

House Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education
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Chairman Carfagna; Ranking Member Sweeney; Representatives Edwards, Miller, and Perales, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony as an interested party. My name is Terry Filicko. I am an Associate Professor in the division of Arts and Sciences at Clark State Community College where my primary teaching responsibilities are in political science and for our College Success course. It is also my honor to serve as Chair of the Ohio Faculty Senate of Community and Technical Colleges (Ohio Faculty Senate).

My remarks focus on three points:

- 1) The important role of community colleges in the Ohio higher education system;
- 2) The significant barriers our students face, particularly with respect to support services and basic needs; and
- 3) The crucial need for more resources across higher education to ensure high quality faculty.

Community Colleges in the Ohio higher education system

Students at Ohio community colleges benefit from a system that consciously creates pathways, starting with affordable and accessible options for entering higher education, leading to placement in the workforce or continuing on to one of our high quality public universities. Faculty across our institutions work together on curriculum, on remedial education, and on other statewide initiatives. Continued support for this system is crucial. This includes support for:

- 1) Increasing the State Supplemental Instruction budget (i.e., increase in basic aid (SSI) funding of 1.1% in FY 2020 and 1.0% in FY 2021);
- 2) Support for micro-degrees and short-term certificates (i.e., \$15 million per year for micro-degrees / short term certificates for new or incumbent workers through the Development Services Agency);
- 3) Funding to support purchase of updated equipment and technology for workforce training (i.e., \$8 million in RAPIDS grant funds);
- 4) Increased funding for the Choose Ohio First Scholarship for students majoring in STEM fields (i.e., \$28 million in FY20 and \$40 million in FY21); and
- 5) A substantial increase in the Ohio College Opportunity Grant (OCOG), including a new program within OCOG to pay for textbooks and instructional materials that includes community college students.

Barriers – Access to Technology, Basic Needs & Support

Resources to maintain and strengthen our higher education system are crucial, but many students still face barriers. The most affordable and accessible option may not be an option for those who face housing and food insecurity. Students face barriers such as a lack of reliable transportation and lack of reliable childcare or eldercare. They try to hold down jobs while being a full-time student, but their work schedules compete with their class schedules. They *expect* to work while in school; most community college students assume that they will be working at one or more jobs while trying to complete their educations.

These may not seem like “higher education” issues, but they are. Faculty across our technical and community colleges could share story after story with you of students who face these barriers. We do what we can to help them. Our institutions do what they can. For example, Clark State Community College established an Office of Student Support to help students access the resources they need. But it’s not enough.

Many of these issues are being addressed in the #RealCollege movement that is growing across the country. I would recommend the work of Dr. Sara Goldrick-Rab and the HOPE Center at Temple University. Their work on addressing “Basic Needs” for college students is ground-breaking. There are creative solutions found in communities across the country for dealing with housing insecurity, food insecurity, transportation, child care, and so on. Addressing these issues is necessary if we want to promote student success.

In particular, we should support:

- Leveraging existing TANF and SNAP funds through the Community College Acceleration Program (CCAP) to support low and moderate income students while they complete degrees or certificates and then move into the workforce with higher earning potential and more job security;
- Improving access to technology across the state, particularly in rural areas, as this will increase access to education and improve a student’s likelihood of completing; and
- Directing support for military members, veterans, and their dependents as this population faces its own unique set of potential barriers (please see Rep. Perales’ HB 16).

Faculty Recruitment, Development, and Retention

One of the most important resources we have in higher education in Ohio is our faculty. Our adjunct faculty are wonderful. They care about our students, they are good teachers, but there is only so much time and energy one can give if one needs to juggle many classes across a region, driving from place to place, with shared office space if any. Moreover, research consistently shows that students are more likely to succeed when they have the opportunity to take classes with full-time faculty.

If we want our students to succeed, we need to increase the stability of the faculty across the state, ensure that full-time faculty have salaries and benefits that do not decline in value, and improve the ratio of full to part-time faculty. Many of our colleges do not have the revenue to expand our full-time faculties or to provide adjunct faculty with increases in wages. The long-term goal should be to have the resources to have more full-time faculty. But in the short run, our institutions need to be able to provide better compensation and resources for our adjunct faculty. A small increase in SSI funding will probably not allow our institutions to address this concern.

We all benefit from having a well-integrated system that includes scholars bringing cutting edge research and innovation to the state and programs to train our workforce in the latest technologies and applications. I would like to recognize and support the Ohio Faculty Council’s desire to a reinstatement of the Eminent Scholars program, designed to bring high quality faculty to our public universities. I would further add that the benefit of such a program could and should be directed at building partnerships across our institutions, providing everything from short-term workforce credentials, through applied associate degrees, baccalaureate degrees, and graduate studies.

Concerns

Before closing my remarks, I would add two cautionary notes:

- Many of our institutions have limited resources to provide the services our students need. Continued constraints on revenues, whether constraints on tuition increases or constrained increases in SSI, will keep us at the status quo. If we want to see a higher education system that continues to create the workforce and citizenry of the 21st century, we need the resources – and we to increase those resources.
- I urge caution with respect to any metrics of success that assume a college student is going full-time or will complete at one institution. While it is understandable that we would want to see what the “Return on Investment” is for our students, that framework probably will not work for capturing what our students experience or for capturing the value of their educational experiences.

Closing Remarks

Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I leave you with the following thoughts:

- 1) Support for higher education is essential for creating the labor force and citizenry of the 21st century. In particular, our community and technical colleges are noteworthy for the accessible and affordable options they provide;
- 2) We need to find creative ways to help students access resources for their basic needs, such as to social services, to eliminate those barriers to success; and
- 3) Our faculty are *the* crucial resource for our students and institutions. We need to direct attention to recruiting, developing, and retaining high quality faculty.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Filicko

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