

Students to Benefit from Edinboro, Cal U, Clarion Affiliation

For 163 years, Edinboro has served the students, families, employers and communities of Northwestern Pennsylvania. It has transformed lives, changed personal trajectories, and met the needs of the present, while keeping an eye to the future.

Throughout that century and a half, the University has remained dynamic, adapting as necessary to meet the evolving needs of those we serve. We have adjusted program offerings, added co-curricular options and enhanced the campus experience as student expectations have shifted.

Edinboro now finds itself at another inflection point with a pending integration involving two sister institutions – California and Clarion universities. Like Edinboro, Cal U and Clarion have rich histories and proud traditions of serving the students of western Pennsylvania and beyond. There may be differences in our campus cultures, but we share a common mission of creating a pathway to social mobility that may not otherwise be possible.

Many of our students come from modest means and are the first in their families to go to college. About 40 percent of Edinboro students qualify for Pell Grant awards, which means the U.S. Department of Education has determined they need additional financial support to pay for college. They work hard, sometimes holding down one or two jobs to pay for their tuition and fees. Their persistence and grit are admirable. Indeed, they are an inspiration to us all.

The three-school integration is part of Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education's Redesign, which is aimed at best serving students by offering a quality education at an affordable price. Savings realized through this affiliation, as well as savings gained through a second System integration – Bloomsburg, Lock Haven and Mansfield universities – will be invested to enhance the student experience.

Edinboro, Cal U and Clarion bring tremendous strengths to this venture, which will expand opportunities for students while increasing our collective contributions to western Pennsylvania – from the southwest to the northwest, from the I-79 to the I-80 to the I-70 corridors.

This new alignment will be true to the mission of the State System by making more programs accessible to more students through both in-person and online offerings at a time when higher education and career preparation have never been more important.

Imagine the synergies to be found, the interdisciplinary programs that might be possible, the clusters of course offerings that may be configured to create an innovative, self-designed major.

Envision the doors to be opened through new experiential learning opportunities, while introducing students to an increased range of faculty expertise.

Consider the powerhouse that will be Western Pennsylvania's second-largest university as collectively we partner with economic development groups to create jobs for our regions and then prepare students for those jobs.

While the integration will bring change to Edinboro, Cal U and Clarion, the essence of who we are as institutions and the singular mission we serve will remain the same. As has been true for more than 160 years, Edinboro students will continue to prevail in the midst of sometimes blustery headwinds, both literal and figurative. Late nights spent creating art will go on. Reflections of fall, in all of its splendor, will be seen in the ripples of Edinboro Lake in the years ahead. And yes, the sounds of bagpipes will linger...

Over the coming months, we will work with our sister institutions to bring clarity to exactly what integration will look like. There will be an opportunity for input as plans progress. We look forward to hearing your thoughts as we once again adapt, evolve and grow.

The mission we serve is critical. It must and will continue. What a tremendous privilege it is to help students find their vocations, their passions and their voice.

Onward!

Guiyou Huang, Ph.D. became president of Edinboro University on July 1, 2019. Prior to his appointment, he served as chancellor of Louisiana State University of Alexandria. Earlier in his career, he was an English professor and administrator at a number of colleges and universities, including Norwich University, which he served as senior vice president for academic affairs and dean of the faculty.