

College Innovation Network FY20-21 Annual Report

Supporting the
Evolution of Education

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College
Innovation
Network

Table of Contents

02	MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR
03	WHO WE ARE
04	WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOUR INSTITUTION JOINS CIN? A ROADMAP
06	NETWORK FOUNDATIONS
10	OUR PROCESSES
13	CIN EDTECH STUDENT SURVEY
14	JOIN US

Message from the Director



Omid Fotuhi
Director of CIN

Dear Reader,

We are thrilled to share with you our first College Innovation Network (CIN) Annual Report. Since launching CIN in early 2020 with the generous support of the Charles Koch Foundation we have made great strides in supporting the evolution of higher education towards a future where EdTech is an effective vehicle for social mobility. And, importantly, we have also built a strong community of founding Member institutions who make the work of CIN possible.

During our first year, we have:

- Onboarded our founding cohort of six Member institutions.
- Identified high priority needs shared among the Network.
- Vetted and partnered with five EdTech companies that address the needs of our Members.
- Designed one de novo product for testing in Fall 2021.
- Launched research pilots at nearly all of our Member institutions.
- Held two Network Convenings.
- Launched monthly Partnership in Practice calls.
- Conducted our first EdTech Student Survey on students' learning experiences with EdTech.

CIN was established to support institutions along their journey of EdTech adoption, implementation and evaluation. As we have grown and evolved since our launch, we have further refined our vision of who we are, and have crafted a set of services and offerings for our Members that leverage the capabilities of our diverse team.

CIN offers a variety of supportive services for Member institutions to identify, implement, and carefully evaluate EdTech solutions, including:

- Comprehensive needs assessment process to identify gaps that can be bridged with EdTech solutions.
- EdTech vetting and pairing process to ensure the right solution to address Member needs.
- Personalized research plans to evaluate the impact of chosen EdTech solutions on the student experience.
- Wrap-around services and community support to ensure seamless and impactful EdTech adoption.

Our Network is the foundation of our work. Throughout our partnership with Members, we nurture a supportive community of dedicated education practitioners to lean on, learn from, and collaborate with during monthly **Partnership in Practice** calls and annual **Network Convenings**.

Great ideas are worth sharing. We hope that our 2021 CIN Annual Report will showcase the collaborative progress we've made in our first year. Please get in touch with us – we would love to connect and expand our Network to drive higher education's evolution together.

Regards,
Omid Fotuhi
Director of CIN

Who We Are



The College Innovation Network (CIN) is a network of higher education institutions committed to serving diverse student populations. EdTech is an increasingly critical piece for meeting students' evolving learning needs. However, there exists a particular set of challenges that can impede effective technology adoption and reduce the positive impact of EdTech on student experiences. CIN strives to support Member institutions with their EdTech adoption, and create a marketplace and community in which innovation can thrive.

The Network is made up of higher education institutions – selected intentionally for their diversity of type and students served – with the goal of driving innovation and collaboration in the higher education space. Run by and for Member institutions, CIN regularly engages Member institutions to form meaningful collaborations, giving way for sharing of best-practices and helpful resources, cross-institution collaboration, and networking opportunities for students, faculty, and staff across the network.

Our process is the solution, and collaborators are invited to co-invest in the process of meeting students' evolving needs by connecting them with the EdTech solutions capable of enhancing the learning experience and facilitating greater upward social mobility.



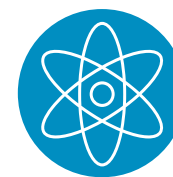
OUR MISSION

By leveraging the power of relationships, CIN supports educational institutions throughout the full lifecycle of EdTech implementation and evaluation with the ultimate goal to improve the student experience.



OUR VISION

Supporting the evolution of higher education towards a future in which EdTech is an effective vehicle for social mobility.



OUR VALUES

At its core, CIN is a relationships-based organization. Our primary goal is to build a network of trust between Member institutions and the EdTech marketplace to promote positive student outcomes, particularly for underserved and underrepresented student populations. To remain aligned with these goals, CIN has adopted four grounding values:

1. Equitable Access: We strive to ensure that students have equal access to the technology and resources needed to succeed in higher education.

2. Students First: Our ultimate goal is to improve student outcomes, especially for underserved and underrepresented students.

3. Evidence-Based: Science drives our strategy to establish the efficacy of EdTech to address students' needs and ensure recommendations are data-driven.

4. Peer Communities: We know that adoption of new practices and methods spread through peer networks, so we regularly bring our Members together to facilitate peer-to-peer learning across the Network.

What Happens When Your Institution Joins CIN? A Roadmap

Our goal is to transform the EdTech adoption process for institutions, and create a community that fosters greater innovation. We have identified three core challenges that institutions are likely to face when adopting and implementing EdTech.



MARKET FAILURES

- Limited understanding of diverse student needs
- Decision paralysis in the EdTech marketplace
- Eroded trust and confidence in partnerships vendors



CHALLENGES TO IMPLEMENTATION

- Limited resources
- Initiative fatigue among faculty and staff
- Faculty buy-in and adoption of new EdTech



CHALLENGES TO RESEARCH

- Difficulty defining and measuring impact
- Developing evaluation plans within complex educational ecosystem
- Limited resources to execute research

Our comprehensive processes and wrap-around supportive services for Member institutions are designed to address these challenges and provide Members with a light-lift EdTech selection, adoption, and evaluation process embedded within a supportive peer community.

When your institution joins CIN, you will experience:

1

1. SELECTION INTO CIN

CIN is committed to working with institutions that are dedicated to serving underrepresented and underserved students. Each interested institution is interviewed and carefully vetted by our team to ensure that we grow our Network intentionally. To this end, we seek out Members that are committed to working collaboratively to build a culture of inquiry-based innovation by placing their students' experience at the center of the development work.

2

2. ONBOARDING

When Members join CIN, the engagement begins immediately. During onboarding, key stakeholders engage in an in-depth conversation with the CIN team to understand the unique needs of Member's students, identify barriers to EdTech implementation, and align on strategy for the upcoming year of assessment and evaluation.

5

5. RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

Our ultimate goal is to improve the student experience by connecting institutions with impactful EdTech products. Our research and evaluation process is customized for each Member institution in order to evaluate the impact of their chosen Ed-Tech product on their specific student populations.

Learn more about our Research and Evaluation process on page 12.

3

3. NEEDS ASSESSMENT

In addition to identifying the common needs of our collective Network, we prioritize understanding the unique needs of students, faculty, and staff at each Member institution. Identifying Member and Network needs drives our subsequent engagement with each institution, and ensures maximal impact on the student experience.

Learn more about our Needs Assessment process on page 10.

6

6. CONSISTENT SUPPORT

In addition to ongoing support provided throughout the EdTech lifecycle, CIN encourages Members to regularly engage with the Network through annual convenings, monthly Partnership in Practice calls focused on themes of shared interest, and online forums where they can share resources, insights, and best practices.

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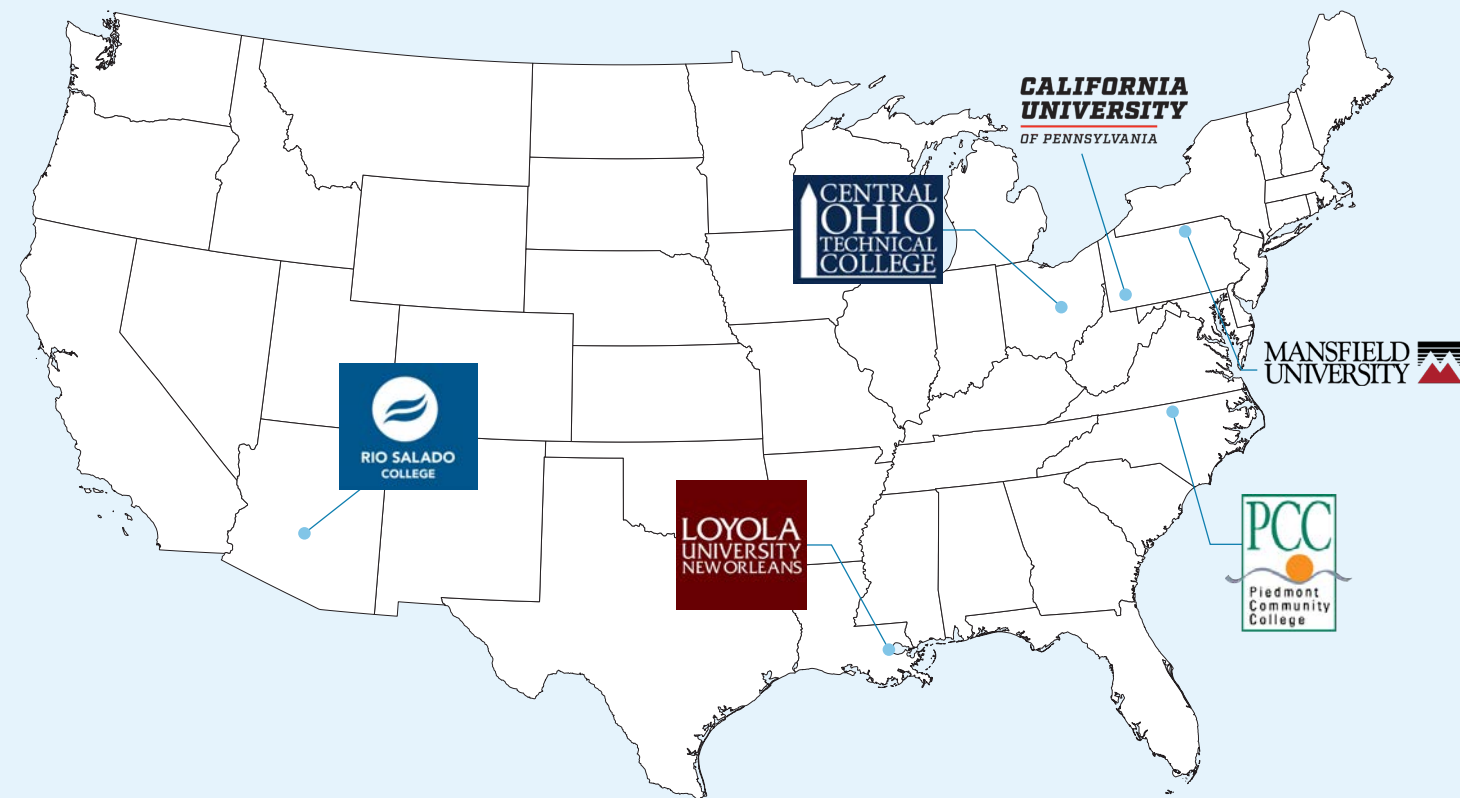
4. VENDOR SELECTION

We know that the seemingly endless marketplace of available EdTech products can cause decision paralysis for administrators. At CIN, we handle the vetting of vendors for you. We focus our efforts on identifying vendors that (1) offer products that directly address Member and Network needs, and (2) are committed to a long-term collaboration rooted in an empirically-based continuous improvement process within the Network.

Network Foundations

FOUNDING MEMBERS

CIN is a relationships-based organization – a network of institutions that is passionate about improving the student experience, driving the evolution of education, and learning from peers. Our inaugural cohort of Member institutions form the foundation of CIN, and will continue to play a central role in our intentional expansion over the coming years.



Piedmont Community College, located in Roxboro, North Carolina, contributes to the economic and educational vitality of the communities they serve by connecting students with degree and certification programs in high-demand industries.

Rio Salado College, located in Tempe, Arizona, is a leader in online education that supports learners across diverse program offerings to provide high-quality, flexible, and accessible education to empower students to reach their goals.

Loyola University New Orleans, located in New Orleans, Louisiana, offers undergraduate and graduate programs in the liberal arts and sciences striving to educate the whole student to benefit the larger community.

Central Ohio Technical College, located in Newark, Ohio, is committed to unlocking the full potential of students through associate and certificate programs in high-demand fields thereby connecting students to purposeful careers quickly.

California University of Pennsylvania, located in California, Pennsylvania, has career-focused academic programs to engage students in applied learning to offer students the experience they need for the career they strive for.

Mansfield University of Pennsylvania, located in Mansfield, Pennsylvania, is committed to students' personal and professional growth by creating a successful learning environment with dedicated faculty across a variety of degree programs.

VETTED EDTECH VENDORS

The EdTech vendors that have joined CIN were hand-selected and carefully vetted to ensure optimal collaboration with our members and clear alignment with the Network's needs.



InScribe leverages the power of community and artificial intelligence to connect individuals to the answers, resources, and people they need to succeed.



Harmonize elevates the online learning experience by providing world-class technology solutions that improve student retention and engagement.



Nearpeer platform is a catalyst for meaningful connections and creating a sense of belonging throughout the student journey.



AdmitHub supports students with chat to nudge when they need it and help them hit key enrollment and retention deadlines.



eLumin makes education accessible to everyone by transforming learning through smart deployment of virtual technology.

MEMBER PROGRESS AFTER YEAR 1

CIN is now halfway through our initial two-year pilot phase where we have committed to assessing Member's needs and implementing and evaluating EdTech solutions on their campus. Below, we chart each institution's progress through the CIN roadmap.

PIEDMONT COMMUNITY COLLEGE *WORKING WITH HARMONIZE*



CENTRAL OHIO TECHNICAL COLLEGE *WORKING WITH ADMITHUB*



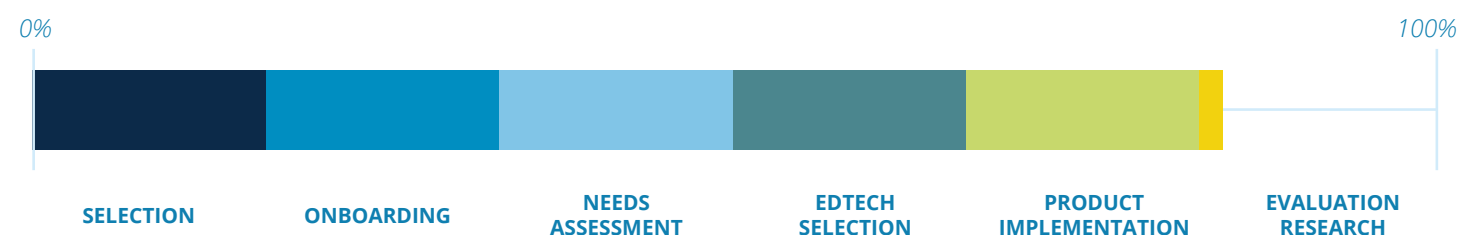
RIO SALADO COLLEGE *WORKING WITH INSCRIBE*



CALIFORNIA UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA *WORKING WITH NEARPEER*



LOYOLA UNIVERSITY NEW ORLEANS *WORKING WITH NEARPEER*



MANSFIELD UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA



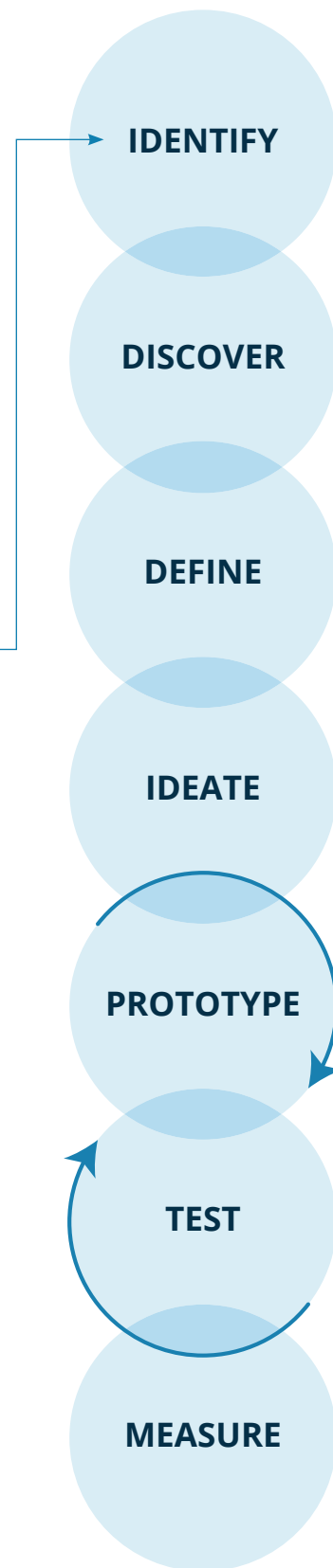
Our Processes

Our process is the solution: new EdTech can't address institutional needs on its own, or all at once. CIN provides wrap-around services to facilitate impactful EdTech implementation and evaluation for Members. The core of our services is our multi-modal, personalized **needs assessment** process and our **research and evaluation** process that are embedded within a community of peer institutions. Below are the details of these core processes.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

CIN is devoted to supporting our Member institutions throughout our partnership. That support begins with the identification of the unique needs of our Member institutions and the common challenges shared across the Network. In this work, we use qualitative and iterative methods to identify the needs of diverse student communities and optimally pair Members with impactful EdTech.

Our team follows a user-centered design process with a specialization in EdTech products that prioritize student learning and accessibility. This process underlies each of the three stages of our comprehensive needs assessment process.



- 01. Identify**
We broadly identify the problem we are trying to solve.
- 02. Discover**
We dig deeper by understanding the problem from a students' perspective.
Methods: Surveys, Subject Matter Expert Interviews, Contextual Inquiry
- 03. Define**
We analyze our data and create an insight report that will be used to define the problem with you before creating solutions.
Methods: Personas, Journey Maps, Learning Objectives, Insight Reports, Site Mapping, Define Success
- 04. Ideate**
We brainstorm solutions and narrow our ideas with you before proceeding to the next phase.
Methods: Brainstorming, Co-Design Sessions
- 05. Prototype**
We create a prototype that will be used to test with your students. During this phase, we may also test existing solutions.
Methods: Moodboards, Prototypes, Wireframes, Learning Content Development, Vetting Available Solutions
- 06. Test**
We test our prototype to help us understand where we can improve. With each cycle, we improve our design.
Methods: Usability Testing, Accessibility Evaluation A/B Testing
- 07. Measure**
We reflect and measure our success by ensuring we've met our initial objectives with you.
Methods: Product Analytics, Surveys (Satisfaction or Engagement), Outcome Tracking

IDENTIFYING INSTITUTION NEEDS

Our goal is to identify the key, unique needs of each Member institution to guide subsequent stages of the needs assessment process.

Included in this stage are:

- Member onboarding to CIN
- In-depth interview with key institutional stakeholders

CROSS-MEMBER COLLABORATION

We work to prioritize common needs across the Network to guide EdTech vendor selection for Member institutions.

Included in this stage are:

- Collaborative working meeting with Member stakeholders
- Iteration and prioritization of Network needs
- Comprehensive evaluation of EdTech products based on Network needs

During our inaugural CIN Convening in August 2020, we worked collaboratively with our Members to identify four Network needs that drove our initial EdTech selection and pairing process.



ACCESS AND EQUITY

Ensuring all students have equal access to learning opportunities by minimizing the digital divide. Flexible solutions for students with a focus on mitigating inequitable access among underrepresented and underserved student populations.



STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Facilitating meaningful interactions between individual learners, as well as learners with faculty as they face the realities of remote teaching adjustments, in particular seeking ways to create engagement in collaborative learning or peer learning contexts.



FACULTY READINESS FOR REMOTE TEACHING

Offering assistance and guidance to faculty, many of whom are not trained in nor feel confident in, remote teaching modifications accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic.



EARLY ALERTS

Establishing and strengthening mechanisms to translate student data into actionable, timely insights to faculty, student-services staff, and administrators. Identify students with the greatest need allowing prompt and relevant intervention.

PERSONALIZED SOLUTIONING

In-depth user research with students, staff, and faculty culminating in a Network report that proposes personalized EdTech solutions for Member institutions.

Included in this stage are:

- Student, staff, and faculty interviews
- Comprehensive literature review
- Solution prototyping and iteration

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION PROCESS

CIN is devoted to supporting our Member institutions through the adoption, implementation, and evaluation of EdTech solutions hand-picked to address the needs of students, faculty, and staff. In all of this work, we lead with research centered around the focal goal of evaluating the impact of chosen EdTech solutions on the student experience. Our research plans vary from formative assessment and secondary data analysis, to pre-post surveys and experimental designs – we design the right study to achieve the aims of the research project.

To ensure a timely and successful research project between our Members and vendors, CIN employs a three-stage research approach. Although each stage includes key components and deliverables, the details are fully customized to fit the needs and goals of the Member and vendor partnership.



RESEARCH PREP AND DESIGN

We outline a clear, thoughtful research strategy to achieve EdTech implementation and evaluation goals.

Included in this stage are:

- Goal alignment among stakeholders
- Member onboarding with vendor
- Outlining roles and responsibilities
- Defining success metrics and outcomes
- IRB review and approval of research plan



RESEARCH IMPLEMENTATION

We execute the research plan and obtain the data needed to achieve the agreed upon research aims.

Included in this stage are:

- Survey design and development
- User interviews
- Product and survey data collection
- Tracking Member institutional data and metrics
- Tracking vendor product data and metrics



ANALYSIS AND DISSEMINATION

Disseminate research results and extract key insights for Members and vendors.

Included in this stage are:

- Data analysis of all applicable data
- CIN research report of evaluation
- Other promotional outputs as desired

CIN EdTech Student Survey

In April 2021, CIN launched its inaugural EdTech Student Survey across the Network. CIN is in a unique position to learn about the student experience with EdTech by leveraging the diversity of students who attend the CIN Member institutions. The CIN EdTech Student Survey will be an annual survey administered to participating CIN member institutions with the goal of generating knowledge and actionable insights for the broader higher education sector. As CIN continues to grow, so will the impact of the CIN EdTech Student Survey.

Below is the Executive Summary of the 2021 CIN EdTech Student Survey. [Download the full report here.](#)

THE NEW DIGITAL DIVIDE: HOW EDTECH SELF-EFFICACY IS SHAPING THE ONLINE STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE IN HIGHER ED

The 2020–21 academic year was a grand experiment in remote learning for both institutions of higher education and for the students enrolled. Understanding students' experiences with online learning and use of EdTech is vital for both educators and administrators to ensure successful student experiences moving forward.

Whereas much of the survey research on the digital divide that has emerged during the pandemic has focused on differential access, the **College Innovation Network (CIN) EdTech Student Survey** was designed to also look at students' usage experiences with EdTech and online learning. Together, by focusing on both access and usage, we propose a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that contribute to digital divide, and offer insights for creating meaningful tech-enabled learning experiences for students.

Of particular focus, the 2021 CIN EdTech Student Survey focused on how **EdTech self-efficacy** — a student's confidence in their ability to learn and adapt to EdTech in the (virtual) classroom — and other subjective student experiences, have shaped the online learning experience. CIN surveyed **684 students across four higher education institutions** to uncover (1) how EdTech self-efficacy impacted students' learning experiences over the 2020-21 academic year, and (2) how students' personal characteristics and characteristics of their college/university impacted their learning experiences with EdTech over the 2020-21 academic year.

The results of the inaugural CIN EdTech Student Survey reveal several key insights into the student online learning experience with EdTech across the previous academic year.

1. **Students' EdTech self-efficacy is a robust predictor of students' learning experience, and is associated with a more positive and impactful learning experience over the 2020-21 academic year.**
2. **Students at institutions with established online learning infrastructure reported significantly more positive and impactful learning experiences over the 2020-21 academic year.**
3. **Foundational EdTech hardware and software are driving the online learning transition in higher education; inequitable access to foundational EdTech can create tech dependencies for new products and exacerbate inequity.**
4. **The future is hybrid: Students are looking forward to returning to social activities on campus, but many still want online learning options next year.**

Drawing on these insights, the report concludes with actionable recommendations on how to improve the online student learning experience with EdTech moving forward. ■

Queries about the report can be addressed to cin@wgulabs.org



Join us

IS YOUR INSTITUTION A GOOD FIT?

We seek institutions that educate diverse student populations, including a significant proportion of traditionally underrepresented and underserved students. By joining CIN, you are connecting with a community of like-minded education practitioners who are committed to the common goal of implementing and testing technological innovations to better support students.

IS YOUR PRODUCT A GOOD FIT?

Participating CIN vendors create products that show a clear understanding of the needs of faculty and the diverse student populations they serve. Vendors must offer EdTech solutions that address identified Network needs, and are able to offer preferential discounts to Members.

INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE?

We would love to chat with you and see if your institution would be a good fit for our growing Network.

Contact Business Operations Manager Erika Wandsneider at cin@wgulabs.org to get started!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CIN is made possible through the support of a grant from the Charles Koch Foundation, and through the cooperation of Leadership at our CIN member institutions.

The support of generous donors who believe in the mission of CIN make this work possible. If you are interested in supporting CIN, please contact us at cin@wgulabs.org.

