Over the past few months, a number of faculty and staff members have inquired about the status of the Achieving System Integration (ASI) initiatives and/or how much money was saved. This report provides a status update and addresses the major questions that have been raised. It also identifies lessons learned and provides information about the future of ASI.

Background

In July 2016, Seattle Colleges Board of Trustees appointed Dr. Shouan Pan as chancellor with the clear expectation of bringing the colleges closer together in order to improve student success and increase operational efficiency and effectiveness.

After a six-month study, Chancellor Pan presented an ASI proposal to the Board of Trustees at the February 2017 Board meeting. The Board voted unanimously to accept the proposal and affirmed the direction: more system integration while preserving the culture and strengths of individual colleges. The Board's decision helped formally launch ASI in March 2017.

To inform the design and implementation of this complex change process, Chancellor Pan:
1. Convened an ASI Steering Committee made up of 11 faculty and staff members from across the district.
2. Established an external panel of 11 business and community leaders.
3. Hired the Floten Consultancy to conduct a comprehensive assessment of district structure and operations.

In the remaining months of 2017, the internal ASI Steering Committee, the external panel, and the Floten Consultancy all submitted their reports. (See https://www.seattlecolleges.edu/asi.) The analysis and recommendations from these reports helped inform decision making and provided the foundation for initiating the Phase I of ASI.

In September 2019, about two and half years later, Chancellor Pan and Chancellor's Executive Cabinet selected the Education Policy Institute to conduct a comprehensive assessment of ASI initiatives. The final Assessment Report was submitted to the Board of Trustees in November 2019. (See https://www.seattlecolleges.edu/asi.)

Defining the Purpose and Scope of ASI

ASI is a multiphase process designed to transform Seattle Colleges into a more efficient and integrated system that enables the colleges to improve services to students and the community.

Faced with continuously declining enrollment and reductions in state support over the course of several years, Seattle Colleges needed to address short-term challenges and position itself for long-term viability. To achieve this goal, it required breaking down organizational silos and integrating back-office services and programs.

From the start, ASI called for achieving an optimal balance of **integrating** shared services and programs at the system level and **differentiating** unique aspects of culture and operations at the

college level. ***The purpose was to raise efficiency, increase internal consistency, freeing up/realigning limited resources to enhance competitiveness with neighboring institutions; it never purported to achieve a specific amount of savings.***

The **initial** phase of ASI included the integration of:
- The college and district Foundations
- Information Technology (IT)
- Human Resources
- Web Development

As the initiatives evolved, a **secondary** set of initiatives were considered, which included:
- International Programs
- Corporate Education
- Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
- Continuing Education.

There were also a set of districtwide programs launched between March 2017 and September 2019. These **parallel initiatives** were planned and executed as a district. They were:
- Seattle Pathways
- Seattle Promise
- Starfish Student Success Solutions.

Status Update

ASI-related efforts pertain to 11 initiatives and parallel programs undertaken at Seattle Colleges the past three years. This report focuses on 9 of the 11 initiatives and parallel programs. The Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Initiative and the Continuing Education Initiative continue to evolve and will not be addressed at this time.

1. Foundation Integration

Before 2017, Seattle Colleges had four independent Foundations, each operating with its own board, donor base, fundraising programs, and separate investment and auditing processes. This resulted in the Foundations frequently soliciting funds from the same donors, resulting in competition among the four Foundations.

Under the direction of the Board of Trustees, Chancellor Pan and college presidents began efforts to integrate the Foundations. After two years of complex, and sometimes very difficult negotiations, 2 of the 3 college Foundations, and the former district Foundation, formed the new Seattle Colleges Foundation.

Results:
a. The new Foundation was officially approved and recognized as a 501 (c) (3) organization by the Internal Revenue Service in summer 2019.

b. Kerry Howell was appointed as the Vice Chancellor for Advancement, with staff reorganization completed.
c. Eleven (11) community leaders and six (6) ex-officio members formed the new Foundation Board.
d. The new Foundation has 12 employee FTEs as compared to 22 FTEs before the integration.
e. The new Foundation raised $4.2 million during the 2019-2020 Fiscal Year. During the 5.5 months between April and September 2020, the Foundation raised $425,000 in emergency funds which has been distributed to support students impacted by Covid-19.
f. The Foundation is gearing up to start a multi-year "Equity Can't Wait" capital campaign.

2. The IT Integration

Prior to ASI, IT services were mostly managed by the colleges. Different IT platforms and systems were used, and there was minimal cross-college coordination or collaboration.

In January 2018, integration efforts for IT services began. The objectives were to alleviate duplication, streamline processes, share staff expertise across the colleges, and bring all colleges under a common operational umbrella.

Results

a. Dr. Cindy Riche was appointed as the CIO/Associate Vice Chancellor.
b. Seattle Colleges now has:
   a) A common Wi-Fi network
   b) A common login process
   c) A common print software for all student labs
   d) A common software renewal process
   e) A new and consolidated IT Services website
c. From 2018-2019, 9 positions, including 3 at the director level, were left unfilled, resulting in approximately $820,000 savings. $500,000 of these funds has already been re-invested to address unmet IT needs across the colleges. The remaining funds will be used for budget reduction. These cuts are only possible because of ASI-enabled standardization of systems and processes.
d. Since the outbreak of Covid-19 in March 2020, IT services provided very innovative and responsive IT support for faculty, staff, and students, including:
   a) Virtual desktop services (mydesk.seattlecolleges.edu)
   b) Remote access for computer labs and classrooms
   c) Rerouting campus telephone extensions to cell phones
   d) Leveraging existing multifunction copiers to receive off-campus faxes
   e) Distributing much needed equipment to students and employees:
      i) 988 Chromebooks
      ii) 254 hotspots
      iii) 100 plus webcams

3. HR Integration

HR integration efforts were initiated with the goal of streamlining all HR processes, providing consistent HR services, limiting liability due to inconsistent processes within Seattle Colleges.

Results

a. Jennifer Dixon was appointed as Vice Chancellor of Human Resources.
b. Basic supervisor training is in place.
c. The new team created:
   a. A new onboarding toolkit and online hiring and recruiting toolkit
   b. Districtwide candidate screening criteria and screening matrix
   c. A more inclusive behavioral set of interview questions
   d. A new separation checklist
d. Eform trainings were provided.
e. Two positions, including one exempt position, are left unfilled, with salary savings of $136,787.

4. Web Services

Prior to 2017, the three colleges and district office maintained separate web services. As such, different software platforms and hardware were used, and "look and feel" of websites were quite different.

In 2017, integrating web services was initiated with the goal of:
- Improving student web navigation experiences across Seattle Colleges websites
- Streamlining the enrollment process
- Centralizing academic program information
- Improving operational efficiency and implementing universal code development

Results

a. The ASI survey revealed 80% satisfaction. (47% moderately satisfied and 33% extremely satisfied).
b. The productivity and efficiency have increased; best practices are shared across the colleges.
   a. All four websites (the three colleges and district office) use the Drupal platform today.
   b. Waitlist information is now available on all three college websites.
   c. All college websites have the same live web chat feature. (This was quickly implemented in July 2020 and its success was due largely to the centralized working environment.)
   d. South's academic webpages are pulling from a single dynamic academic data warehouse. North will have this capability in late 2020; then Central.
c. No additional FTE were required to accomplish the above.

5. International Education

International enrollment has been a major revenue source for Seattle Colleges. Concerned with continued decline in international enrollment since 2014 (43% decline), the three colleges worked to achieve a modest degree of coordination. However, marketing and recruitment occurred largely independently among the colleges before 2018.

As a second Phase ASI, the International Programs integration plan was approved by Chancellor's Executive Cabinet in August 2019.

Results

a. International Education eliminated 9 positions (including 4 administrators), which amounts to a reduction of $914,494 in salaries and benefits.
b. Strengthened Seattle Colleges as a brand by recruiting and marketing as a system rather than college by college. The unified marketing and recruitment approach allows potential students to take advantage of the wider variety of program options across the district and to move from college to college more seamlessly.

6. Corporate Education

Corporate Training Program was largely integrated at Seattle Colleges before ASI. The initiation of ASI prompted the program to redesign to ensure fiscal stability and relevance to the needs of the business community.

Results

a. A more integrated model was affirmed, with the hiring a new Executive Director in July 2019.
b. The program averages over 20 training projects per year with revenue above $600,000/year and climbing, providing a sustained profitability that is trending positively.
c. Corporate training continues to be profitable despite Covid-19. As of September 1, 2020, Corporate training had secured over $500K in grants and contracts for next year to ensure profitability through Summer 2021.

7. Seattle Promise

Thanks to Mayor Durkan's strong championship and the support of Seattle City Council, Seattle voters passed a 7-year FEPP Levy which included $40.7 million to enable all eligible high school students to attend Seattle Colleges tuition free. Some also receive equity stipends.

The Mayor and Seattle City Council asked a unified approach, rather than three different approaches, to operating this program now called Seattle Promise. Modeled after the 13th Year Program at South, Seattle Promise aims to guide all students on a path from high school to college to earn a degree, certificate, transfer to a four-year institution, or enter the workforce.

The 2019-2020 academic year is the first year when students from all Seattle Public High Schools can enroll in any academic program across the Colleges.

Results

a. More than 71% of Seattle Promise students are students of color, and 46% are first-generation students.
b. Received $5 millions from the City of Seattle as the first endowment fund for Seattle Promise.
c. About 800 Promise Scholars are enrolled at Seattle Colleges in fall 2020; over 650 new Promise Scholars successfully completed virtual Summer Bridge.
d. Fall 2018 to Winter 2019 student retention reached 85%. Fall 2018 to spring 209 retention was 71%,

e. By addressing the services gaps that existed in how the colleges served students, Seattle Colleges provides more consistent and accessible solutions for students. Recent student survey reported high-level (91%) of satisfaction with the Program.

8. Seattle Pathways

Seattle Pathways, a Seattle Colleges branded version of Guided Pathways, was first initiated at South Seattle Colleges and expanded district wide in early 2019 with the goal of enabling students to achieve their academic and career goals by providing students, BIPOC students in particular, with clear and structured academic pathways. It is a broad, district-wide initiative that incorporates several student success efforts including Strategic Equity Enrollment Management, Guided Pathways, and EDI work.

Results

a. Common Areas of Study (AOS) are adopted across three colleges, which are shared by Seattle Public Schools.
b. Associated academic programs are clearly listed under the AOS.
c. Cohort/Intrusive Advising is implemented by AOS.
d. Accelerated English pathways and directed self-placement at all three colleges.
e. A single database to warehouse academic information.
f. An academic program webpage template.
g. Common coding to transfer EPC codes.

   The current district-wide areas of focus are:
   1) Program mapping
   2) Intake and onboarding (eight sub-tactics including first-year experience and align new student orientation)
   3) English
   4) Math
   5) Advising
   6) Starfish
   7) Common codes/data
   8) Professional development

9. Starfish Student Success Solutions

After an extensive investigation of similar technology solutions on the market via an RFP process, Seattle Colleges purchased Starfish to provide improved advising services, communication tools, early alerts, predictive analytics, and other functional support for students and those work directly with students. Implementation began in fall 2018.

Results

a. Starfish is used daily by more than 360 different staff members connected to students to provide advising, tutoring, financial aid appointments, and many other services.
b. In the first 16 months of Starfish use, 53,000 appointments have been scheduled between students and our advising and support services, with 36 percent of these appointments being scheduled by students.

c. Starfish is actively supporting TRIO programs and Seattle Promise operations with student progress surveys, success plans, and notifications.

Lessons Learned

According to the 2019 Assessment Survey results, 61%-94% of the 700 responders expressed moderate to high satisfaction with ASI initiatives and parallel programs. However, it was also clear that many respondents expressed dissatisfaction or concerns either with ASI or with the process of change management. For sure, there were missteps and gaps in communication. Lessons learned include:

1. **Engaging college leadership and union leadership earlier in the process**
   The Board of Trustees had informal and formal discussions with the chancellor about the need to integrate structures and functions within the first few months of the chancellor's appointment. More direct and focused conversations with the college leaders and leadership of labor partners before the initiation of ASI would have helped with a smoother implementation.

2. **Providing clearer and more frequent communication across the district**
   A great deal of messages and updates, including email updates, written reports, meetings and open forums, Q&As, were provided throughout the process, but it is clear that a multicollege system like Seattle Colleges could have benefited from much more redundant communications, particularly on clarifying the scope, the sequence, the timing, and the results of ASI initiatives.

3. **Scheduling more frequent assessment of ASI initiatives to address issues**
   The ASI initiatives were launched in Spring 2017. The comprehensive assessment of ASI was conducted two years later in fall 2019. Scheduling assessment of ASI initiatives right after they complete would help address implementation glitches and respond to employee concerns in a more timely manner.

Looking to the Future

The forces and the speed of change facing colleges and universities have been accelerated by the global pandemic, the economic recession, and the social justice movement.

For Seattle Colleges to be financially sustainable, programmatically relevant, socially responsible, and technologically agile, we must speed up the pace of system integration.

We will need to appreciate the lessons learned from our last three years of ASI work and confront the challenges as a system in order to forge our future together.