daunting. The following considerations should guide your institution's program planning process and help to minimize roadblocks along the path to successful online dual-credit offerings.

Building Institutional Support

- **Share tuition revenues with participating academic units**. There is no "optimal split" for every institution, but financial recognition for instructional labor and program participation is critical to ensuring and sustaining faculty interest.

- **Target high-priority prerequisites**. Offering popular general education courses and high-enrollment requirements maximizes student interest and shortens time-to-degree.

- **Appoint a dedicated program coordinator**. A dual credit office of 1 to 3 people is typically able to manage and scale online curricula, and having a clear point person able to coordinate relationships between school districts and academic units is critical for program sustainability.

Calibrating Technology Investments

- **Simplify and standardize educational technology standards**. Leaving "bells and whistles" open to individual faculty too often leads to wasteful investment and a confusing, inconsistent student experience.

- **Anticipate synchronous conferencing costs**. Building capacity for seamless interaction between multiple classroom sites typically requires two monitors per site, two cameras (instructor- and student-facing), four microphones, and an HD video codec, totaling approximately $60,000.

- **Ensure sufficient bandwidth for synchronous conferencing**. Limit web conference participation to 4-5 remote sites, each with no more than 15 students.

- **Establish authentication standards**. Standard LMS web authentication for fully online courses is commonly used, though many institutions now use live video proctoring for synchronous, site-based exams.

- **Orient students to course expectations**. High school students are rarely prepared for the specific policies and procedures involved in individual online courses, so it is critical to inform them of expectations well in advance through emails, texts, and orientation modules.

Managing Partner School Relationships

- **Assign departmental liaisons to visit school sites**. Faculty in each participating department should visit partner schools each term to ensure rigor and consistency, especially when courses are taught by contract or high school faculty.

- **Provide technical support**. Partner schools are typically willing to pay institutions for initial setup and maintenance costs associated with online learning tools.

- **Consider renting equipment to schools in need**. This allows the institution to ensure technical compatibility while enabling dual-enrollment offerings among schools that are otherwise unable to participate.

Online Dual-Credit Courses (cont.)

Leveraging Web Delivery to Expand the High School Recruitment Pipeline

Case Study

Through the Western Missouri Educational Technology Consortium (WeMET), the University of Central Missouri partners with 29 Missouri school districts and 88 high schools to offer dual-enrollment courses through synchronous (I-TV) and asynchronous online formats.

WeMET is run by a board of directors comprised of district superintendents and managed on a term-by-term basis by a site council staffed by representatives from the University and partner high schools.

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL MISSOURI. → Faculty / Content → **WeMET** Western Missouri Educational Technology Consortium → Tech Support → ← Fee per Term

Provider Institution	Ed Tech Collaborative	Partner High School
▪ Dual Credit and I-TV Coordinator works with departments	▪ Assists with curricular and schedule alignment	▪ Pays WeMET $1,000 fee per term for participation
▪ Departments receive revenue share	▪ Sets up A/V equipment at high schools to enable high-quality conferencing	▪ Mix of face-to-face, asynchronous online, and live videoconferencing broadcast on site
▪ Dual credit liaisons conduct site visits to high schools to ensure quality	▪ Conducts trainings for participating faculty and staff using I-TV	▪ Can rent equipment from WeMET if needed

33% Average conversion rate of dual enrollment students to UCM matriculants

In fall 2013, UCM offered 77 dual-credit courses (10 in online formats) with over 2,300 high school students enrolling. Through an office of only three staff members(the dual credit and I-TV coordinator, WeMET coordinator, and an administrative assistant), UCM connects online learning specialists with interested faculty and advertises available curricula through high school orientation sessions and marketing through brochures, emails, and texts.

UCM requires dual-enrollment students to have at least a 3.0 GPA, a minimum of 18 on the ACT English section, and 20 on the ACT math section (higher if registering for more advanced courses such as Calculus I or II). Though high school students require more hands-on orientation to online learning than the typical college student, **UCM finds that dual-enrollment students outperform their own undergraduates** in many courses.

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Military Portal Programs

Recruiting and Retaining Service Members in Online Master's Programs

Problem

!

Online and hybrid courses are often good fits for active duty and veteran students who require curricular flexibility, and given strong federal support for service members who enroll in higher education, many institutions are eager to attract them.

There have traditionally been **three significant challenges** to doing so, however:

1. The bulk of service member enrollment in higher education is concentrated at the baccalaureate level in adult degree completion programs and at large-scale online providers such as Liberty University, University of Maryland University College, and proprietary institutions like the University of Phoenix. Most traditional nonprofit institutions with smaller online programs struggle to compete in this mass-market arena.

2. The traditional value proposition made by colleges and universities often fails to convince service members that degrees offered will be both applicable to their career aspirations and accomplishable by busy adults returning from deployment.

3. Active duty and veteran students require specialized financial, academic, social, and professional support once they enroll—beyond the skill set of most existing staff on campus.

Strategy

By (a) focusing on **professional master's degrees** to fill in important unmet need in the marketplace, (b) developing and articulating **the value of disciplinary and alumni networks**, and (c) investing in **a dedicated support infrastructure** for service members, non-profit colleges and universities are able to recruit and retain military students in preexisting online programs.

Opportunity Diagnostic

?

Few institutions without substantial existing military enrollments are able to attract large numbers of new veteran students, given heightened competition in the market and the upfront costs required to establish brand awareness across branches, bases, and ranks. Still, the opportunity to assist service members through education is attractive for mission-driven institutions, and veteran students are often terrific additions to programs seeking disciplined, motivated, and experienced applicants.

A recent survey found that approximately 44% of over 400,000 GI Bill benefit users already had a bachelor's degree, demonstrating a large potential market for veterans actively interested in higher education and able to pursue advanced studies.

Deans, departments chairs, and central administrators should gauge institutional readiness to attract and serve veterans by conducting three basic analyses:

1 Identify Appropriate Program Candidates	**2** Assess Existing Campus Resources	**3** Size the Local Pipeline
List programs and certificates that are:	List any existing infrastructure and staff available:	Even in fully online programs, most enrollment markets are stubbornly local.
▪ STEM-focused	▪ Veterans Support Office	▪ List all military installations and bases in your region
▪ Professional/vocational	▪ GI Bill / military benefit expertise	▪ Audit current and previous enrollments for military students by branch, base location, and program
▪ Flexible in format	▪ Veteran faculty and alumni	
▪ Likely to recognize military experience and credit	▪ Connections with relevant employers and networks	

Source: "Million Records Project: A Review of Veteran Achievement in Higher Education," National Student Clearinghouse & Student Veterans of America, 2014.

Military Portal Programs (cont.)

Recruiting and Retaining Service Members in Online Master's Programs

Implementation Guidelines

Whether designing new programs with veterans in mind or adding veterans to existing program recruitment channels, institutions should account for the following considerations:

Recruitment: Military regulations prohibit base personnel from recommending programs to service members, compounding the challenges faced by institutions seeking to reach eligible service members.

- **Consider assigning a part- or full-time veterans liaison** for each distinct program area offered. He or she should meet with officers and educational coordinators at local bases, perform outreach to nearby ROTC groups, and connect applicants with veteran alumni (preferably from the same branch).

Admissions: Unless the admissions office has prior expertise in working with military students, staff members may need help understanding how to interpret military experience.

- **O*Net Online**, a database developed in partnership with the US Department of Labor, maintains a crosswalk tool to identify civilian jobs that correspond with military occupations. *(*www.onetonline.org/crosswalk/MOC)

Student Support: Veterans benefit from specialized outreach and campus support infrastructure.

- **Campus Orientation**: Create a special orientation for military students to ease the transition from service to campus and to educate students about available resources.

- **Veterans Affiliation Groups**: Encourage student-based affinity groups to create a sustained community for informal support in graduate programs and within the broader institution.

- **Counseling and Mental Health**: Provide and publicize assistance for students with post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, or other conflict-related issues.

Financial Aid: Processing delays can jeopardize veterans' ability to make tuition payments on time.

- **Assign one or more staff members to specialize** in helping military students navigate benefits, navigating policy compliance issues, and working to fill unanticipated benefit gaps or charges with contingency funding and/or exceptions.

Remediation: While many veterans enter graduate programs with above-average levels of professional experience, it is common for service members to lag behind civilian students in academic preparedness.

- **Offer online "refresher courses" in introductory pre-requisites** like calculus, college writing, or finance to students in need of remediation prior to the program's first term. Maintain a list of freely available resources for content areas the institution is unable to accommodate or for students unable to attend a full refresher course.

Professional Networks: Students making a transition from the military to civilian workforce often place tremendous value on the professional and social networks made available through academic programs.

- **Connect veteran students with peers** through cohort-based program structures and with local employers through branch-specific alumni networks.

Military Portal Programs (cont.)

Recruiting and Retaining Service Members in Online Master's Programs

Case Study

The University of Virginia redesigned elements of the School of Engineering and Applied Science's Accelerated Masters Program in Systems Engineering (AMP) to better serve military students. Program faculty believed the applied curriculum and the accelerated format were ideal for early-career veterans, but knew that additional investment would be needed to address three challenges associated with military enrollment: (1) reaching and demonstrating value to prospective students, (2) supporting veterans once they matriculate, and (3) mastering complex (and continually changing) military benefit and reimbursement policies.

UNIVERSITY of VIRGINIA
Accelerated Masters Program
in Systems Engineering

Typical Challenges Associated with Military Enrollment	**Essential Capabilities of a Military-Friendly Program**

Admissions and Recruitment

Difficult to identify and reach veteran students at the right time in their career	Hired veteran to coordinate outreach to veterans and active duty service members finishing deployment
Undergraduate and completion markets saturated by large, established providers	Focuses military recruitment on specialized professional master's degrees and known institutional disciplinary strengths

Student Success

Applicants have technical experience but lack prerequisite course credits	Offers online "refresher" courses 10 weeks prior to program
Veterans often face unique academic, social, and emotional challenges	Campus-wide committee discusses veterans' issues monthly; Veterans Center provides central support resources

Financial Aid

GI benefits are difficult to navigate; processing delays can interfere with payment	Registrar maintains dedicated website and specialized staff for veteran benefits
	Program provides contingency aid to students whose benefits unexpectedly change

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Open Course Trials

Attracting New Students Through Free Online Offerings

Problem

!

Today's higher education consumers are bombarded with advertisements from deep-pocketed for-profit colleges and fully online universities, but these students are typically unable to make real connections with faculty and curricula that might convince them of a particular program's value proposition.

Massive open online courses (MOOCs) present one new avenue for "content marketing"—that is, using expertise, insight, and education to create enough value with prospective students to persuade them to apply to and enroll at the institution. To date, however, **few direct connections have been made between MOOC offerings and program-specific enrollment strategies**.

Strategy

In the search for a business model to accompany MOOC development, progressive institutions are experimenting with variations on the MOOC model to drive prospects to existing (paid) online programs. Many early attempts overspent and under-delivered, but **when designed to maximize engagement and demonstrate career-relevant benefits to students, "freemium" offerings can build program awareness and new registrant pipelines.**

Opportunity Diagnostic

?

While design and implementation are critical to success with open course trials, it is important to first identify promising academic programs, professional networks, and modalities on campus; second, it is important to articulate what the institution expects to gain through this strategy to enable assessment and iteration.

In what context is an open course trial most likely to succeed?

▪ In a hybrid or fully online program where the trial experience closely mirrors that of the program and success in the online trial indicates likelihood of persistence in the program.

▪ In fast-growing professional fields that enjoy broad interest, such as cybersecurity, entrepreneurship, and software development. These areas are more likely to **drive immediate interest, employer sponsorship, time investment, and conversion to a credential**.

▪ In programs that serve existing, active professional networks. These networks maximize the likelihood of viral referrals among colleagues and affinity groups, drastically reducing the otherwise high costs of building institutional brand awareness in new markets.

How do we define success?

▪ Given the historically low engagement and completion rates that accompany the MOOC model, institutions should define success based on the **conversion of passive registrants to course completers** and of **completers to paying customers**, rather than pure enrollments or application numbers.

▪ **Require registrants to indicate their motivation and intentions** at the beginning of each trial to measure conversion against likely program applicants—early trials at progressive institutions have reported up to 90% completion rates among those who complete the first assignment and 25% program conversion rates among course completers.

Open Course Trials (cont.)

Attracting New Students Through Free Online Offerings

Implementation Guidelines

To attract paying student from free, no-frills learning experiences, campus leaders and instructional designers must move beyond a one-size-fits-all MOOC model.

Secure Faculty Participation: Early open courseware efforts were built on coalitions of the willing, allowing interested faculty to select the topic and design the core components. But as institutions target niche fields and standardize design to control costs, it becomes more difficult to secure faculty interest. **Make it easy for faculty by offering to record existing panel discussions, presentations, or lectures**, and offer small stipends for faculty to visit a pre-designated production facility to develop and record mini-modules.

Scaling the Course Experience: MOOCs are often associated as much with their high development costs as with their low (or free) costs to students. **Make open course trials financially sustainable by driving cost-efficiencies in their design**.

1. **Use a "master course model."** Students, teaching assistants, and paraprofessionals should monitor trials and oversee assessment, with full-time faculty serving primarily as curricular advisors.

2. **Archive courses for repeated use**. Capitalize on popular topic areas and reduce regular revision costs by archiving open courses for 24/7 availability and repeated campaigns.

Demonstrate a Career-Relevant ROI: Enrollment, completion, and conversion to a full certificate or program is much more likely among professionals when the application to their work is clear. Develop content around high-interest topic areas and high-demand skill sets, and **build one or more activities into the trial that show direct applicability to a student's vocation or interest**.

Foster Student Engagement and Conversion: Structure content, interaction, and assessment to maximize ongoing engagement among busy students without building unnecessary obstacles to completion.

1. **Focus on engagement, not assessment**: Early adopters often regret copying the conventional long-form, assessment- and memorization-focused structure of many university courses onto open trials. Use offerings as short as webinars to lower the time commitment required to interact with your content and **limit assessment to one or two assignments that demonstrate valuable outcomes to the student**.

2. **Invest in and standardize audio/visual production**: Faculty and staff often underestimate the effort required to produce, record, and edit content at a level that meets student expectations. While few can afford dozens of production specialists, it is important to steer interested faculty toward trusted resources to maintain quality control over the program brand.

3. **Co-brand with relevant associations and networks**: A student's own professional or affinity environment can serve as a reinforcement mechanism by illustrating peer engagement and interest in a course.
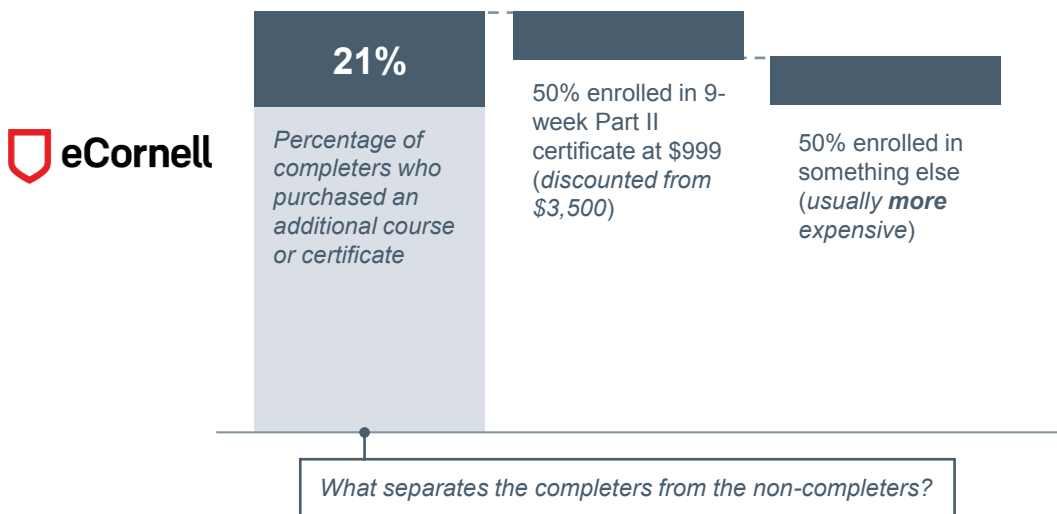
Open Course Trials (cont.)

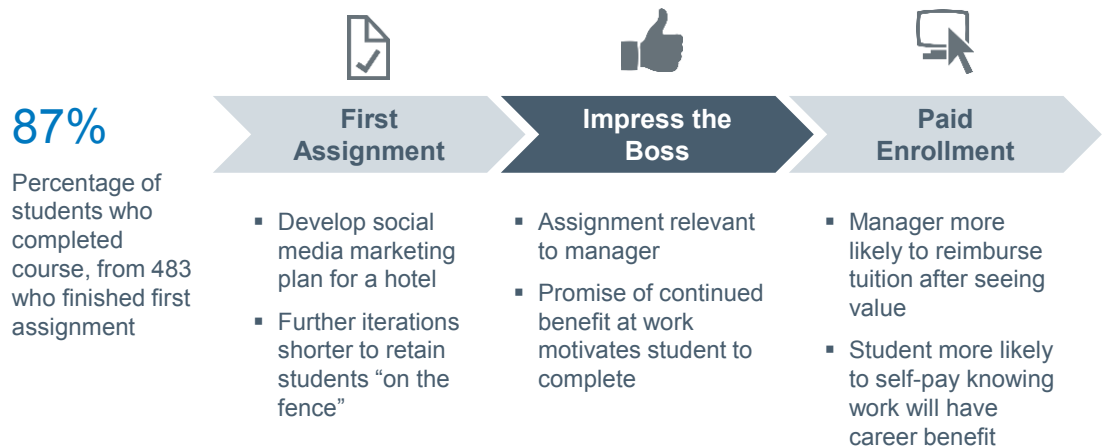## Attracting New Students Through Free Online Offerings

Case Study

Cornell University's predominantly online continuing and professional education unit, eCornell, was one of the first to experiment with open course trials as a method of attracting leads to certificate programs. Their initial pilot course on social media marketing in the hospitality industry yielded surprising results, converting nearly a quarter of completers into paying students, half of which enrolled in offerings unrelated to the trial experience.

Early Conversions Among Completers High; Purchase at Higher Price Point Than Expected

eCornell

21%

Percentage of completers who purchased an additional course or certificate

50% enrolled in 9-week Part II certificate at $999 (*discounted from $3,500*)

50% enrolled in something else (*usually **more** expensive*)

What separates the completers from the non-completers?

Leaders at eCornell concluded that giving students a practical first assignment that demonstrates value to their managers without unnecessarily burdening more passive registrants is key to encouraging completion and potential tuition reimbursement among corporate enrollees.

87%

Percentage of students who completed course, from 483 who finished first assignment

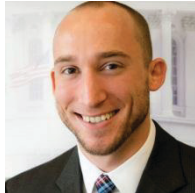| First Assignment	Impress the Boss	Paid Enrollment
▪ Develop social media marketing plan for a hotel ▪ Further iterations shorter to retain students "on the fence"	▪ Assignment relevant to manager ▪ Promise of continued benefit at work motivates student to complete	▪ Manager more likely to reimburse tuition after seeing value ▪ Student more likely to self-pay knowing work will have career benefit

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

What to Expect with New Online Investments

Use the table below to compare the costs, potential enrollment revenues, impact on student success, difficulty of implementation, and degree of campus-wide buy-in necessary for the individual strategies described in this guide. The strategies are organized according to the institutional priority they address and in descending order of overall impact.

Improving Student Success and Expanding Access	Development Costs	Ease of Implementation	Institutional Buy-In Required	Impact on Student Success
Bottleneck Course Redesign	◑	◑	◑	●
Remedial Ramp-Up Courses	◔	◔	◑	◔
Online Course Consortia	◔	◔	◑	◔
Withdrawal Redirect Courses	◔	◑	◔	◑
Online Orientation Modules	◔	◔	○	◔

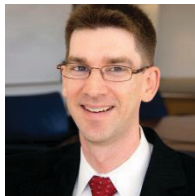| Growing Revenue Through New Enrollment	Development Costs	Ease of Implementation	Institutional Buy-In Required	New Enrollment Potential
Online 2+2 Pathways	◑	◔	◔	●
Summer Course Recapture	◔	◔	◔	◑
Online Dual-Credit Courses	◔	◔	◔	◑
Military Portal Programs	◔	◑	◑	◔
Open Course Trials	◑	◑	◑	◔

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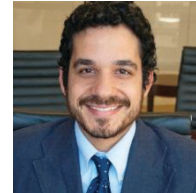
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