

Thank you, Chairman Cross and Ranking Member Howse, for allowing me to testify today. On behalf of the University of Findlay (UF) and my colleagues at the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (AICUO), I ask that you support the proposed increase to the Ohio College Opportunity Grant (OCOG) and the proposed requirement that high school students be required to complete the FAFSA.

**An increase in OCOG** will enable more students who face financial barriers to attend college. UF and the independent higher education sector at large pledge to continue to do our part in helping bridge the financial gap for these students by providing significant need-based and merit aid for them from our own budgets and from donor support.

The breakdown of financial support to students at UF for FY 20 provides context:  
\$45,442,206 in UF and UF-raised funds  
\$3,451,093 in federal and state grants (inclusive of \$970,605 from OCOG)

At UF, an average of 340 students have benefited from OCOG in each of the last four years. UF students who receive OCOG support have achieved an average of 3.21 grade point average (GPA). The top majors for UF OCOG recipients are animal science/pre-veterinary medicine, pharmacy, business, and education.

I know that Ohio is in tight economic times at the moment, but this is the time to invest in Ohioans. The pandemic has added financial strain to many families and communities and ensuring a viable path forward to higher education would only be a betterment to the state.

UF fully supports Governor DeWine's commitment to see the OCOG grant increase by \$500 per student by the end of biennium. Every single dollar for these students counts – a change in \$100 can mean a student might not be able to enroll. UF hopes this body can continue to increase support for OCOG.

**Requiring FAFSA completion** will open opportunities for many Ohio high school students and their families that they do not currently know to be available. The perception that further education is not affordable may keep students from pursuing a trade, technical or four-year degree. How are they to feel hopeful about the future if they believe there is no way to prepare themselves for a better life? The National Association of Financial Aid Advisors recently stated that "for high school seniors, in particular, having awareness of the financial aid process can be transformative."

In conclusion, Ohio's completion rate of education beyond high school must be higher to meet workforce needs and to prepare our citizens for productive lives. Additional OCOG support and requiring FAFSA completion will be a bold step toward more hope for all our citizens.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.