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Senate Workforce & Higher Education Committee
Chairman Terry Johnson & Ranking Member
Wednesday June 2, 2021
SB 135

Dr. Neville Pinto, President of the University of Cincinnati

Chairman Johnson, Vice-Chairman Cirino, Ranking Member Williams, and members of the Senate Workforce & Higher Education committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide interested party written testimony to SB 135. I am Dr. Neville Pinto, President of the University of Cincinnati. UC serves over 46,000 students across 14 colleges and 414 areas of discipline. We are leading public urban universities into a new era of innovation and impact. Our faculty, staff, and students are saving lives, changing outcomes, and shaping the direction of our city, region and state. Our primary focus is the impact we make as a public university on students – students of all types – students who are the talent pipeline for employers, for startups, for large and small businesses, for our educational system, health professions, all types of careers and community involvement.

UC: Enrollment and Accessibility

This year, in the middle of a pandemic, UC again reached record-breaking enrollment for the 8th straight year - one of the few in the state and nation to increase enrollment rather than dip.

The vast majority of our students, who come from all 88 Ohio counties, are seeking and attaining bachelor's degrees, but as a comprehensive university we also have master's and doctoral students and students on two regional campuses.

The following illustrates our enrollment per degree:

Total:	46,798
Associate's:	6,769
Bachelor's:	27,325
Master's:	6,353
Doctoral:	3,741
Certificate:	1,013
Non-degree seeking:	1,597

Pell Students:

- 24% are Pell eligible (first-time, full-time students)
- 19% Uptown Campus
- 45% UC Blue Ash
- 46% UC Clermont

UC: Attainment

We work hard to support the state’s goals to increase the number of citizens with a college degree. We use innovative approaches to foster student success and graduation. The number of degrees we award and the number of students we graduate are at record levels. Our graduation rate continues to improve and is up more than 9 percentage points over the last seven years– now at its highest level ever at 72.8%.

Number of Degrees Awarded: 11,675 (AY 2020-21)
 Number of Graduates: 11,173 (AY 2020-21)
 6-Year Bachelor’s degree Graduation Rate: 72.8%
An increase of more than 9 percentage points in seven years (was 63.6%)

UC: Affordability

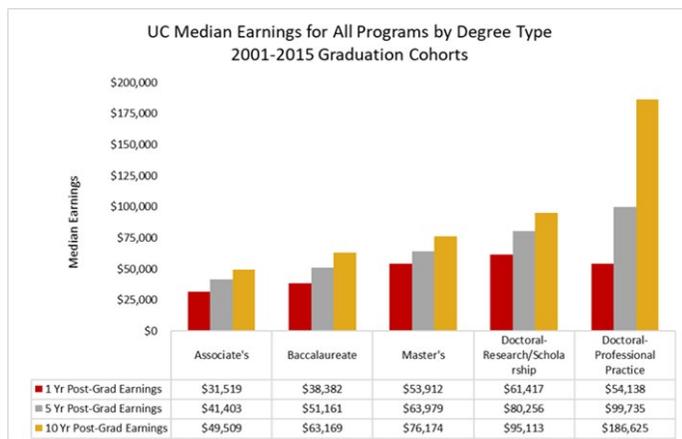
UC is focused on college affordability. UC provides \$128 million annually in scholarships and assistance to students to help make their college experience affordable—not including any government grants or CARES funds. In the past two years UC reallocated \$1.6M in institutional merit aid towards needy students through the Bearcat Incentive Grants and UC Need Grants.

As the worldwide Co-op founder, we view cooperative education as one of our greatest tools to keep college affordable. Students last year earned \$75 million collectively. We are currently expanding Co-op into more and more disciplines, including the arts and communications, and majors such as Political Science, International Affairs, and Law and Society.

Our tuition levels have been frozen for continuing undergraduate students for five years in a row, and our Tuition Guarantee Program has been in place since Fall 2019.

UC: Earnings by Degree Types

This chart demonstrates the relationship between degrees and earnings for UC graduates. It includes the median earnings of our graduates for all degree types and demonstrates that the education UC provides is making an impact on students’ lives.



UC and Senate Bill 135: Maintaining Ohio's Competitive Edge

We appreciate the sponsor's collaboration with us on the bill after its introduction and the changes made in the substitute bill. While the bill is greatly improved, we still have several concerns with an eye toward Ohio's economic strength. We support the concepts of access, affordability, and attainment and, even with the great progress higher education has made in all areas, we believe we always can do more.

Expanding community colleges' ability to provide non-applied bachelor's degrees raises questions about duplication of degrees as well as the delivery of advanced coursework. With Nursing degrees, for example: there are simply not enough qualified nursing faculty to keep expanding programs, and this will further deplete the pool of available faculty, driving up their costs. For the community colleges to offer more bachelor programs they would need to comply with and meet regional accreditation standards (Higher Learning Commission) and hire new faculty who meet accreditation standards, increasing costs yet again. If, on the other hand, community colleges were to attempt to keep costs of bachelor's degrees low by using the same model as is used for associate degree programs, they will not be able to maintain regional accreditation standards. The laudable goal of college affordability, which UC shares and actively supports, could consequently be eroded by this bill.

Furthermore, given the number of 4-year institutions in the state as well as the declining number of college-aged students over the next decade in Ohio, it is not financially prudent to increase bachelor's degree at community colleges. Granting authority to offer bachelor's degrees confuses the role of community colleges and universities within the state and could lead to duplicative bachelor's degrees, something public universities have been working to reduce.

Finally, we are concerned about Sec. 3345.063 of the bill, that prohibits a state university from prioritizing the admission of an applicant who is not an Ohio resident over an applicant who is an Ohio resident if both applicants have substantially similar qualifications that satisfy the university's admissions. This could hurt a public university's ability to recruit out of state and/or international students when such a strategy is frankly necessary due to declining Ohio population—especially when we should be focused on attracting new talent to Ohio. Institutions need to be able to achieve diversity within their class cohorts -- including cultural, experiential, and geographical diversity. In order for Ohio to maintain its economic development advantage and nationwide competitiveness, in order to serve our mission as an urban public university serving Ohio, in this demographic and financial environment we need flexibility to attract and retain the best and brightest students from across the country and around the world to the University of Cincinnati.