

**University of Cincinnati Capital Budget Testimony
Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee
Wednesday, April 10**

Thank you, Chairman Cirino, Vice Chairman Rulli, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee. I am Neville Pinto, President of the University of Cincinnati, and I am grateful to be here today to share more about UC.

Originally founded in 1819, the University of Cincinnati has evolved over the past 200 years to where we are today. We are extremely proud of the meaningful contributions we have made in the lives of our students, alumni, faculty and staff in Cincinnati, in Ohio and beyond. In 2017, I was honored to be appointed as the university's 30th president. Since then, my commitment has been to faithfully steward this institution with an eye toward dramatically changing the future. This is why, in 2018, I introduced "Next Lives Here," our university's strategic direction.

At UC, we use "Next Lives Here" as a framework to prepare our students for the future. Our core belief is that society's next leaders are right here, on our campus, today. It is our duty and responsibility to prepare them to be successful so that our society will thrive. Our university's vision in support of this belief is to lead urban public universities into a new era of innovation and impact. The word "public" is the most important word in our vision statement, and its centrality unfolds in two significant ways. First, our goal is to provide broad access to the life-changing opportunity that higher education can offer. We therefore welcome any qualified student who wants to pursue higher education to do so at UC. Secondly, our duty is to advance knowledge for the public good.

This is done by increasing our understanding of the world around us. We then leverage this knowledge with creativity and innovation to solve problems and create new opportunities for our communities. Therefore, to live up to our vision, we have adopted an aggressive growth mindset — growth in education, growth in discovery & creativity, and growth in innovation. All of this is with the goal of achieving major impact.

The University of Cincinnati serves 50,921 students across 13 academic colleges. This academic year was the first in our history to surpass 50,000 students and represents a 15% increase since 2017. We expect that number will increase further in the 2024-25 academic year. We have also broken records in the number of degrees we have awarded, with over 12,500 degrees conferred last year.

We recognize this growth is an outlier compared to the national higher education landscape. In the United States, there are 900,000 fewer undergraduates in college today than there were in Fall of 2019. This decline is a threat to our nation's long-term competitiveness. In order to

secure Ohio, and consequently the nation as a global leader, we must expand our talent base. We need all public universities to grow aggressively, building the pipeline of skilled workers.

STEM degrees at UC have grown by nearly 29% over the last five years. This has been fueled by our efforts to grow our student population by opening our doors wide to attract qualified students who otherwise would not have pursued higher education. We have 9,200 first-generation students — defined as the first in their family to go to college. And, we now have more than 12,000 graduate students. Along the way, our students have become more diverse, with 27% of our population being students of color, an increase of 6% since 2017.

Our growth, and our increasing diversity, is driven by our public mission. In fact, we believe increasing our diversity is a strategic imperative. From first-generation students breaking barriers in their families, to adult learners looking to advance their career, to veterans who have returned from duty, many are achieving their goals at UC. Ultimately, this builds a stronger workforce for our businesses, state and nation.

As one example of opening our doors wide, we realized in 2017, when we were developing our strategic direction “Next Lives Here,” that too few Cincinnati Public Schools students were coming to the University of Cincinnati. In fact, in 2017, students from only three of the 17 CPS high schools came to UC. Today, students come to us from every single one of those 17 schools. UC has also been proactive in reaching adults who might want to pursue new careers. We provide academic credit that recognizes professional work experience that they can apply toward certificates and degrees. We have almost 9,000 online students who reach us through technology that allows them to complete coursework while being employed.

Our growth story is one of student achievement. Our strategy focuses heavily on student success, through hiring faculty, academic advisors and career advisors to meet the needs of our growing enrollment and continuing to deliver an educational experience of high quality. These investments impact our retention and graduation rates. We now retain 85.7% of our students, with a goal of retaining 90% or more.

Over the last academic year, 12,523 students graduated, an increase of 16% since 2017. Success, though, is not measured by just a successfully earned diploma or certificate. It is also having a professional plan and the skills and tools to achieve professional goals. Our Bearcat Promise program brings to life our commitment to our students that when they walk across our Commencement stage, they will have a diploma in one hand and a career plan in the other.

I am proud of the fact that 96% of our graduates are employed or continuing their education a year after commencement. Our graduates at both the associates and baccalaureate levels earn median salaries of \$51,000 a year, 37% higher than the median per capita income in our city.

Now let me share with you our progress in research and scholarship. UC is designated as a Research-1 institution by the Carnegie Foundation, which signifies the highest degree of research conducted at an institution of higher education. Our annual research expenditures are almost \$700 million, an increase of more than \$240 million a year since 2017. This places us on a path to reach our Research 2030 goal to become a top-25 public research institution nationally. We are currently ranked 31st by the National Science Foundation.

Most of our research grants — upwards of 56% — come from the federal government, earned by our faculty in highly competitive grant programs. These grants funnel hundreds of millions of dollars in research spending, dollars that originate from outside our state, into Ohio's economy every year. Overall scholarship at UC is also at a record high, with UC researchers publishing in over 5,800 scholarly publications last year. In the latest report on the "Top American Research Universities" from the Center for Measuring University Performance, UC ranks 26th in the nation among public universities.

Our work creates positive ripple effects across our community. According to a recent study, we deliver a total annual economic impact of \$10.6 billion into our region. One out of every 12 jobs in the region are supported by the activities of the university and our students. We think these numbers will only increase as we continue to chase our ambitious growth goals. We are also proud of our role as a major employer. In the last fiscal year, we employed more than 12,000 FTEs in our faculty and staff, making us the fourth largest employer in Greater Cincinnati. Our dedicated workforce is the fuel that powers our success.

All of this activity creates a vibrant environment for learning designed to meet the needs of our students and their future employers, creating the workforce that our region, state and country desperately needs. Public universities must prepare students to be civic leaders, and successful in the workplace — something UC has been doing for decades.

The University of Cincinnati invented the co-op model in 1906. Co-op, an abbreviation for "cooperative education," is a partnership between students, higher education institutions and employers that fully integrates academic study with real-world work experience by alternating semesters on the job and semesters in the classroom. UC has been a perennial leader nationwide for this model of education. Last year, our students earned more than \$75 million in wages as part of their co-op experiences. A recent study showed that UC students, in total, had 12.2% lower student debt burdens than their peers because of our co-op program.

We are investing heavily in building out innovation at the University of Cincinnati, both as an educational outcome and to grow the near-term impact of our discovery and research. Innovation is the capacity to apply talent and knowledge in real time, at the challenging pace

that today's world demands. This approach allows us to take on the problems facing our society while creating significant new opportunities for our economy.

One way of exposing our students to innovation is by engaging them in practice. We connect our students to practice opportunities, not only through co-op, but through partnerships with industry. One example is our 1819 Innovation Hub. This hub has brought industry onto our campus and provided opportunities that otherwise did not exist for our students, faculty and staff. Within the 1819 Innovation Hub, we now have 17 corporate partners, including multiple Fortune 500s, who are leasing space to be co-located on our campus. Why are they there? They want access to talent for the future — access to our students — and our students are getting an incredible head start on their careers through these experiences.

The best way to draw businesses to our state and region is to provide a talented, trained, ready-to-go workforce that is educated and energized to meet the future. UC is doing that and will continue to deliver to meet this growing need. But this requires continued investment in people and facilities, and that is why I am here today.

Our capital budget request this biennium is for the renovation of a critical STEM facility so we can continue to meet the needs of the knowledge economy. We are asking the committee to support a capital allocation of \$41 million to renovate the original 1917 chemistry building, which we call "Old Chem," and replace the research wing, built in the 1930s. This is our only capital request this budget cycle. The renovation is projected to cost \$190 million in total, with \$29 million awarded during the last capital budget cycle. If additional state funds are awarded at \$41 million, approximately \$120 million will be funded by UC through debt financing and philanthropy.

This project will bring cutting-edge technology and facilities, upgrading STEM instruction for undergraduates in engineering, biology, chemistry, and anatomy & physiology. These are some of our fastest-growing programs, supporting foundational education for future medical professionals, engineers and other STEM disciplines. As we have heard from economic development leaders across our state, we know these are in-demand workforce needs. Once complete, the project will serve half of UC's undergraduate population. Funding this project will help UC continue the progress we have made in educating and preparing our students to be successful in the workforce.

Chairman Cirino also requested that we provide information about our institutional costs, which we shared with the committee. You will see on the following slides the figures related to our operating and instruction costs, general staff costs, employee headcounts, and an accounting of our investment in diversity-related programming.

To meet the demands of our growing student population and continue improving our student success outcomes, for fiscal year 2023, we spent \$392.6 million on faculty and instructors, employing a little more than 5,000 FTEs. Salaries for our grounds, maintenance, utilities, and food service employees were \$32.1 million in fiscal 2023; and we employed approximately 440 FTEs in those specific roles. We spent \$495 million on administrators and staff who are not faculty, employing a little more than 7,400 FTEs.

Our diversity efforts also exist to advance student success, which we see in outcomes related to retention, graduation and employment. We strive to bring out the best in our students, faculty and staff by valuing their unique backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives – welcoming and leveraging individual contributions to collaborate, create, innovate and compete in a global society. Out of our 12,000-plus faculty and staff, 34 FTEs are fully dedicated to diversity initiatives, at a cost of about \$2.1 million. Beyond this, there are some faculty and staff with multiple responsibilities, one of which is serving diverse students. As an example, an associate dean in one of our colleges may devote 40% of his or her time to supporting programs that lead to higher retention among diverse students. There are 38 such individuals, and collectively they devote the equivalent of 19 FTEs to similar programs. We have calculated our total spend in this area based on this estimate is \$3.5 million in the most recent fiscal year.

In closing, allow me to point out that the numbers I have shared with you are only that — numbers we have pulled from a spreadsheet. These figures do not tell the story of the top cancer researchers we have recruited to our university from across the country who are now working to unlock the mysteries of Leukemia in our soon-to-open Blood Cancer Healing Center. These numbers say nothing about the UC engineers who won an \$11.5 million grant to develop satellite-based robotics technologies to service other satellites in space. The tables also cannot illustrate the success of our Gen-1 program, which serves as a living/learning center for first-generation students, who regularly outperform their peers when it comes to achieving a degree.

There are countless additional examples I could share of the inspiring work taking place at our university. Thank you again for your time today, for the opportunity to share UC's success and growth, and for your consideration of our capital request. I would be happy to answer any questions the committee might have.