

Dear Senator Randy Gardner, Ranking Minority Member Capri Cafaro, and members of the Senate Finance Higher Education Subcommittee,

My name is Tobi Akomolede and I serve as the Speaker of Senate in the Undergraduate Student Government at the University of Cincinnati. I'm currently going into my fourth year at UC, studying Computer Science with a minor in Mathematics. During my time at UC, I've had the opportunity to intern both locally and abroad, working as an iOS Developer at Bubbly, a tech startup in Singapore, after my first year and continuing to co-op as a Software Developer at local Cincinnati small businesses. I have lived in Cincinnati my entire life, growing up in Mason and attending high school at Cincinnati Christian Schools.

Recently the Undergraduate Student Senate at UC passed a resolution in support of increased state funding for Ohio public universities. College affordability is an issue that greatly impacts every student at UC, with tuition and financial aid strongly affecting whether a student can complete their degree. The current text of the proposed budget, Ohio House Bill 64, prohibits tuition from being raised in FY17. While on the surface, this may appear to be solely a step in right direction, without increased state funding towards universities, there are many concerns that students have regarding the potential ramifications this could have to the quality of their education, as well as the student services that our university renders and the overall college experience.

Quality education is the most important yield students expect from their tuition dollars, and Ohio colleges have been returning that investment. The number of degrees awarded by Ohio colleges has increased by 19.1% from the 2010 to 2014. During that same time period, funding on a per-graduate basis has declined 28.3%. Colleges are now seeing greater enrollment numbers as more students attend college. The University of Cincinnati in particular has seen record enrollments for consecutive years. While the universities have been graduating more students with less funding, with increasing class sizes and no additional funding, this growth

is unsustainable. In order to educate the growing population of students, more professors will be necessary, as well as classrooms and support staff. Students in engineering, like myself, already struggle to enroll in many courses simply due to the sheer number of students interested in them and a lack of space to accommodate them all. Without additional funding, this problem will only be exacerbated and maintaining the quality of education students expect will become impossible. In addition to maintaining the quality of education, additional state funding is crucial for dampening the burden of other costs associated with student life.

Being a student involves many costs aside from tuition and fees. Students often have housing costs and other fees associated with being an adult in addition to costs for supplies, textbooks, equipment and technology for their coursework, as well as general health and wellness costs. Particularly mental health is an area of financial burden to many students, with 1 in 4 American adults living with a diagnosable mental disorder, and suicide being the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of death among college students. Universities could be investing in ways to lessen the financial burden of these costs for students, but they cannot because they simply do not have the money up front to afford them. Without additional state funding, these costs will be passed onto students. Lack of additional state funding will not just deter universities from investing in new programs, it will also impact the existing programs and services that we as students need.

Many of the student support services that the university renders, while ancillary, are crucial for students to get through their education and graduate on time. Academic and career-based advising are often neglected facets of higher education that have a significant impact on a student's overall college education. Advisors work hard to guide students into the field of study that's right for them, as well as helping them determine the coursework that fits their intended career path. Students' entire career paths are often jumpstarted by advisors who find them their first internship and co-ops. Without additional funding, UC, which should be investing more resources into these systems that are proven to help students succeed, may have to begin cutting these advisors. In addition to advising, there are other investments that may be impacted by lack of funding.

The University of Cincinnati and its students have been benefiting from the investments it has made. A wide variety of programs are raising

in national rankings and innovative research is being performed by our faculty and students. Having benefited from the foresight of those who came before us, the UC community is looking forward into moving into its third century and the vision we have for how we will continue to innovate in the areas of teaching and research. However, with tuition being capped at a zero-percent increase and no additional funding, the investments into our institution that are laid out in our Third Century Plan may not be fully realizable. This plan has already proven to work; its measures have brought new faculty to campus, spurred interdisciplinary collaboration, and we have seen a 92% first-to-second year retention rate of first generation students, among many other accomplishments. Without additional funding, the University may have to begin downsizing a plan that has already been proven to work. While this would not only affect the progress of our University, it would damage the spirits of students who have worked hard with faculty and the administration to realize this plan.

The University of Cincinnati and Ohio colleges have been graduating more students in spite of decreasing state support, but this is not sustainable. Ohio's educational appropriation per Full-Time-Equivalent student is \$2,237 below the national average, while tuition has been among the slowest growing in the nation. Without funding, it's difficult for innovation and growth to increase or even sustain. There are only so many efficiency measures a university can take, and as the budget is currently proposed, the possibility for negative ramifications for UC students and all Ohio college students is very real. While prohibiting tuition from raising is a necessary component in making college more affordable and lessening student debt, increased state funding is crucial in order to prevent the costs from coming back to students in the form of lower quality education, gutted student supportive services, stunted innovation, and lack of cost saving services. As thus, the University of Cincinnati Student Government strongly asks that the language of the proposed budget be altered to appropriate more funding for public universities in Ohio.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you have any questions or concerns, I would be happy to address them. Please see the attached documents for sources.

Respectfully Written by,

Tobi Akomolede

Speaker of Senate, University of Cincinnati Undergraduate Student  
Government

Sources:

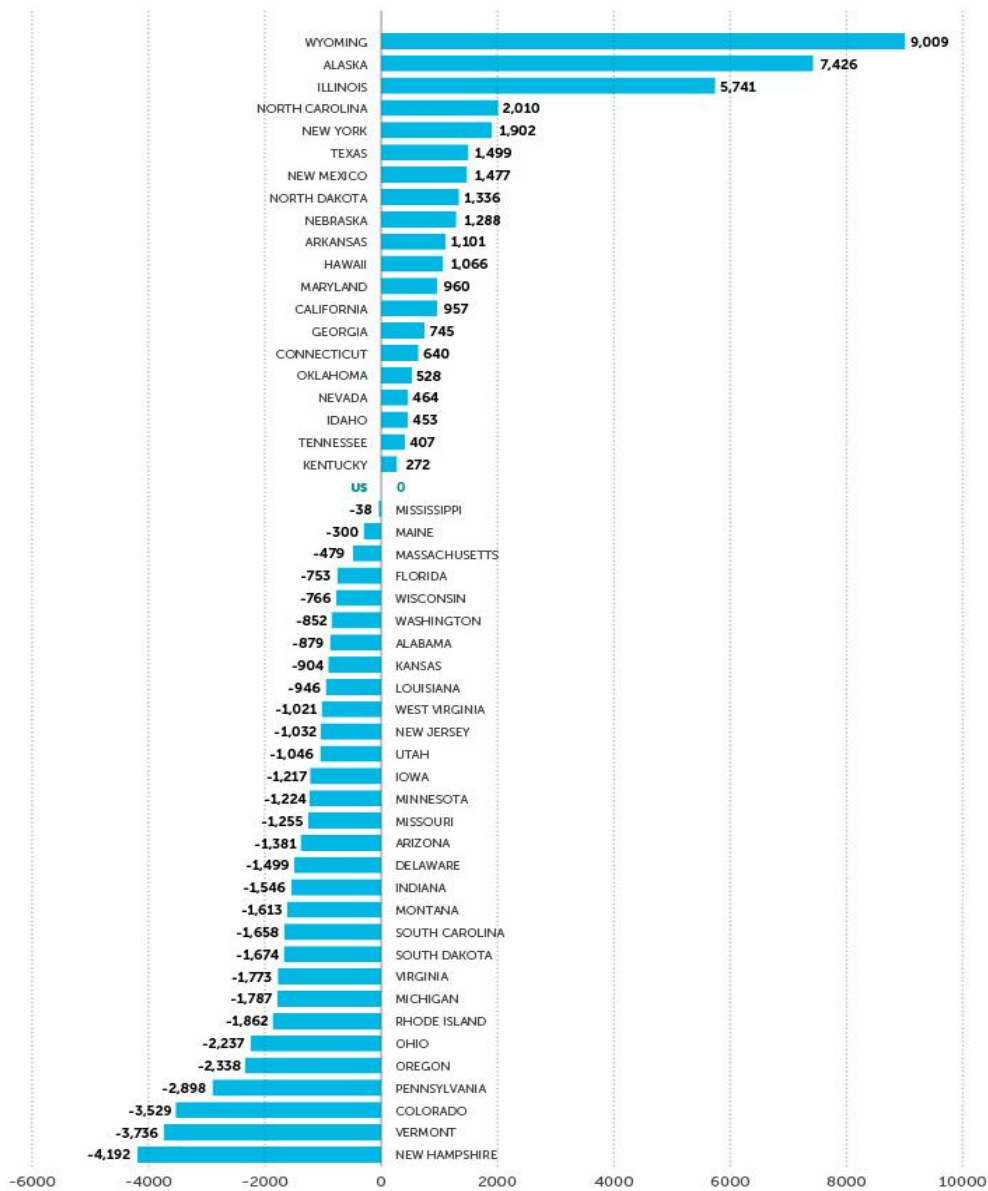
[http://www.activeminds.org/storage/documents/TheIssue\\_FullCitations2.pdf](http://www.activeminds.org/storage/documents/TheIssue_FullCitations2.pdf)

<http://www.uc.edu/news/NR.aspx?id=20858>

<http://www.uc.edu/news/NR.aspx?id=20720>

FIGURE 12

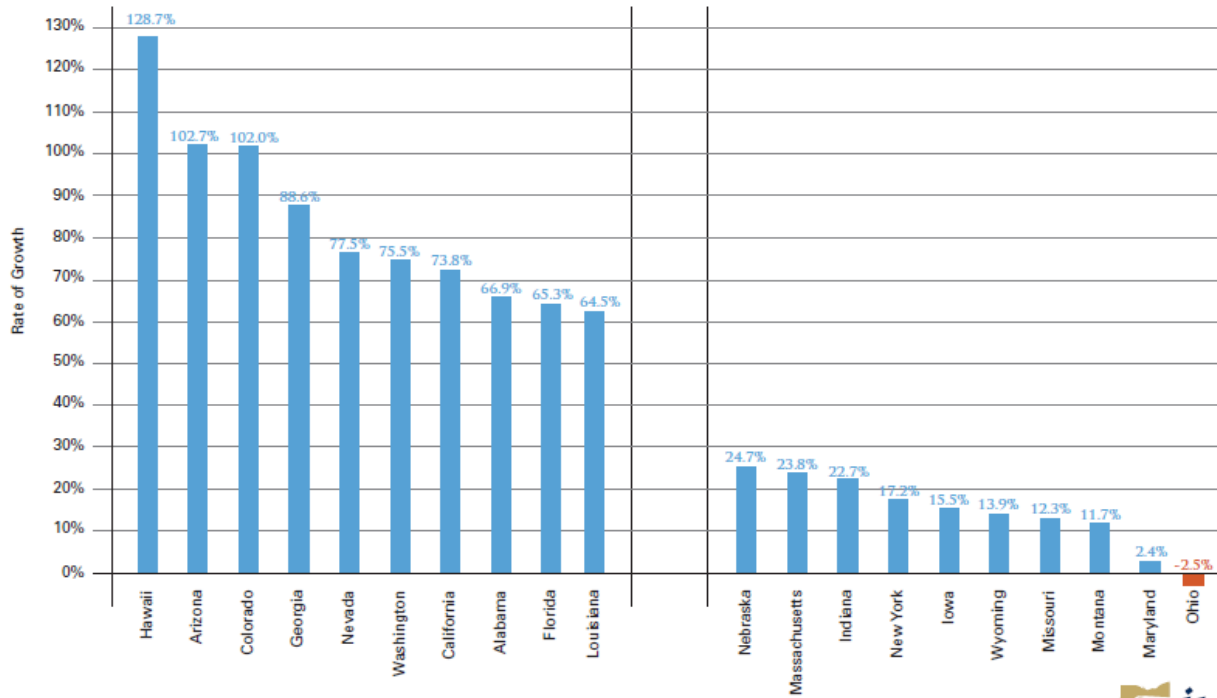
EDUCATIONAL APPROPRIATIONS PER FTE—STATE DIFFERENCES FROM U.S. AVERAGE, FISCAL 2014



NOTE: Dollars adjusted by Cost of Living Adjustment and Enrollment Index  
SOURCE: State Higher Education Executive Officers

# OHIO IS THE NATIONAL LEADER IN RESTRAINING GROWTH OF TUITION AND FEES

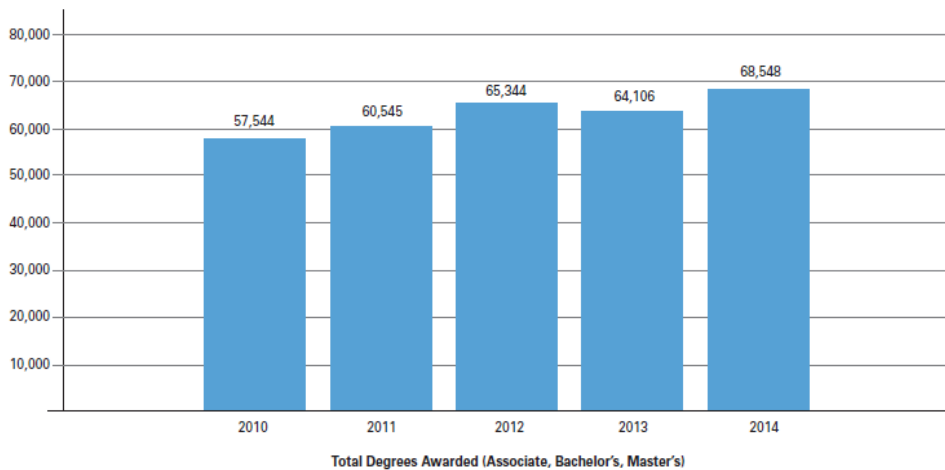
FASTEST & SLOWEST RATES OF GROWTH IN TUITION AND FEES  
Public 4-Year Institutions, Average Published In-State Tuition & Fees, 2004-05 to 2014-15 (adjusted for inflation)



Source: College Board: Trends in Higher Education  
<http://trends.collegeboard.org/college-pricing/figures-tables/tuition-fees-sector-state-time>



## THE NUMBER OF DEGREES AWARDED BY OHIO'S PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES INCREASED BY 19.1% BETWEEN 2010 AND 2014



Source: Ohio Board of Regents

