



Ohio Conference of the American Association of University Professors

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Testimony of John T. McNay, Ph.D.

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Before the House Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education

Representative Rick Carfagna, Chair

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Chair Carfagna, Ranking Member Sweeney, and Members of the Higher Education Subcommittee:

My name is John McNay, and I am president of the Ohio Conference of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), which represents 6,000 faculty at public and private institutions of higher education across the state. I am also a professor of history at the University of Cincinnati.

I am here today to express my association's views on House Bill 166, the state operating budget.

First, I would like to express appreciation to Gov. DeWine, Chancellor Gardner, Vice Chancellor Duffey, Chair Carfagna, and the members of this committee for their openness and cooperation with faculty during this budget process so far.

Funding: SSI and OCOG

In order to make Ohio's colleges and universities affordable, accessible, with high-quality faculty, and academically competitive, we must do better to support the main funding stream to our public institutions – State Share of Instruction (SSI). We have seen too many budgets over the years in which SSI was slashed heavily, so we appreciate the modest increases to the SSI line item. But they are modest. We ask this committee to seek additional resources to enhance SSI and be open to pursuing new revenue in order to achieve that.

As you know, the General Assembly and Governor recently agreed to a gas tax increase to fund Ohio's crumbling infrastructure. As a result of this tax increase, we will see potholes filled, bridges repaired, and other improvements that make Ohio's transportation system safer.

Higher education investment is not something that is as tangible as filling a pothole. However, the investment is just as important for the well-being of our state. We know that the more affordable that we make higher education, the more people that will seek degrees. The more people that earn degrees here are more likely to stay here, pay higher taxes here, start their own businesses here, and so on. The return on investment is exponential.

This is particularly why helping lower-income Ohioans pay for college is a critical component to helping Ohio reach its lofty certificate and degree-holder goals. The \$47 million addition to the Ohio College Opportunity Grant (OCOG) over the biennium is a much-needed infusion to this grant; but again, we can and should do better.

The SSI Funding Formula

Under Gov. Kasich, the SSI funding formula was significantly altered from one based primarily on enrollment to one primarily based on course completions and graduations. The new formula also eliminated the separate funding stream to regional campuses. This has hurt open access campuses, which admit all students, and has further benefitted selective institutions, which admit only students most likely to complete courses and graduate.

We must do better to support institutions that have a mission to educate everyone, particularly regional campuses, which often are students' gateways to a earning a degree. Because of the changes, as it stands now, main campuses can drain away revenue that was intended for the regional campus open access mission. We believe that is undermining the original intent of the creation of the regional campuses and should be reversed.

Faculty and Workload

Our institutions have been asked to do more with less between insufficient funding and new mandates. As a result of this, as well as misplaced priorities, we continue to experience the erosion of tenured positions, tenure-track positions, and full-time faculty positions in general. Quality matters. It matters that we have full-time and tenured faculty with strong ties to their institutions, who have the time and resources to devote to their students and research. The armies of adjunct faculty now teaching core courses across our universities is not only exploitative and, one could argue, immoral, but it does not represent a genuine commitment to undergraduate education by our institutions.

Unfortunately, the lack of tenured and full-time faculty, and the high volume of adjunct professors teaching courses, is often mistaken for tenured and full-time faculty "not teaching enough." We imagine this, in part, is why there is language in the budget that says the following:

The boards of trustees of state institutions of higher education shall ensure that faculty members devote a proper and judicious part of their work week to the actual instruction of students. Total class credit hours of production per academic term per full-time faculty member is expected to meet the standards set forth in the budget data submitted by the Chancellor of Higher Education.

Faculty workloads, which include teaching, research, and service, are best set in the department and college. Some faculty primarily teach, others primarily research, and most do a combination of both. In addition, House Bill 66 from the last General Assembly established a study committee to review undergraduate teaching. We should allow that committee to carry out its mission.

After conferring with the Ohio Department of Higher Education, we were informed that this language is a vestige of previous budget bills and has no discernible impact. As a result, we ask respectfully for this to be removed to avoid any potential confusion.

More Focus on Quality, Less on "Time to Degree"

"Time to degree" has become the latest mantra in Ohio higher education. Rather than increasing investment to make earning a degree more affordable, the state has pursued ways to speed students through their education. This is shortchanging students of a complete education.

We support gifted students being able to earn college credit through the College Credit Plus (CCP) program. However, CCP has proliferated too quickly without sufficient time to study its impact. CCP strictly should be taught by college professors and be a way to expose students to the rigor of college courses.

Transparency and Management

As stewards of taxpayer money and student tuition dollars, it is important for our public colleges and universities to be as transparent as possible. We believe institutions should be more forthcoming with their budgets. Using universities own self-reported data, they are spending less than 25 percent of their budgets employing faculty. Greater transparency, we believe, could hold institutions more accountable for focusing resources on the academic mission.

Unfortunately, institutions also have grown increasingly secretive with presidential searches, asking those selected for search committees to sign non-disclosure agreements, and selecting the new leader without an opportunity for the wider campus community to meet and vet the finalists. The rationale for secrecy is that they will not get quality candidates with an open search, but there is little evidence to support this idea. After several Ohio institutions have undergone challenges with leadership, it is more important than ever to have open searches.

Also in that vein, we believe the Ohio Department of Higher Education must have greater oversight of presidents and trustees. Some of our institutions have been mismanaged badly without any accountability.

I appreciate your time and the opportunity to testify today. I would be happy to answer questions the committee may have.