



Testimony before the Senate Finance Committee

Substitute House Bill 166
Wednesday, June 5th, 2019

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Burke, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Ohio Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am Jack Hershey, President of the Ohio Association of Community Colleges (OACC), which represents the presidents and trustees of all twenty-three of the state's public community colleges.

You may have read Gongwer's coverage this week of a new report by the National Student Clearinghouse that showed Ohio degree granting institutions saw a 1.9% decrease in total enrollment in spring of 2019 versus spring of 2018. This decrease was slightly larger than the national average of 1.7%. Certainly, some of this decline is to be explained by the fact that our economy is strong and adults in particular are working instead of pursuing education or seeking re-training.

However, there is also the reality that our enrollments would be higher if more students stayed enrolled until graduation instead of dropping out early. In the community college sector we have made great strides in the area of completion. Since first turning our funding formula into an outcomes based formula that only pays us for success, we have seen an 8.5% increase in the number of degrees and long-term certificates awarded by Ohio community colleges and a 22% increase in short-term certificate awards. In fact, during the recent graduation season, numerous community colleges reported the highest graduation classes in their history, even though their enrollment numbers are nowhere near historic highs.

These gains have largely been accomplished by a series of reforms being implemented internally at our campuses to change or outright eliminate policies that were serving as roadblocks to student success. However, we are far from done and have come to realize that the next phase of our work to improve student success requires partnerships with organizations that have typically only been tangentially connected to the business of a community college.

What we have realized by examining student level data is that many of our students are dropping out as outstanding students with excellent grades. Once our colleges dug deeper we discovered that they were often leaving because they were hungry, had housing insecurity, had child care issues, or conflicts with work schedules. And we know from a number of recent studies, the challenge of community college students to overcome basic needs insecurities are not unique to just Ohio students.

- According to a 2018 survey by the Hope Center for College, Community and Justice, a research center located at Temple University, 56% of community college students have experienced housing insecurities, ranging from difficulties paying their utility bills or rent to being evicted.
- Nearly one in five (18%) students reported having been homeless in the last year – yes, we unfortunately have students who are “couch surfing” between friends and relatives' homes, living in their cars or living in a shelter while attending classes.

- A 2019 report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that up to 50% of college students face food insecurities.
- The GAO report estimated that there were 1.8 million low-income, at-risk students who are likely eligible to receive SNAP benefits but were not currently receiving any assistance.

To solve these challenges, we need to establish better working partnerships with organizations who share a similar goal to community colleges: improve the lives of those we serve so that they can secure a family sustaining job and reduce their need for services from organizations like foodbanks, housing authorities, United Way and county Job and Family Service Agencies.

Community College Acceleration Program (CCAP)

This is the core concept behind the Governor’s proposal to establish the Community College Acceleration Program, which I envision as an umbrella type program to better coordinate the numerous funding sources already available through state and federal sources to help move people from poverty into a position where they can fill the numerous jobs currently available at Ohio employers.

We are starting with one strategy funded by a federal funding source that Ohio has not taken full advantage of yet – the Snap to Skills program. The strategy was piloted by Cincinnati State Technical and Community College, Cuyahoga Community College, and Lorain County Community College, who set out to address their low-income students’ needs by turning to a proven-effective program: the Accelerated Study in Associate Programs developed by the City University of New York (CUNY). The accelerated study program requires students to enroll full time, and in exchange, provides them with a comprehensive set of financial, academic advising and other student support services. Two-years into the program, results showed that the Ohio colleges boosted semester-to-semester persistence and credit accumulation and more than doubled the graduation rates for students participating in the program.

Student Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced advising • Enhanced career-development services • Enhanced tutoring 	Requirements and Messages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-time and summer enrollment • Taking developmental education courses early • Graduating within three years
Financial Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuition waiver • Textbook assistance • Monthly incentive* 	Course Enrollment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A consolidated schedule and blocked courses[†] • First-year seminar[‡]
Program Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managed locally within each college • Dedicated staffing 	

The Snap to Skills funding source would require us to work with both the state and county departments of Job and Family Services to begin drawing down dollars available through the U.S. Department of Agriculture aimed at helping educate people

off SNAP benefits and into careers. These funds can be used to provide some of the comprehensive support services that have proven so effective in this pilot program.

I am encouraged to say that we have already have several very productive conversations with the Department of Job and Family Services and the Ohio Department of Higher Education to begin the work of establishing the backbone of this partnership.

We believe we can begin drawing down the federal matching funds, once a plan change is approved by the federal government, based on the current amount of spending already occurring for programs serving SNAP recipients currently enrolled within Ohio's community colleges. However, it will take a little time to get the funding flowing. If you see the wisdom and promise in this strategy, and are interested in us moving quicker, I would highlight that the Federal government will provide a 100% match to any one-time funds that are allocated by the state for the purpose of setting up and establishing the system.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.