



**Testimony of Kristina M. Johnson, President  
The Ohio State University  
Ohio Senate Finance Committee  
HB 110 Biennial Operating Budget – As Passed by the House  
May 11, 2021**

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Ohio Senate Finance Committee, I am Kristina Johnson, president of The Ohio State University. I appreciate the opportunity to present proponent testimony to the committee on HB 110, the state's biennial operating budget.

The Ohio State University continues to be open for in-person instruction and has been since the beginning of autumn semester last year. While we have expanded our online classes and remote options for students, we value the teaching, learning, interaction and research that occurs in-person on all of our campuses (Columbus, Lima, Mansfield, Marion, Newark and Wooster). Like you, we endeavor to continue safely returning to normal day-to-day activities as the state emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic. The operating budget before you is an important component for Ohio's higher education institutions as we produce more and more graduates who are eager to make their mark in the world with the skills they need for jobs that will power Ohio's economy into the future. Attracting and retaining the knowledge-economy entrepreneurs, employers and workforce grows more important every day.

In addition to communicating to you about the HB 110 biennial budget, I want to take this opportunity to give you some brief updates about the university:

- **Enrollment** remains strong. In the recent autumn semester, we had a total university enrollment of 67,957 students.
  - The number of undergraduate students at the Columbus campus reached a record-high level of 46,984.
  - African American student enrollment increased by 8.1% compared to autumn semester of 2019.
  - Our freshman class size at the Columbus campus in autumn semester was a record high of 8,602.
  - Our autumn semester undergraduate enrollment was 79.0% in-state students.

- **Student outcomes** are improving, too. In 2020, our undergraduate four-year graduation rate reached 68.7%, and our six-year graduation rate was 87.0%. Both are record highs.
  - This past Sunday, May 9, we held commencement in Ohio Stadium. 12,345 degrees and certificates were conferred.
  
- **Affordability:**
  - We continue to utilize the Buckeye Opportunity Program, a student financial aid initiative we created in 2018-2019, to cover any gap in the cost of tuition and general fees for Pell-eligible, in-state students.
  - We also are continuing the President’s Affordability Grant program, established in 2015, to provide up to \$2,250 to approximately 15,000 low- and moderate-income Ohio students annually.
  - The Ohio State University started its undergraduate tuition-guarantee program in 2017. Ohio undergraduate students and their families now have certainty for tuition, general fees, and room and board as they attend the university. (Prior to the guarantee program being implemented, Ohio State had frozen in-state tuition from the 2012-2013 academic year through the 2017-2018 academic year.)
  - The percentage of undergraduate students graduating with debt has declined from 55% of our student population five years ago to 47% in 2019-2020. Additionally, for those who graduate with debt, the average amount has decreased 3.6% over the last two years to \$27,133.
  - I intend to make additional progress on affordability. Over the next decade, our goal is to have graduating seniors leave our campuses debt-free, as I recently noted in my State of the University address.
  
- **Entrepreneurship:**
  - Our focus on research, innovation and the knowledge enterprise will grow entrepreneurship opportunities and deepen partnerships with private-sector startups. The Ohio State University Innovation District, along with Nationwide Children’s Hospital, recently received a boost in support from JobsOhio. As part of our commitment to JobsOhio and the state, the university will double our sponsored research in biomedical science and engineering and will produce 22,500 additional STEM graduates cumulatively over the next 15 years.
  
- **Workforce and partnerships:**
  - Our Office of Academic Affairs is working to create even more ways to quickly respond to the labor market. We participate in Ohio’s innovative TechCred program and have developed many certificates sought by employers.
  - By improving and growing online offerings, Ohio State can help many more students (both traditional and adult learners) earn degrees at their own pace. While we look forward to returning fully to the on-campus instruction most of our students prefer, we are taking the lessons we have learned to improve our remote learning offerings.

- Our regional campuses, too, continue to develop degree programs in conjunction with Ohio businesses for in-demand career fields. For example, the newly minted Bachelor of Science in Engineering Technology degree will help Ohio businesses fill plant manager roles with specific industry-desired skill sets.
- We continue to work with our two-year community and technical college partners on 2+2 pathways for associate's and bachelor's degrees.

With regards to the state budget, Governor DeWine and this General Assembly are to be commended for your support of higher education in uncertain times.

HB 110 provides an excellent framework for Ohio higher education in FY 22 and FY 23. I would respectfully request additional state investment beyond the appropriations now in the bill:

- *State Share of Instruction (SSI)* – This line item is the main source of state support to state-assisted colleges and universities for operating costs associated with instruction. I thank the governor and House for their proposal to increase funds for SSI by 1.0% in FY 22 and by 0.9% in FY 23. I would ask there be consideration of increasing the line item by the inflation rate in each year of the biennium.
- *Ohio College Opportunity Grant (OCOG)* – OCOG is Ohio's main need-based aid program. HB 110 contains appropriation levels that will support an increase of \$500 per eligible student over the course of the biennium. I would ask that the OCOG program be funded at a level to provide eligible students a \$500 increase per fiscal year, as was originally anticipated by the pre-pandemic budget for FY 20 – FY 21.
- *Cooperative Extension* – Ohio State University Extension provides services, in partnership with all 88 counties, as part of our land-grant university mission. Program areas include agriculture and natural resources, 4-H youth programs, and family and consumer science. I would request this line item be flat-funded at FY 21 appropriation levels, which would be an increase of \$1,157,273 in FY 22 and \$755,509 in FY 23.
- *Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center (OARDC)* – OARDC is the research operation of Ohio State's College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences. As another component of our land-grant mission, OARDC assists Ohio's farms and agricultural industry improve competitiveness and profitability at 12 locations across the state. I would request flat-funding at FY 21 appropriation levels for this line item, which would be an increase of \$2,465,858 in FY 22 and \$1,868,074 in FY 23.
- *Sea Grant* – This appropriation supports the Ohio Sea Grant Program in the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences. This is part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Sea Grant College Program, which works to protect Lake Erie and coastal resources. In addition, the Sea Grant partners with the Ohio Department of Higher Education and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency on water-quality assessment, protection and improvement. The bill currently flat-funds this line item at FY 21 levels. I would request this funding be maintained.

- *Ohio State University Clinic Support & Ohio State University Clinical Teaching* – The Clinical Teaching and Clinic Support line items assist with Ohio State University’s laboratory and clinical teaching components of medical and other health-related curricula. I would ask that these line items be flat-funded at FY 21 levels which would require a \$28,910 increase in the Support line item and a \$364,664 increase in the Teaching line item in FY 22.

I also ask for your support in retaining the appropriation in the budget bill for:

- *The Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine (OSUCVM)* – We support this new line item because more than 80% of practicing veterinarians in Ohio graduated from the OSUCVM, and this state support is vitally important to the college’s mission to educate the next generation of Ohio veterinarians, protect Ohio’s food supply, prevent infectious disease outbreaks and assist agricultural production. Additionally, this appropriation will help with access and affordability for in-state students. Please see the attached material with regard to veterinary medicine. As you know, The Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine is the only college of veterinary medicine in Ohio, and I ask that you retain this appropriation.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today. We remain committed to our core mission as a land-grant university, and I look forward to working with you as a partner in the years to come.