

**Testimony before the Senate Finance Subcommittee on
Higher Education on House Bill 49**

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Chairman Gardner, Vice Chair Williams, and members of the Subcommittee, I am Dr. Darin Fields, Vice President for Academic Affairs at the University of Findlay. The University of Findlay has been serving northwest Ohio since 1882. The University is known not only for science, health professions, animal science and equestrian studies programs, but also for cultivating the next generation of business leaders, educators and innovative thinkers through a dedication to experiential learning, both in and outside of the classroom. The University of Findlay has nearly 60 undergraduate programs of study leading to baccalaureate degrees and offers 10 master's degrees, and four doctorate-level degree programs.

I appreciate you taking the time to hear my testimony. I would like to discuss to main topics in the budget: College Credit Plus and the Ohio College Opportunity Grant (OCOG).

The University of Findlay is the only college in the state that is accredited by the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP). NACEP's accreditation uses "standards are measurable criteria that address quality in concurrent enrollment programs in the areas of curriculum, faculty, student, assessment, and program evaluation." Sadly, Ohio Dominican University was also accredited but they had to shutter their program due to the bureaucracy of College Credit Plus. We have been operating a post-secondary program for more than 10 years.

This past school year, we had 1046 students earn 5023 credits in 133 classes at 41 high schools. Additionally, 59 students earned 569 credits in classes on campus. However, all of these opportunities will be lost and these students will no longer attend our institution if the College Credit Plus program proposed under House Bill 49 moves forward.

The House-passed version of House Bill 49 includes the following provisions:

Not reinstating the \$40 "floor."

The Governor, Department of Higher Education and many public and private institutions of higher education support this floor. The cost of \$40 per credit hour is a better bargain than a student would get at any institution as a regular undergraduate. Without this small minimum, it is almost impossible for independent colleges to survive in this program. Please remember that independent colleges are not underwritten in any way by the State for CCP outside of the negotiated deals with the high schools. Public colleges, both four- and two-year, get state share of instruction on top of their agreements with high schools to help recoup some of the

lost cost. In fact, the legislative service commission found that public institutions get an average of \$461 in SSI for every three-credit hour course. By allowing the cost of the floor to be driven to zero, this body seems to believe that there is no cost to offering a college course. That universities should just give away college credit without any thought to rigor or substance is a very unsettling road.

The 50/50 textbook cost-share provision.

My understanding is that the House removed the over-arching textbook language to study the cost, but created a mandated 50/50 cost-sharing for textbooks with the high schools. We currently provide the textbooks for students who take courses on campus, and the high schools provide the books for University of Findlay courses offered at the high schools. We have developed this arrangement through cooperative conversations with our partner high schools. Our faculty approve both the textbooks used in the high schools and the syllabus which must mirror the syllabus for the on-campus section. A conservative estimate of 50% of the cost for textbooks used in the high schools would be \$60,000 a year of additional cost to the University of Findlay. This additional cost would be prohibitive to our continued participation in College Credit Plus.

Again, please keep in mind that while publics get these costs recouped through SSI, independent colleges do not.

Requiring colleges and universities to pay for entrance exams

Earlier this year the Department of Higher Education announced that all colleges should be paying for any student, seventh grade and up, who wants to take the ACT or SAT who said they were interested in College Credit Plus. There were no other guidelines issue with this rule. Theoretically, a student could show up and make us pay for an ACT quarterly and never even attend our institution.

This is such an unknown, and potentially large, cost that no non-profit institutions could continue forward with the program. It would not be about ensuring college readiness but rather allowing any entrepreneurial student to use this leverage to make any institution pay for entrance exams to other colleges.

It is my understanding the House included a provision to limit the tests to only one per student. While this is an improvement, I wonder where it ends. If colleges are responsible for all costs of even applying, will they be required to pay for free books next year, and a free computer after that. Where does it end?

Finally, I would be remiss if I didn't mention the importance of Ohio's need-based aid program, OCOG. As you heard last week from our association, Ohio is 36th in the country and dead-last in our region for supporting our neediest college students. At Findlay, 374 undergraduate students received OCOG awards last year. Those are real students who are going to graduate

on time and go out into the workforce. If this state wants to increase its economy it must increase educational attainment. Helping students who would not otherwise go to college should be a priority.

Thank you again for allowing me to testify and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.