



Ohio Association of Community Colleges

Interested Party Testimony on Senate Bill 216

Senate Education Committee

Wednesday, February 28, 2018

Chairwoman Lehner, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on Senate Bill 216. I am Jack Hershey, President and CEO of the Ohio Association of Community Colleges (OACC). OACC represents the presidents and trustees of Ohio's 23 public community colleges. Today, I would like to focus my testimony on College Credit Plus (CCP) and the proposed change to the program contained in SB 216.

Since its inception, CCP has been widely popular amongst students and parents. In just the second year of the program, more than 64,000 students across Ohio have taken advantage of the state's dual enrollment program. With the cost of higher education continuing to be a major concern for many of Ohio's families, it is not surprising that so many students are taking advantage of the opportunity to enhance their high school experience by taking courses that allow them to earn college credits at no cost to the student.

While OACC acknowledges that the program is by no means perfect and changes to the program are merited, our colleges are concerned with the perception that only costs associated with CCP are borne by our primary and secondary partners. While it is true that the school districts are responsible to cover the cost of the textbooks and do have CCP payments deducted from the State GRF foundation payments, colleges and universities are also required to absorb significant costs for CCP students. In addition to charging a reduced per credit hour tuition rate – based on whether the course is delivered at the high school, on campus or online – our institutions are also required to waive all fees, including technology, lab or course fees. Colleges are also required to cover the costs of any required course materials which can be very expensive for some courses, particularly science and technical courses. Other direct costs to our institutions include academic advising, testing, career counseling, and CCP coordinating offices.

While we certainly understand that there are some loud critics in the K-12 system who feel that the costs to the school district outweigh the benefits being accrued by their students, the presidents of our community colleges repeatedly tell me that the large majority of superintendents that they partner with on College Credit Plus are enthusiastic supporters of the program, and they understand the enormous value that they are providing to their taxpayers through this partnership.

One of the issues that we have repeatedly heard from superintendents throughout this partnership concerns the cost of textbooks. And we know full well that you are also hearing about it. This is a concern that community colleges take seriously and one we felt was worth trying to solve to preserve the tens of millions in cost savings the program has generated so far.

Last year, we approached the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) with our idea, which they supported with a grant to North Central State Community College, with funding from the Ohio Innovation Grant program. ODHE awarded North Central State, OACC, Ohio State University, and Ohio Dominican University \$1.3 million to collectively implement a statewide project to establish online open educational materials to replace traditional textbooks, with the goal of reducing textbook costs by 70% for the most popular courses taken by college credit plus students.

Faculty from Ohio's community colleges are currently working with faculty from Ohio State University to develop open educational resources (OER) for 19 different high enrollment courses, while faculty from Ohio Dominican University are working on developing OERs for three upper division math courses.

Work has already begun on the first round of courses, which should be finished by the fall of 2018. These courses include the following: American Government, First & Second Level Writing, Intro to Psychology, Intro to Sociology, Linear Algebra, and Statistics (7 total courses). We expect the second round of courses should be finished by the end of 2018, and includes the following: Calculus I & II, General Chemistry I & II, Macroeconomics, Microeconomics, Ordinary Differential Equations, and Quantitative Reasoning (8 total courses). Finally, faculty for the third grouping of courses should finish their work by the summer of 2019. Those courses include the following: Biology I & II, College Algebra, Intro to Ethics, Pre-Calculus, Public Speaking, and an upper level math course to be determined Ohio Dominican (7 total courses).

In just the first two years since College Credit Plus, more than 27,000 students have enrolled in these 19 different general education courses. We are confident that through the OER project, we will be able to reduce the College Credit Plus cost to school districts by millions each year once faculty begin adopting these new resources into the courses.

I say all of this to point out that we certainly understand the motivations behind the CCP textbook language currently in the bill as well as the potential consideration of further amendments. However, we feel that this initiative is well down the road toward a solution that will more than meet the sponsor's intent to reduce the cost burden of CCP textbooks for school districts and would respectfully request that any provisions regarding this subject be removed from the bill. We also recognize that we may be guilty of being so wrapped up in the work of the initiative itself that we have not properly communicated to our partners the benefits of what the state funding for this project will achieve. We will have a conversation with the Ohio Department of Higher Education to discuss what efforts we should take so that school superintendents better understand the implications of our work.

Let me finish with a broader reflection on the program. College Credit Plus in its early days was largely driven (perhaps necessarily so) by state agency staff to ensure that the program got up and running based on the timelines established by the general assembly. However, each year that the program matures, new situations arise, which often raise a whole new set of questions that administrators in both K-12 and higher education have to deal with. At this point in the program's life cycle, I believe that most of these operational issues are probably better solved by administrators and practitioners from school districts, community colleges and public and private universities. Therefore, OACC would support establishing a study committee charged with reviewing the current program and making recommendations on how to improve and sustain the program. Issues such as weighting of courses, whether CCP students should have full access to our course catalogues, AP admission standards, textbook costs, teacher qualifications, and ensuring academic quality for all students regardless of where the course is delivered are all appropriate to review.

Ohio's community colleges stand ready to be constructive participants in any study committee. OACC believes that a collaborative approach, driven locally, will provide the ideal avenue toward improving how this program is administered, while ensuring that this important dual enrollment program remains sustainable for all of our institutions and available to all students throughout Ohio.



Ohio Open Ed Resources Grant Overview



GOAL: Reduce College Textbook Costs to Ohio Students

Ohio

Department of
Higher Education



OhioLINK

Grant Steering Committee

1		Faculty Content Teams Cross-Institution group of up to 5 Subject-Matter Faculty who will identify available OER/Free content packages. <i>\$500-\$1500 stipend per credit hour</i>
2		Faculty Review Teams Cross-Institution group of up to 4 Subject-Matter Faculty who will review packages from Content Teams. <i>\$1000 stipend per review</i>
3		Course Package State Repository Approved OER/Free content package of each course placed into the state repository. <i>FREE TO ALL TO DOWNLOAD/ ADOPT</i>
4		Statewide Community of Practice Statewide network of local campus communities of practice to support/disseminate best practices in adopting the OER/Free content packages.