bbd BETTER BY **DEGREES**

Regional Higher Education

Consortia: A Review of

Best Practices

November 17, 2008

Draft Report Submitted to the
Western New York Consortium of Higher
Education

by the University at Buffalo Regional Institute
The State University of New York

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I. Executive Summary

To gain a competitive edge in today's knowledge economy, regions are looking to better harness the rich economic potential of their higher education sectors. One approach is to form networks of higher education institutions and public-private sector partnerships to foster a fluid churning of ideas and talent across institutional and sectoral boundaries. To distill effective network and partnership strategies, the Western New York Consortium of Higher Education has commissioned the following best practices assessment of higher education collaborations in seven knowledge regions: Baltimore; Boston; Lancaster County, PA; Akron and Cleveland, OH; Philadelphia; Pittsburgh; and Rochester, NY. For each, the study analyzes and makes recommendations for *Founding Methods and Partnerships, Financial Resources, Governance, and Implementation Tools and Strategies*.

Founding Methods and Partnerships
- While the seven consortia share the mission of strengthening the position of the higher education cluster in the regional economy, the networks have varied histories, with some operating for several decades before pursuing an outreach effort, and others forming recently with the sole purpose of launching marketing campaigns.
- Beyond broad partnerships across academic institutions of all sizes and types, these higher education consortia partner variously with the business community, foundations, government and economic development and tourism organizations.
- All consortia employ in some degree a three-part approach to advance higher education's role in the knowledge economy: attract greater numbers of stronger, more diverse students; engage current students in the region's community and culture; and retain recent graduates by successfully transitioning them into the region's knowledge workforce. This three-pronged approach was designed by the independent consulting firm Collegia, with which five of the seven regions in this study initially contracted to structure a program.
- The attract-engage-retain approach is most effective when customized to a region, and when each of the three focus areas receives separate attention and resources.
- The program should be approached and presented as a truly regional effort, with input and participation from as broad a stakeholder group as possible.

Financial Resources
- Generally, fees collected from participating institutions provide the bulk of financial support for higher education networks, with an enrollment-based sliding scale the most predominant method for determining fees.
- Additional programmatic funding is provided by business sponsors, community foundations, chambers of commerce, tourism organizations and governments.
- Annual budgets range from $100,000 for a small program of nine schools in Lancaster, PA, to $1.5 million for Philadelphia's 21-school program.

Governance

- Governance approaches fall into two categories, depending on mission: pure presidents' councils and mixed boards of directors with community leaders (politicians, foundation heads, and business representatives).
- Subcommittees for admissions, library personnel or financial aid administrators, for example, support executive boards to identify priorities and discuss shared needs.
- A majority of the regions employ full-time staff, though staff sizes vary widely.
- Networks with diverse governance boards that represent a cross-section of schools, different levels of academic officials, and student and community stakeholders are more likely to succeed; this is especially critical in that a key challenge cited by surveyed networks is sustaining partner engagement past the initial stages of the project.

Implementation Tools and Strategies

- Networks invest heavily in marketing and image-building tools to build awareness and positive perceptions of these regions as places to receive a higher education and remain after graduation.
- To strengthen knowledge connections to the private sector, networks often shape academic programs to include opportunities outside the classroom and build awareness among students of internship and career opportunities.
- To build enrollment, engage students and retain graduates, these networks employ a variety of programs and tools, including:
    - Comprehensive, multi-audience Web sites that feature listings of institution and cross-institution programs, campus visitation tools, community and campus events, transportation information, community service opportunities, career resources and housing and post-graduation living information
    - Complementing a virtual presence, printed information and marketing materials on schools and regional assets
    - Educational enrichment initiatives, including cross-institution registration programs (and related transportation services), career-building services such as networking, and internship, employment and volunteer opportunities
    - Programmatic highlights, including a student shuttle in Baltimore, cultural events in Lancaster, and a kick-off music and art festival in Philadelphia

Recommendations

Based on this assessment of seven higher education collaborations in knowledge regions, the following recommendations are offered to the Western New York Consortium of Higher Education:

Founding Methods and Partnerships

- Clearly define the consortium's goals and mission at the outset, before structuring strategies and implementation programs.
- Formulate mission with buy-in from a cross-section of higher education institutions and students, and, depending upon goals, public and private sector partners.
- Build the mission into a regional higher education branding strategy.

Financial Resources
- Establish an enrollment-based fee system to fund the consortium, with fees based on institution enrollment to encourage broad participation.
- Secure additional funding from private sector, foundation and government partners.

Governance
- Ensure that existing working group has representation from each higher education sector (public, private, two-year, four-year, Catholic, etc.) to set strategic goals and execute initiatives; consider adding private and public sector partners to group once the consortium establishes a track record of success.
- Support for a paid coordinator to assist in establishment of priorities and manage day-to-day initiatives, such as Web site build-out, research priorities, development of intra-consortium networks and programs, development of relationships with business and economic development leaders, and managing marketing and promotional materials.
- In support of working group, establish subcommittees representing specific interests such as financial aid, marketing and admissions to deliberate, recommend and implement consortium-wide programming and initiatives.
- Arrange for periodic meetings of college and university presidents to guide long-term strategy.

Implementation Tools and Strategies
- Develop a Web site to enhance implementation of the consortium's mission and approach; developed in stages, ultimate Web presence could be comprehensive and tailored to diverse audiences (students, parents, guidance counselors, employers), with dynamic tools for accessing information on academic programs, regional assets, services and employment.
- Produce supporting marketing materials, including an e-newsletter and brochure, to promote Western New York as a place to attend college, recreate and build careers, and raise a family.

II. Background

There is a nationwide impetus, especially in larger metropolitan areas, to become more competitive in an economy fueled increasingly by ideas, knowledge and talent. In this growing knowledge economy, universities and other academic universities and colleges together form an economic powerhouse, pumping dollars directly into the economy and transferring cutting edge knowledge and talent to the private sector.[1]

Regions across the U.S. are undertaking diverse approaches to harness the resources of the "ivory tower" for economic vigor. Among these is the formation of alliances of higher education institutions and related public and private sector entities to facilitate a rich and fluid turnover of knowledge across institutions, sectors, borders and distances. These networks build strong marketing and outreach programs to draw high-performing students to the region, engage them in the surrounding community, and then transition graduates into the region's knowledge workforce.

To advance higher education in this region, the Western New York Consortium of Higher Education, representing 22 colleges and universities in Erie, Niagara, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Allegany and Genesee Counties, has commissioned the following best practices assessment of higher education collaborations in seven knowledge regions: Baltimore; Boston; Lancaster County, PA; Akron and Cleveland, OH; Philadelphia; Pittsburgh; and Rochester, NY. The study analyzes and distills findings and recommendations across the consortia, highlighting their *Founding Method and Partnerships, Financial Resources, Governance* and *Implementation Tools and Strategies*.

The best practices review is part of Better by Degrees, a major initiative of the consortium to build understanding of higher education in the region and assess opportunities to tap the sector's economic potential. The Regional Institute, a research and public policy unit of the University at Buffalo, is managing the project, which also includes a comparative analysis of higher education in peer knowledge regions, an industry impact assessment, and a match-gap analysis of higher education's supply of programs and graduates to the region's workforce needs.

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[1] Luger M. and Goldstein H. (1997), "What is the Role of Public Universities in Regional Economic Development?" in Bingham R. and Mier R. (eds.) *Dilemmas of Urban Economic Development. Issues in Theory and Practice*, Sage Publications: London.

III. Regional Higher Education Consortium Profiles

BALTIMORE COLLEGETOWN NETWORK
(BaltimoreCollegetown.Org)

Mission
Enhance academic and social lives of students; attract students, faculty and staff; expand professional development opportunities; facilitate resource sharing; promote economic impact of higher education; enhance higher education's regional and national visibility; advocate for Baltimore higher education; engage in community service.

Partnerships
+ 16 colleges and universities

+ 7 foundations and corporate partners provide funding and project assistance

History
Founded in 1995, the group has evolved from a loose peer-networking group to a highly organized marketing, public policy and development body.

Governance and Funding
Governance board of college administrators meets five times a year with support from three full-time employees; subcommittees include public relations and transportation. Sixteen member schools contribute equally to $350,000 annual budget. Seven participating schools contribute $400,000 for shuttle.

Challenges and Successes
+ *Transportation:* The shuttle system, with 75,000 riders in 2007, has become a national model.

- *Partnership building:* The group is trying to bolster corporate partnerships, which have been hampered by general lack of interaction between these sectors.

- *Student attraction and retention*: Combating a negative image of Baltimore's urban core among regional residents and building national awareness of Baltimore as a place for higher education remain challenges.

http://baltimorecollegetown.org
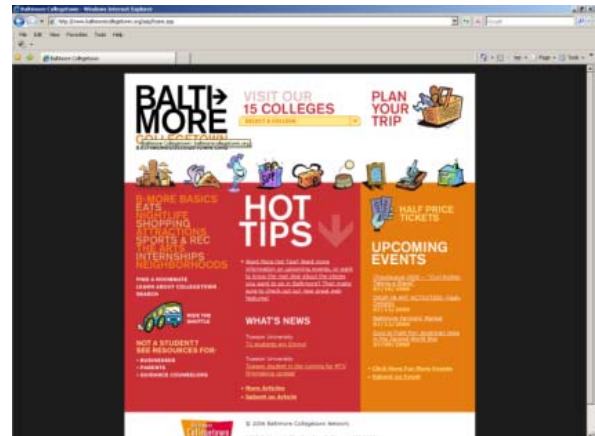
Implementing Tools and Strategies
Attract

Web site features "plan-a-visit" information with excursions and itinerary building; list of college visit days and school profiles; print materials, including magazine, sent to prospective students, parents and guidance counselors.
Engage

Web site features internship resources (for business and students) and links to dining, shopping and nightlife; cultural attraction discounts; Collegetown Shuttle; Baltimore Student Exchange Program enables cross-registration at member schools for up to two courses per year.

Retain

Single employment database planned

For more information:
Kristen Campbell, Executive Director
Baltimore Collegetown Network
1002 Dulaney Valley Road; Baltimore, MD 21204
Phone: (410) 828-5733; E-mail: bcn@goucher.edu

BOSTON: AMERICA'S COLLEGE TOWN
(BostonVisit.Com)

Mission

Simplify and enhance campus visitation to Boston area institutions to attract competitive students and maximize the economic role of higher education.

Partnerships

+ 19 colleges and universities

+ Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau

+ Collegia

History

Formed in 1995 with funding from Boston visitor's bureau; first college partnership for Collegia; originally focused on the three-part approach, but has evolved to a more attraction-centered effort. Resources have been dedicated to attracting students of color and international students through targeted outreach.

Governance and Funding

Collegia serves as project manager in place of governance board or staff; Web site and ongoing projects are funded by the partner institutions and a grant from the Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau. Recent international student outreach based on partnership with nonprofit Mass Insight Corp.

Challenges and Successes

+ *Model program:* Initial outreach program has become the model for similar programs in many other areas.

- *Student attraction and retention:* Increased competition from other U.S. and international regions eroding Boston's status as "America's College Town."

- *Partnership-building:* Coordinating "retain" portion of the mission is challenged by lack of cooperation among career services offices of participating schools.

http://bostonvisit.com/

Implementing Tools and Strategies

Attract

Web features "plan-a-visit" resources with maps, directions, quick tips/resources, school profiles, financial aid info; print materials including *Campus Visit* magazine; focused outreach to attract international and minority students.

Engage

"Experience Boston" section on Web site with half-day excursions, profiles of "student zones" and student discounts.

Retain

Effort in development.

For more information:

Todd Hoffman, Collegia President
18 Grove Street; Wellesley, MA 02482
Phone: (781) 431-7755
E-mail: thoffman@collegia.com

LANCASTER COUNTY HIGHER EDUCATION WORKING GROUP
(CampusCentral.Org)

Mission

Work collaboratively to encourage student interaction and engagement with the Lancaster community to lay groundwork for student retention post-graduation.

Partnerships

+ 9 colleges and universities

+ 4 community sponsors

+ Collegia (*no longer contracted)*

History

Working group and outreach program both began in 2005 as a gathering of college presidents who were inspired by the Campus Philly project, launching a Web site in partnership with Collegia. The group recently decided not to renew its relationship with Collegia and has hired a local Web company to maintain their site.

Governance and Funding

Governance board of school presidents meets quarterly; supported by full-time executive director; enrollment-based member fees and community sponsors support $100,000 budget.

Challenges and Successes

+ *Student events*: Events sponsored through community partnerships, including First Fridays at area galleries, have become highly popular with students.

- *Leadership:* With a new director every year, organization has been challenged to find a consistent organizational structure that works.

- *Student retention:* Students perceive a dearth of job opportunities in the region, with competition including such major markets as New York, Philadelphia and Washington DC.

http://campuscentral.org

Implementing Tools and Strategies

Attract

Web features links to schools, lodging, travel and attraction information for planning campus visits.

Engage

Vast online listings of entertainment, dining, shopping; student discounts to regional attractions; community partnerships to sponsor small events, including First Fridays, where more than 60 art galleries and shops in downtown Lancaster offer students free admission and extended hours .

Retain

"Choose Lancaster" section on Web site with regional data and links to employment listings.

For more information:
Allison Strauss, Director, Campus Central
P.O. Box 3003; Lancaster, PA 17604
Phone: (717) 291-3889; E-mail:
fstrauss@fandm.edu

NORTHEASTERN OHIO COUNCIL ON HIGHER EDUCATION (College360.Org)
Akron and Cleveland, OH

Mission
NOCHE: Leverage member institution assets for the regional economy; support projects that build professional development and community outreach for member schools; facilitate research and technology transfer in region.
College360: Increase the region's supply of college-educated workers by defining a series of messages and implementing activities that brand Northeast Ohio as a premier destination for "learning, living and working."

Partnerships
NOCHE

+ 26 colleges and universities

+ 29 corporate and foundation funding partners

College360

+ 15 colleges and universities

+ Foundations and corporations

+ Collegia *(no longer contracted)*

History
NOCHE was founded in 1951 as an academic consortium for Cuyahoga County; group's geographic scope expanded to 13 counties in 1995. NOCHE joined with Collegia and other regional partners to launch the College360 outreach effort in 2005; College360 is a four-year, $5 million effort supported by NOCHE, participating schools and regional partners.

Governance and Funding
NOCHE board membership includes 26 presidents and 25 elected public trustees providing insight on key regional issues; NOCHE supported by six full-time staff, with Collegia overseeing College360; enrollment-based membership fees support NOCHE's budget, with nearly half of annual funds provided by 29 foundations and corporations.

Challenges and Successes
+ *Private sector partnerships*: NOCHE considers itself one of few groups that successfully fosters dialogue between the higher education and business communities, leading to improved academic programming and student opportunities outside the classroom.

- *Governance*: Quarterly presidents' meetings are vital but difficult to coordinate.

http://college360.org; http://noche.org

Implementing Tools and Strategies
Attract

College360 features "plan-a-visit" information, guide to area colleges and *Campus Visit* magazine; NOCHE's College Caravan program sends admissions reps to area high schools.

Engage

College360 "play" and "explore" sections feature events calendars, student discounts, NEO Student Zones, community service opportunities.

Retain

NOCHE offers internship service for students and businesses through ClevelandIntern.com with position listings, application administration, professional development resources and links for parents, students and employers; produces F*act Book* on regional impact of higher education.

For more information:
Kacie Beck, NOCHE Office Manager; 1422 Euclid Avenue, Suite 840; Cleveland, OH 44115
Phone: (216) 420-9200
E-mail: kbeck@noche.org

CAMPUS PHILLY (CampusPhilly.Com and OneBigCampus.Com)

Mission

Through partnerships with the region's higher education, business, government and civic leaders, maximize the connections between colleges, students, business, and community to leverage the economic potential of higher education in the region.

Partnerships

+ 21 colleges and universities
+ 5 foundation and corporate funders and dozens of other regional partners
+ Collegia

History

Campus Philly represents the merger of several programs launched in the past decade to address the challenge of attracting and retaining top college students and young professionals. In 2003, as part of the Knowledge Industry Partnership, partner organizations developed pieces of a collaborative approach to student recruitment, engagement and retention. The Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corp. and Collegia promoted the region as "one big campus" for expanded enrollment; the City Commerce Department and Campus Philly worked to engage students in the local community; Innovation Philadelphia sought to connect students to internships and job opportunities.

Governance and Funding

Eight-member governance board includes school administrators and community leaders; two full-time staff and several paid student assistants support organization. The total annual budget is about $1.5 million, supported by graduated fee scale for partner schools based on enrollment ($7,500, $15,000 $25,000 and $50,000). The group receives additional funding from five foundations and corporations.

Challenges and Successes

+ *Annual Campus Philly Kick-Off*: Continued support for the growth of the program is considered another success.

- *Engagement:* From schools at the initial stage to business community throughout, sustained involvement in the project is a major challenge.

- *Student attraction and retention:* Students perceive a lack of activity in Philadelphia compared to other major cities; safety is also a concern.

http://campusphilly.org;
http://onebigcampus.org

Implementing Tools and Strategies

Attract

OneBigCampus.Com features college profiles, "on-line advisor," downloadable brochures, graduate and international student portals, and trip-planning resources; *Campus Visit* magazine broadly distributed.

Engage

Campus Philly Kick-Off festival; Web sites feature links to entertainment; student discounts; "Click" e-newsletter for students lists social activities; Campus Philly hosts online internship fair.

Retain

"Click" e-newsletter for alumni and graduate students lists career opportunities; "Philly Careers" section on CampusPhilly includes resources, networking events calendar, regional industry information and employment listings.

For more information:

Jonathan Grabelle Herrmann, Executive Director; 1515 Market Street, Suite 830; Philadelphia, PA 19102; Phone: (215) 988-1707; E-mail: jon@campusphilly.org

PITTSBURGH COUNCIL ON HIGHER EDUCATION (TheCollegeCity.Com)

Mission

Share resources and information, engage in joint projects, and advocate for members on shared issues; priority is betterment of students and staff, with focus on professional development and growth.

Partnerships

PCHE

+ 10 schools, by invitation

TheCollegeCity.Com

+ 13 colleges and universities

+ Pittsburgh Regional Alliance

+ Collegia *(no longer contracted)*

History

Founded in 1966 by presidents of Pittsburgh area colleges as a volunteer consortium; PCHE partnered with the Pittsburgh Regional Alliance and Collegia to launch The College City project in 2002.

Governance and Funding

The 10 PCHE schools pay dues based on enrollment; College City Web site funded by 13 schools and Pittsburgh Regional Alliance; PCHE presidents' board meets quarterly; regular meetings hosted for specific academic officials or special projects.

Challenges and Successes

+ *Student engagement:* Cross-registration program is noted as hallmark of the organization.

+ *Academic representation:* PCHE membership is diverse, including large state university and highly technical schools for the arts, as well as religious and single-sex institutions.

http://thecollegecity.com
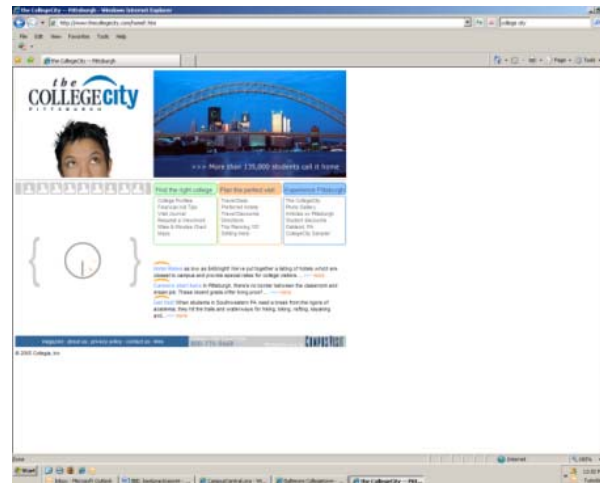
Implementing Tools and Strategies

Attract

Web site features "Plan the Perfect Visit" section, downloadable *Visit Journal*, college profiles, form to request college viewbooks, financial aid tips; *Campus Visit* magazine distributed broadly; PCHE Web site features degree finder.

Engage

CollegeCity.Com features entertainment links and information on student discount and half-day trips; PCHE provides cross-registration across PCHE member institutions; Web site offers cross-registration tools.

For more information:
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201 Wood Street, #647
Pittsburgh, PA 15222-1912
Phone: (412) 392-4217
E-mail: jburley@pointpark.edu

ROCHESTER AREA COLLEGES (Biz2Edu.Com)

Mission

To foster collective growth of educational opportunities in the Rochester area.

Partnerships

+ 22 colleges and universities

+ City of Rochester, Monroe County, Rochester Business Alliance and Greater Rochester Enterprise

History

RAC was established in 1970 by presidents of Rochester regional colleges. The Biz2Edu Web site project launched in 2006 after about a year of coordinating with business community and funding partners.

Governance and Funding

Presidents' governing board meets quarterly; staff support is wholly volunteer-based. Funding provided through governmental development grants, both state and federal. The Biz2Edu project initially garnered about $95,000 in funding, $50,000 from a senator and the rest in smaller increments from state assemblymembers.

Challenges and Successes

+ *Founding methods:* The broad support secured to develop, launch and now maintain and grow the Biz2Edu Web site is indicative of the range of community buy-in for the initiative.

- *Support:* RAC exists more as a virtual organization (although the presidents meet quarterly); volunteer support provided by member schools is not sufficient.

http://thecollegecity.com
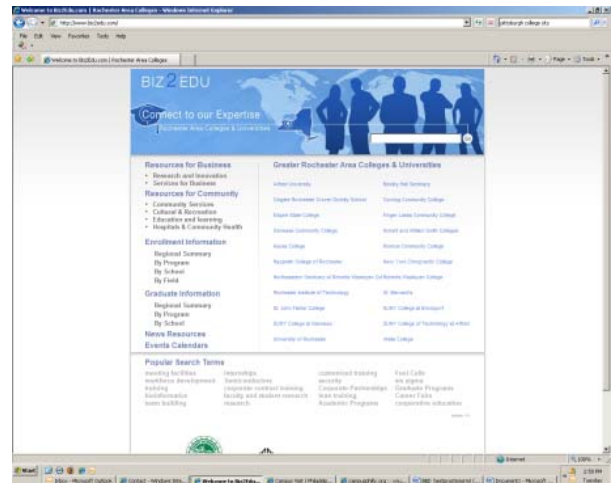
Implementing Tools and Strategies

Retain

Web site is business-directed, with links to co-op and internship programs, academic research expertise, available patents and technology, university start-up companies, business incubators and customized training; site features data profiles on graduates and enrollment; community recourses include community learning opportunities, education and government services, student volunteers, lecture series, libraries and recreational facilities.

For more information:
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IV. Review of Findings

A. Founding Methods and Partnerships

While sharing in the broad mission to strengthen higher education and its role in the regional economy, the seven consortia reviewed in this analysis have varied histories. Several groups – with some in operation for several decades – are guided by broad missions and have recently begun to pursue separate outreach and promotion efforts (Northeastern Ohio, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia and Rochester). Other consortia have convened with the single purpose of launching collaborative marketing campaigns (Baltimore, Boston, Lancaster County, PA).

The consortia vary in terms of rates of participation among regional schools. Northeastern Ohio's program enjoys an extremely high rate of participation—26 of the region's 28 schools partner in the outreach program, with the remaining two engaged without direct membership. Baltimore, Lancaster and Rochester all enjoy similar rates of participation. A smaller proportion of schools in the Philadelphia and Boston region engage in such efforts, with only about 20 out of 80 schools in each region participating in the respective consortium. These higher education networks also have forged partnerships with corporations, foundations, tourism and economic development entities, and multiple levels of government.

> **Commentary and Advice:**
>
> Give each of the three areas separate focus and resources. The greatest success comes out of a full, three-pronged approach.
>   ~ *Director, Collegia*

Each network bases its strategy on the three-pronged, "attract-engage-retain" Collegia method, with each of the three focus areas emphasized to different degrees by the consortia. The three-part method emphasizes expanding the region's student population through promotion efforts, engaging that population with the community to establish meaningful ties to the region, and working deliberately to place recent graduates in the regional workforce **(Figure 1)**. Five of the seven areas studied initiated their marketing efforts through a partnership with Collegia, a private consulting firm specializing in "connecting colleges and communities."[2] Some regions have followed aspects of this three-part method but did not partner with Collegia (Baltimore and Rochester) **(Figure 2)**.

Some of the consortia began with equal emphasis on all three approaches, but gradually focused on one or two areas according to the

Attract	Engage	Retain
Encourage greater enrollment, including students from outside the region, through reputation building and positive campus visit experiences for students and parents. **Key:** Market region as a higher education destination.	Move students from the campus into the community through entertainment, culture, sports and career opportunities to foster meaningful ties to the area. **Key:** Lay groundwork for graduate retention.	Connect students and recent graduates with the business community for career placement and to fill gaps in the knowledge workforce. **Key:** Convince young, educated population to remain after graduation.

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[2] Only two of those five regions (Boston and Philadelphia) remain in contract as of July 2008.

mission and goals of the organization. For instance, Boston's primary focus is on attracting students to the region by marketing enhanced campus visits for parents and students, with this consortia's primary partner the Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau. Lancaster, on the other hand, through CampusCentral.org, emphasizes student-community interaction as a foundation for retaining graduates.

Figure 2   Overview of Consortia Founding Strategies

Higher Education Network	*History*	*Mission*	*Partnerships*	*Focus Areas*
Baltimore Collegetown BaltimoreCollegetown. Org	Founded in 1995 as loose peer network for local administrators; evolved to highly organized marketing, public policy and development body	Enhance academics, attract students, provide professional development, share resources, promote economic impact of higher education and provide community service	*16 schools; seven foundations and corporate partners*	*Attract, Engage*
Boston: America's College Town BostonVisit.Com	Initiated in 1995 as partnership between Collegia and 19 institutions (Collegia's first such program)	Streamline and improve the experience of campus visits to attract top students and maximize economic benefits of higher education in the region	*19 schools; visitor's bureau; Collegia (contract ongoing)*	*Attract, Engage*
Lancaster County Higher Education Working Group and **CampusCentral.Org**	Working group of college presidents formed in 2005 to launch outreach program (CampusCentral) with Collegia	Encourage student interaction with Lancaster community; promote region as prime post-college destination	*Nine schools, with four community partners; Collegia*	*Engage*
Northeastern Ohio Council on Higher Education (NOCHE) and **College360.Org** (Akron/Cleveland, OH)	Founded in 1951 as academic consortium; contracted with Collegia in 2003 to launch promotion and outreach efforts	Public policy advocacy, information-sharing, joint project coordination, research funding and technology transfer	*NOCHE: 26 schools; 29 community partners; College360: 15 schools, community partners, Collegia (no longer contracted)*	*Attract, Engage, Retain*
Campus Philly CampusPhilly.Com and OneBigCampus.Com	KIP began in late 1990s as education leaders convened to discuss role of higher education; In 2003, KIP, tourism, marketing, public sector leaders and Collegia initiated Campus Philly	Maximize the connections between colleges, students, business, and communities to leverage the economic potential of higher education in the region	*21 schools; five foundations and corporations; Collegia (contract ongoing)*	*Attract, Engage, Retain*
Pittsburgh Council on Higher Education (PCHE) and **TheCollegeCity.Com**	Founded in 1966 by Pittsburgh area college presidents; PCHE engaged Collegia and regional partners to launch College City effort in 2002	Work for betterment of students and staff by sharing resources, partnering on projects and representing mutual interests of member institutions	*PCHE: 10 schools; College City: 13 schools, Pittsburgh Regional Alliance, PCHE and Collegia (contract ongoing)*	*Attract, Engage*
Rochester Area Colleges (RAC) and **Biz2Edu.Com**	Regional college presidents established RAC in 1970; Biz2Edu Web site launched in 2006 to engage business community	Foster collective growth of educational opportunities in Rochester area	*22 schools, with broad industry and public sector partnerships; state, federal support*	*Retain*

B. Financial Resources

With extensive Web sites, publications, research and information maintenance, and in some cases paid administrative staff, establishing a sustainable base of funding is critical to the effectiveness of these higher education consortia. Budgets for networks reviewed in this study range from $100,000 in Lancaster, a small program joining nine schools, to $1.5 million for Philadelphia, which works with 21 schools, supports a paid staff and sponsors a major event[3] (**Figure 3**).

Commentary and Advice:

A budget of $250,000-$500,000 is typically required to effectively implement the three-pronged attract-engage-retain approach.

~ Director, Collegia

For all but one of the regions studied (Rochester), membership fees paid by participating schools constitute the largest share of consortia budgets. Four networks determine fees by a sliding-scale system based on student enrollment (Lancaster, Northeastern Ohio, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh).[4] Baltimore levies a flat fee for participating schools, while schools using the student transportation service are charged an additional fee. All but one region studied (Pittsburgh) receives at least part of its funding from grants by government, corporate sponsors, foundations, regional economic organizations or other contributors. In fact, these partners contribute half of the budget in Northeastern Ohio and are the only source of Rochester's funding.

Figure 3 Summary of Consortia Financial Support

Higher Education Network	Budget	Membership fees	Other funding sources
Baltimore Collegetown BaltimoreCollegetown.Org	$350,000 for staff, operations; $400,000 for shuttle	Flat fee for 16 member schools; student shuttle supported by seven participating schools	Seven foundations and corporate partners provide project-specific support
Boston: America's College Town BostonVisit.Com	NA	19 schools support Web site through flat fee paid to Collegia	Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau
Lancaster County Higher Education Working Group and **CampusCentral.Org**	$100,000	Nine schools pay dues on enrollment-based sliding-scale	Four community sponsors
Northeastern Ohio Council on Higher Education (NOCHE) and **College360.Org** (Akron/Cleveland, OH)	$500,000	26 schools pay dues on enrollment-based sliding-scale	29 community partners fund half of NOCHE budget; College360 is a four-year, $5 million effort supported by NOCHE, schools and regional partners
Campus Philly CampusPhilly.Com and OneBigCampus.Com	$1.5 million	21 schools pay dues on sliding-scale based on enrollment	Five foundations and corporations
Pittsburgh Council on Higher Education (PCHE) and **TheCollegeCity.Com**	NA	10 schools pay enrollment-based dues to PCHE	College City Web site funded by 13 schools and Pittsburgh Regional Alliance
Rochester Area Colleges (RAC) and **Biz2Edu.Com**	$95,000 grant to build site; $50,000 for year two	None	Business, local/state government provided start-up and year-two grants

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[3] Two consortia in Boston and Pittsburgh did not provide annual budget information.

[4] Philadelphia formerly used a flat-rate system, but directors found that this method generated insufficient funding. After the sliding-fee scale was introduced, a number of schools left the organization entirely.

C. Governance

The consortia's approaches to governance fall into two categories: pure presidents' councils (Baltimore, Lancaster, Pittsburgh and Rochester) and mixed boards of directors that include community and business leaders (Northeastern Ohio and Philadelphia) (**Figure 4**).   Several consortia also convene subcommittees for special groups (chief financial officers, financial aid administrators) or projects (transportation, marketing and public relations). Boston's effort is overseen by Collegia, which is under contract with participating schools, in partnership with the visitor's bureau; there is no governance board or staff for this effort.

Consortia governing boards vary in size. Northeastern Ohio's 51-member board includes presidents of all 26 member schools and 25 community representatives. By contrast, Campus Philly, the largest higher education network by budget size, is steered by an eight-person board of directors, three of which are community representatives. The presidents of all consortium-member schools in Baltimore, Rochester and Lancaster sit on the respective governing boards.

Generally, consortia governing boards convene on a quarterly basis, with subcommittees for special groups or projects meeting separately. E-mail communications between meetings help keep board members up-to-date.

Consortia with mixed boards point to enhanced collaboration between business and education, two sectors that often struggle to communicate. For instance, the Northeastern Ohio Council on Higher Education cites its cross-sector representation as one of its greatest successes, with each sector able to more effectively respond to the needs of the other. Campus Philly's organization embodies, and relies upon, partnerships across the region's higher education, business and government sectors, as well as civic leaders.

> **Commentary and Advice:**
>
> Cooperation across schools is enhanced by a board representing all levels of academia; engaging the business community is critical, but can be a challenge for college administrators, who often do not have much interaction with this sector.
> *~ Director, Baltimore Collegetown*
>
> It can be difficult to gather college presidents; arranging speakers and other compelling programs can boost attendance at quarterly meetings; contacts with administrators' senior staff can help move forward goals in timely manner.   *~ NOCHE Staff*
>
> Sustaining involvement of schools and business partners past initial stages of the project is a key challenge; engage all stakeholders, including students, in the planning phase.
> *~ Director, Campus Philly*
>
> In order for a program to be successful, one school cannot be seen as the driver.
> *~ Director, Collegia*

Even pure presidents' councils engage community and business leaders in strategic development, however. For instance, the Rochester consortium's strong ties with the business community, especially economic development agencies, helped to plan, fund and implement its Biz2Edu Web site. Baltimore responded to the needs of the business community by adding employment and internship listings to its Collegetown Web site. At the same time, some consortia leaders cite college administrators' general lack of interaction with the business community as a challenge in establishing strong partnerships with this sector.

All consortia reviewed for this study have some form of ongoing staff support dedicated to administration and program management, including Web site maintenance, development and production of marketing materials and other coordination of other services. Five networks directly employ staff, while Collegia, under contract with Boston schools, manages the America's College Town Web site. Rochester schools volunteer staff to maintain Biz2Edu, though this has been cited as inadequate. These findings suggest that a dedicated staff—even if small—is essential to growing a sustainable outreach program.

Figure 4   Summary of Consortia Governance

Higher Education Network	Governance Board	Staff	Notes
Baltimore Collegetown BaltimoreCollegetown.Org	Board of one VP or higher from each institution (appointed by president for three-year term); meets five times per year; subcommittees meet separately on joint projects	Three full-time employees	College presidents meet once a year to provide strategic direction to board
Boston: America's College Town BostonVisit.Com	No governing board; Collegia under contract to manage and maintain Web site		Effort was initiated by Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau to focus on attracting students to Boston colleges
Lancaster County Higher Education Working Group and **CampusCentral.Org**	Presidents' board meets quarterly; regular meetings hosted for specific academic officials or special projects.	One full-time executive director for CampusCentral	
Northeastern Ohio Council on Higher Education (NOCHE) and **College360.Org** (Akron/Cleveland, OH)	Board includes 26 member presidents and 25 public trustees representing business community; meets quarterly	Six full-time employees (exec. dir., two program managers, development director, office manager, program assistant)	Meetings feature guest speakers; executive committee and other ad hoc groups meet regularly
Campus Philly CampusPhilly.Com and OneBigCampus.Com	Campus Philly's eight-member board includes school administrators and community leaders	Campus Philly employs two full-time staff with many assistants, including paid students	Engagement of business and community leaders represented in launch of Campus Philly
Pittsburgh Council on Higher Education (PCHE) and **TheCollegeCity.Com**	Presidents' board meets quarterly; regular meetings hosted for specific academic officials or special projects.	Staff employed by PCHE	
Rochester Area Colleges (RAC) and **Biz2Edu.Com**	Presidents' board meets quarterly; regular meetings hosted for specific academic officials or special projects.	None; some staff support volunteered by colleges	Project leader notes challenges in organization and achieving goals due to volunteer-based program

D. Implementation Tools and Strategies

To effectively implement the attract-engage-retain approach, the consortia employ a range of strategies and tools. Strategies to attract students include promoting the schools' academic strengths and diversity of offerings, and providing resources to encourage and enhance campus visits. Cross-registration programs, community events, centralized activity listings and transportation services are applied to engage students. Retain tools include employment listings, streamlined career services, career building resources and connections to the business community.

In terms of scope, Philadelphia employs the broadest array of implementation tools and strategies, including a comprehensive, multi-audience Web site, an annual music and arts festival, an e-newsletter and printed outreach publications. On the other end of the spectrum, Rochester maintains a Web site limited to connecting the business community with academic resources. Regardless of budget size or focus area, each effort has as its centerpiece a Web site that centralizes access to information about higher education in the region. These sites serve as an information hub for audiences including prospective students, parents, guidance counselors, current students, recent graduates, businesses and the community at large. The following more closely reviews the higher education networks' approaches to attracting, engaging and retaining students.

Attract. "Attract" efforts are geared to prospective students, parents and guidance counselors, with all but two higher education networks (Rochester and Lancaster) including this focus area in their approach (**Figure 6**). Key to drawing prospective students – and appealing to parents and guidance counselors – is providing convenient, centralized access to information on educational opportunities as well as resources to plan campus visits. For instance, several Web sites include school profiles, dynamic search tools for degree offerings, downloadable materials and brochure and information request forms. Information on campus visitation schedules, admission office contacts, transportation, lodging, entertainment and itinerary planning are also provided. The goal is to ensure students and their parents have a convenient, full campus visit experience that includes broad exposure to the region's higher education offerings and quality-of-life amenities. To increase Web traffic and enhance student attraction efforts, most regions (all but Rochester) produce printed promotional materials. Those regions that have contracted with Collegia distribute a *Campus Visit* magazine with college profiles, extensive travel information and highlights of regional attractions. Baltimore Collegetown has a variety of branded materials that are sent to students and parents upon request or with application packets.

> **Key Challenges:**
>
> Negative impressions of the urban core and the lack of a national image of Baltimore as a college town challenge efforts to attract students.
> *~ Director, Baltimore Collegetown*
>
> Attempts to engage Philadelphia-area students in the broader community must combat student perceptions that the city "lacks excitement" and is unsafe.
> *~ Director of Policy and Development, Campus Philly*

Engage. Facilitating diverse, fulfilling off-campus experiences that establish meaningful student ties to the community can lay the groundwork for graduate retention. Efforts to engage students with the surrounding community range from promoting dining, shopping, cultural and nightlife amenities to

connecting students to community service and career-building opportunities. Specifically, consortia Web sites feature events calendars, regional excursion planning tools, transportation information, and listings and links for volunteer, community service and internship opportunities. Some regions, including Philadelphia, Baltimore and Northeastern Ohio, distribute e-newsletters with information on key regional happenings. Many consortia partner with regional attractions to offer student discounts. Baltimore's and Pittsburgh's cross-registration programs allow students to experience other colleges and universities in the region by enrolling in courses not offered at their own institution.

Direct event sponsorship is a strategy employed by some regions. The Campus Philly Kick-Off, the largest such event, includes a music festival, arts, cultural and sporting events, and a community table fair. Lancaster attempted a similar event in its first year, but determined the investment was not worthwhile, and has since scaled back to smaller events. Its First Friday series – in which downtown art galleries open their doors for free to college students on the first Friday of each month and also provide cocktails, food and music – has been a success, with gallery owners noticing a significant increase in student attendance since the series began. Baltimore is the only region that has coordinated a transportation system to allow students to explore the area. Seven schools participate in a student shuttle that links outlying campuses with the revived downtown district. This is considered one of the greatest successes of that organization, with annual ridership growing to 75,000 in 2007. The shuttle system also supports Baltimore's cross-registration program by transporting students between campuses.

Retain. Though a focus area for only three of the higher education consortia reviewed in this study, graduate retention can be a measure of the cumulative success of the attract-engage-retain approach. Effectively transitioning graduates into the regional workforce requires communication between business and education. The consortia accomplish this by providing students with convenient, comprehensive access to employment listings and post-graduate living information, while linking businesses to the full range of academic resources, including graduate placement, technology development and research areas. Perhaps the most sophisticated "retain" tool is featured on Campus Philly's Web site: the "Philly Careers" section is tailored for student, business and university users. Businesses can search for talent or view tips for designing an internship program, while students can access advice to build professional skills and their resume, view a calendar of networking events, learn about regional industries, and search for employment opportunities. Rochester's Biz2Edu Web site is oriented toward businesses, with links to university and college resources such as new graduates, campus recruiting, research centers, business incubators, customized training and career placement offices. Other resources offered by the consortia include profiles of regional neighborhoods and cost-of-living and salary information.

V. Recommendations

The Western New York Consortium of Higher Education has established a strong platform for success since convening in 1967 to discuss and act upon shared challenges. However, in light of this review of consortia in other thriving knowledge regions, Western New York's network has the potential to do more for higher education and the regional economy. The following recommendations reflect findings of this best practices report and analysis in the context of the consortium's mission and goals, as well as the focus of Western New York's leadership on advancing higher education in the regional economy.

A. Founding Methods and Partnerships

- *Clearly define the consortium's goals and mission at the outset, before structuring strategies and implementation programs; evaluate whether the consortium will focus on all or parts of the attract-engage-retain approach.*
- *Formulate mission with buy-in from a cross-section of higher education institutions and students, as well as public and private sector partners if relevant to goals and mission.*
- *Build the consortium's mission into regional higher education branding and economic development strategies that engage a broad range of community partnerships, if applicable.*

Directors of the higher education networks reviewed in this study almost uniformly advise that the first priority in organizing a collaborative outreach effort is to set the goals and mission of the program with broad input from stakeholders ranging from students to community leaders. Programs and strategies should then be developed in accordance with these goals. The consortium should evaluate whether it will take on the entire attract-engage-retain approach given resource availability; a phased, multi-year initiative may prove effective in addressing all three components with appropriate attention and resources.   While business-education partnerships may take time to establish, this should be given attention, especially if the Western New York consortium is to make "retain" a focus area. Given the focus of economic development efforts in Western New York on maximizing higher education's potential, aligning the consortium's strategy with a regional brand and economic strategy may further build buy-in and support for the program while enhancing its effectiveness over the long-term.

B. Financial Resources

- *Establish an enrollment-based fee system to fund the consortium, with fees determined based on institution enrollment to encourage broad participation.*
- *Secure additional funding from private sector, foundation and government partners.*

Sustaining a higher education consortium with outreach programming requires a substantial budget and reliable, ongoing funding sources. Consortia representatives cite the sliding-scale fee system as the most effective in generating a steady resource base while allowing for the broadest range of school participation. Given the range of schools involved in the Western New York consortium and the considerable programmatic needs that will be required to establish and sustain a successful outreach program, an enrollment-based fee system would be optimal as a major source of funding. Not one of

the regions studied sustains itself on fees alone, however. Foundation, government and private sector grants are critical to support the ambitious programming and outreach associated with an attract-engage-retain approach, especially during the start-up phase of the effort.

C. Governance

- *Ensure existing working group has proper representation from each higher education sector (public, private, two-year, four-year, Catholic, etc.) to set strategic goals and execute initiatives; consider adding private and public sector partners to working group once the consortium establishes a track record of success in its outreach effort.*
- *Support a paid coordinator to assist in the establishment of priorities and manage day-to-day initiatives, such as Web site build-out, research priorities, development of intra-consortium networks and programs, development of relationships with business and economic development leaders, and managing marketing efforts and promotional materials.*
- *Establish subcommittees representing specific interests such as financial aid, marketing and academics to deliberate, recommend and implement consortium-wide programming and initiatives.*
- *Arrange for periodic meetings of college and university presidents to guide long-term strategy.*

The Western New York consortium has established a foundation of success with its governing board of member-school presidents, as well as its working group on this initiative. If the Western New York consortium intends to strengthen ties to the business, economic development and tourism sectors, the working group could expand to include representatives of these sectors as the outreach effort moves forward. Quarterly meetings to set strategy should be sufficient, with subcommittees and task groups assisting in identifying specific challenges and directing projects.

With all but one higher education network operating with dedicated staff support, and the other noting significant difficulty in relying solely on volunteers, it is highly recommended that the consortium support a small full-time staff, especially for the initial development and launch of the effort. Dedicated staff will continue to be important for consortium administration, including maintaining the Web site, developing promotional materials, building cross-sector partnerships and managing member relations and board administration.

D. Implementation Tools and Strategies

- *Develop a Web site to enhance implementation of the consortium's approach to the attract-engage-retain method; as programs are established and relationships built, Web presence ultimately could be comprehensive and tailored to diverse audiences (students, parents, guidance counselors, employers), with dynamic tools for accessing information on academic programs, regional assets and services and employment.*
- *Produce supporting marketing materials, including an e-newsletter and brochure, to promote Western New York as a place to attend college, recreate and then build careers and raise a family.*

A well-designed Web site is the cornerstone of each of the efforts studied – with resources concentrated on Web site development and maintenance to ensure its effectiveness and versatility as an outreach tool.   As consortium programs evolve and relationships forged between higher education and business and economic development stakeholders, these efforts will be reflected in the Web site, which could ultimately include information on the region as well as available internships and other programs established with the business community.

The consortium should develop printed materials to supplement and support promotion of its Web site. Initially, a streamlined campaign employing postcards or brochures could be employed to build awareness of the Web site. Subsequently, more sophisticated pieces such as a campus visitation magazine that includes information on the region's academic offerings and attractions should be developed to advance student attraction and engagement efforts.

In the end, efforts by the consortium to favorably position the region in the 21st century knowledge economy are contingent upon strong higher education leadership committed to a multi-year process; a clearly defined and articulated vision; deliberate and thoughtful consortium-wide programmatic planning and implementation; relationship building with constituencies outside higher education; a strategic marketing initiative; and investment from all interested sectors.