

**Presentation to the Senate Workforce and Education Committee  
Senator Jerry Cirino, Chair  
April 24, 2024**

**Alex Johnson, Interim President  
Central State University**

**Slide 1**

Senator Cirino and members of the committee, thank you for allowing President-Elect Morakinyo Kutu, our associates, and me to join you today. It is our hope that through our appearance the power and value of Central State University is more evident so that decisions related to capital funding for the University are informed.

For the 2023-24 academic year the theme is *“Culture + Collaboration = Success”* to underscore continued innovation as we transitioned to new leadership and to denote the significance of teamwork in an environment where the potential of every student is maximized.

**Slide 2**

The importance of collective engagement is rooted in the history of Central State University established in 1887 by freed men and women and the Ohio state legislature as a teacher and vocational education department on the campus of Wilberforce University. In 1951 Central State became an independent college and in 1965 a university, primarily for African American residents of Ohio and beyond. In 1974, a tornado ripped through the region, destroying eighty percent of the campus. Calls to shutter the university permanently were quieted by alumni and friends and the sight of students returning just two weeks following a natural disaster that claimed 32 lives, among them a student and staff members.

The tornado ushered in an era of innovation that enabled the university to expand, including designation in 2014 as an 1890 Land Grant Institution supported by a one-to-one match from state and federal funds.

**Slide 3**

Today, as Ohio’s only publicly supported historically black university, Central State boasts a diverse student enrollment attending classes and programs on campuses in Wilberforce and Dayton. It’s 630 full and part-time employees oversee varied

programs that lead to well-paying careers or graduate school. The University is regionally accredited for ten years by the Higher Learning Commission and several programs are certified, including engineering, business, and social work.

#### **Slide 4**

The return on investment of dollars, including those from the state, are impactful. Central State contributes annually \$323.13 million to Ohio's economy.

#### **Slide 5**

The staff is proud of their contributions. They are well-educated, highly expert, and diverse; 36% are white and 54% are women.

#### **Slide 6**

The students are motivated, but rely heavily on Pell Grants and institutional aid, which is costly. The student body is majority female and overall is 33% Black, 36% white, and 41% other, including a sizeable international presence. Sixty-two percent of graduates, regardless of residency, remain in Ohio.

#### **Slide 7**

Despite fluctuations in enrollment caused, in part, by a now defunct, third-party online program, the enrollment outlook is favorable, and the number of graduates has been increasing.

#### **Slide 8**

Despite this outlook, like higher education nationally, several challenges face Central State. Unsteady enrollments, dwindling government support, and public concern over cost and value mean that the university must be positioned to respond with innovative programs and services.

This responsibility requires us to thoroughly examine or overhaul existing structures, achieving flexibility and vitality in academic programs and reducing costs through operational efficiency.

For example, we are implementing a system to support the student journey, meaning they will graduate on time and in higher numbers, resulting in less outlay for tuition and fees.

Integrating colleges, beginning with Education into Humanities Arts and Social Sciences, and eliminating low enrolled courses and programs will streamline operations, thus avoiding duplication and redundancy.

### **Slide 9**

The Central State Student and Institutional Success Model is the centerpiece for these actions. Based upon the National Institute for Student Success at Georgia State University, the model includes the Six Pillars of Access – CONNECT, CONVERT, ENTER, LEARN, RETAIN, AND COMPLETE. These pillars combine administrative operations and data-based approaches to increase outcomes including enrollment rates, retention rates, and the accumulation of thirty credits in the first year, including mathematics and English.

The model also quantifies the concept of “Sense of Belonging,” which constitutes the extent engagement in extra-curricular activities contributes to student success.

### **Slide 10**

And, as we refine offerings it shall entail applying six academic pathways to create generalized degrees that provide specialties (sometimes referred to as meta majors) in up-to-date fields that have value in the workplace or in graduate school.

### **Slide 11**

As we progress, our designation as an 1890 Land Grant Institution will distinguish us from other Ohio public universities except for Ohio State. The 1890 institutions were established under the Second Morrill Act to provide agricultural research, education, and extension programs to African Americans.

### **Slide 12**

When Central State was awarded the 1890 Land Grant designation in 2014, it joined Ohio State in serving citizens throughout Ohio.

### **Slide 13**

Its research and development programs are focused on ensuring science and technology combine to improve agricultural solutions to improve health outcomes.

### **Slide 14**

Central State continues to serve communities in 44 counties of Ohio in extension program. In 2023, 18,000 individuals participated in 740 programs, camps, workshops, and classes.

**Slide 15**

A brand-new Agricultural Research and Education Complex will stimulate additional funding for research, which has grown since the inception of the land grant mission from \$6.5 million in 2014 to a high mark of \$50 million in 2021.

**Slide 16**

Central State's Ohio Senate Bill ratio has fluctuated in recent years. This is due, in part, to the influx of HERRF monies to offset expenses incurred during COVID-19.

**Slide 17**

Some funds were used for recurring expenses, which remained after funding ended. After reconciliation measures to offset a \$4.1 million shortfall, the FY 24 budget will be balanced through eliminating duplication, reducing expenses, and renegotiating contracts.

**Slide 18**

The FY 25 Capital Request is important for ensuring that programs and services take place in well-maintained facilities.

**Slide 19**

Utility, infrastructure, and technology upgrades head the list of immediate needs. But, constitute only a small portion of the deferred maintenance needs contained in the following slide.

**Slide 20**

Here you see details of pressing needs that require additional funding that smaller institutions, like Central State, are not able to access because of student body size. I urge the committee to consider additional funding to guard against further deterioration of infrastructures at these universities.

**Slide 21**

On this slide is a rendering of a facility that will house health care programs, including nursing. If funding is secured through the one-time Strategic Community Fund for this project, it will provide additional opportunities for students to earn degrees that have significant value in the work place, especially at health care organizations located in the Miami Valley. I ask for your support of this venture.

**Slide 22**

On this final slide is a picture of Galloway Tower, one of the few structures standing following the 1974 tornado. It is symbolic of the resilience and fortitude instilled in students as they transition from Pirate, to Marauder, to Centralian. These titles reflect phases of the student experience from enrollment, as they complete coursework, and graduate. This is a rite of passage established early in the history of the university as students pursued a quality education in a culturally enriching environment.

Your support will ensure that students be educated in well-maintained and updated facilities.

Thank you.