



## **Ohio Conference of the American Association of University Professors**

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Before the House Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education

Representative Perales, Chair

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Chairman Perales, Ranking Member Ramos, and distinguished members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education: my name is John McNay, and I am president of the Ohio Conference of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). We represent about 6,000 college and university faculty at both public, private, as well as two- and four-year institutions across the state. I am a Cold War historian who teaches at Ohio's largest regional university campus, University of Cincinnati-Blue Ash. I am here today to share my organization's positions regarding House Bill 49.

### Education First

We appreciate that the governor and General Assembly have placed so much emphasis on higher education in recent years. Our fine public institutions are great economic engines for the communities they serve, and they educate Ohio's students, so that, once they graduate, they can fully participate in our democracy and economy. It is important to emphasize, however, that the primary purpose of our colleges and universities is to educate and that purpose should be the primary focus of state and institutional decision-making.

Certainly, our higher education institutions are a principal source for workforce development. But if we overemphasize funneling students into certain programs and trying to reduce "time to degree," we're risking not giving students a full education. For instance, there has been heightened interest in pushing students into the STEM fields, but three-quarters of current jobs are not in STEM or STEM-related fields. It is the arts and humanities that help students learn to think critically and to communicate persuasively. All employers seek those qualities, regardless of field. And, given the ways in which technical advancements are disrupting employment, those skills are what will enable workers to be as adaptable as possible to changing industries and employer needs.

We support the state's degree attainment goal, but we want those degrees to possess the highest value possible. Discount versions of education, like discount versions of surgery or car repairs, are no bargain.

### College Credit Plus

This is what has concerned us about the "less education is better" model that College Credit Plus (CCP) promises. Reducing students' total educational experience in an increasingly knowledge-based economy in order to save money is pennywise and pound foolish. It also is disingenuous to call CCP courses "free," when school districts and institutions of higher education are footing these costs.

Most CCP courses are taught in the high school by high school teachers. This is a vast departure from the former dual-enrollment model, through which bright students could get a jumpstart on their post-secondary education by taking courses at a college or university. Under that model, there was no question that a student was being taught collegiate material at a collegiate level and that those credits would count toward their degree. The same can no longer be said about dual-enrollment under CCP.

According to Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) data, when comparing CCP students and undergraduates enrolled in the same courses, the CCP students earned a .5 higher GPA. In addition, ODHE reports higher GPAs overall for CCP students taught by high school teachers in the high school. This could be evidence that the courses taught by high school teachers in the high school are not as

demanding as what they are at a college. If that is the case, we cannot be assured that students are learning the material at a college level, and that these courses sufficiently prepare them for subsequent courses that they will take at a college or university.

We believe that CCP should be limited to juniors and seniors in high school (perhaps with some exceptions), and that the classes should be taught by a college faculty member. This isn't to criticize our high school teachers. Teaching college courses is not what they were trained to do. They do not have the same kind of educational background and research requirements that make faculty experts in their fields, just as faculty do not have the expertise to teach high school classes. The best thing that our high schools can do is fully prepare students for college, not substitute for it.

We are opposed to any further expansion of CCP, such as the proposal to grant high school students college credit for work experience and apprenticeships. If the General Assembly decides to go down this road, however, the criteria for earning credit under those circumstances should be extraordinarily strict.

#### Western Governors University & Competency-Based Education

In addition, we caution this committee about giving a Utah-based "university" status as an Ohio institution. Ohioans already can become students of Western Governors University. If we are to award competency-based education (CBE) credits in Ohio, and have those credits recognized by Ohio institutions, they should be developed by faculty at our existing Ohio institutions. Only then can we be assured that the CBE credits meet strict criteria and that CBE credit is awarded only in areas where it is appropriate, such as in certain technical fields where competency is cut and dry and easily ascertained.

#### Performance-Based Funding Model

Moreover, we urge you to reexamine the performance-based funding model. While we are not opposed to some college and university funding being based on course completions and graduations, the model is weighted so heavily in that direction that the state is no longer providing opportunity to Ohio students in the same way that enrollment-based funding provided. The only way we are going to generate more degree holders in this state is to lift the financial burden for those who cannot afford it.

A Columbia University study looked at the impact of the new formula in Ohio in 2015 and found that the state's universities were moving resources from financially-needy students to high-achieving students who were more likely to pass classes and graduate (and thus generate financial return). We advocate for a different funding formula, one that balances enrollment and performance, so that we are not further disadvantaging students with fewer means. At the very least, the legislature can ameliorate some of the problems the new model produces by providing an infusion of funding to need-based aid, such as the Ohio College Opportunity Grant (OCOG). A recent report by Policy Matters Ohio shows that even with the governor's proposed increases, Ohio would need to spend about \$120 million more annually to restore need-based aid to pre-recession levels.

If we are to measure the success of the new funding model in incentivizing performance, we should look at graduation rates. As you can see in the chart below, which contains data provided by ODHE, the six-year graduation success rate actually has been declining over the last few years, and the total number of graduates is fluctuating only slightly. Ohio had fewer university graduates in 2016 than 2014. So far, the results of the new funding formula are not promising.

Graduation Year	Number of Graduates	Graduation Rate
2014	26,415	69%
2015	26,537	67%
2016	26,334	66%

### State Share of Instruction & Tuition/Fee Freezes

We appreciate that the governor and General Assembly have held the line on tuition and fees for the last several years. We never want to see our students going into debt for trying to achieve an education and better their lives. However, institutions cannot meet current demands with yet another two years of freezes and only 1% increases to State Share of Instruction. Colleges and universities need adequate instructional funding from the state to maintain educational quality.

### The Textbook Mandate

We know that this committee already has heard extensive testimony in opposition to the governor's textbook proposal. We echo all of the concerns that have been raised, but would like to focus on the issue of utmost importance to us: academic freedom.

This unfunded mandate would give incentives to institutions to standardize textbooks in order to help control the exorbitant costs. Requiring faculty to offer specific texts would be a gross infringement on academic freedom, which is the essence of great teaching and research in higher education. Under this scenario, faculty may not be able to assign texts with which they are most familiar and that suit their teaching styles, a restriction that ultimately hurts students. This restriction also would inhibit institutions' ability to attract and retain quality faculty.

Faculty and administrations have demonstrated an innovative spirit when it comes to helping students save on textbooks. They increasingly have used electronic and open source materials and developed customized textbooks that pull together materials from multiple sources, rather than students having to purchase multiple books. In some of the sciences, faculty have developed their own lab manuals and provide them to students for free.

We understand that the governor and General Assembly are serious about taking action on textbook affordability, and we support that goal. But we would discourage a rushed process with an untenable plan. Instead, the legislature could encourage institutions to share best practices, as well as invest in faculty development of course materials.

### Commercialization as a Pathway to Tenure

Finally, we must address the language in HB 49 regarding commercialization and tenure. On its face, we are not opposed to the idea of another pathway to achieving tenure, so long as commercialization is not considered a *requirement* to achieving tenure the same way that instruction, research, and service are. At some Ohio institutions, commercialization already is recognized as a consideration for earning tenure.

But we have to caution. It is acceptable for commercialization to be a consideration for tenure when the research is funded by the university (or a grant with little to no strings attached) and is peer reviewed. It becomes more complicated with public-private arrangements. With private entities, research likely is considered proprietary information. This creates confidentiality restrictions, which would prevent the research from being peer reviewed.

Public universities are supposed to act in the public interest and that is why we require peer review. Otherwise, universities become tools for corporations to promote the interests of their shareholders; and clearly, those can conflict with the public interest or even the interests of competing corporations. We confront a moral dilemma if we award tenure to public institution faculty for commercialization work that serves only the private sector.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for your time. I welcome any questions that you may have.