



Jean R. Paddock, PhD

President

Ohio Senate Higher Education Committee

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Chair Roegner, Vice-Chair Timken, Ranking Member Ingram, and all members of the Senate Higher Education Committee, thank you for your commitment to public service and your time spent this evening considering the different facets of proposed budget spending regarding how it may impact institutions like mine.

My name is Jean Paddock and I serve as the President of Aultman College in Canton, Ohio.

For the purposes of these remarks, context seems important. My interest is in serving students and getting them into the healthcare workforce, particularly in Northeast Ohio. Aultman College is one of the smaller institutions in the independent college association, and has approximately 300 total students studying certificates, associate's, and bachelor's degrees focused solely in healthcare in areas such as nursing, radiologic technology, medical assisting, and diagnostic medical sonography. Our graduates (approximately 60 new healthcare providers graduated with certificates and degrees last Thursday!) remain in northeast Ohio at rates of 95-98%, taking care of local communities throughout multiple counties, including rural and underserved populations, and providing a quality workforce in professions that continue to experience regular shortages.

My attention was drawn to the proposed Ohio House budget and the Governor's Merit Scholarship required provisions, particularly four specific areas as they relate to my campus.

1. Proposed faculty requirements were inconsistent with our teaching-focused faculty philosophy and, in some cases, simply could not be applied at our institution.
 - Adhering to proposed workload ranges would result in faculty workload for us that is LESS THAN our current policy/practice. With a cursory review of existing state institution workloads, we would need to hire 25% more faculty to teach the same number of classes we are covering today with our current faculty. This inefficiency does not make sense.
 - Tenure review is also not relevant to our campus. We do not offer faculty tenure. Instead, annual faculty reviews for all inform hiring for the next 1-3 year period and are dependent upon many outcome achievement factors, primarily revolving around quality of teaching, research, and service.
 - I would argue that removing provisions surrounding faculty workload and tenure in the requirements would allow us to continue to teach and review faculty with the efficiencies we already have in place today.
2. The 10 percent acceptance mandate proposed would simply not be possible in healthcare programs that are limited to a capped number of seats. Currently, the only programs on which we have enrollment caps (due to clinical site regulations) are radiologic technology and our newest program, diagnostic medical sonography.
 - Clinical/field hours and experience are required for every one of our healthcare programs in order to graduate. Said programs have strict clinical hours/ratios, and limits mandated by external accreditors. If we were forced to accept students (we offer direct program entry), it could result in too many students in one field, leaving them without the ability to earn those clinical hours and, therefore, unable to graduate. This scenario is untenable.
 - Our clinical partners (including our own affiliate health system) accept thousands of students (from ours and multiple local campuses) for clinical hours and experiences annually. Their capacity also has a limit. They must preserve a quality teaching experience and most importantly, patient care/safety.
 - Allowing us the ability to opt in to a 10% acceptance program for those students who meet admission criteria and those programs that do not have current clinically driven caps could be a solid compromise.

3. Reasoning for funding distribution seems inconsistent between K-12 and higher education.

- K-12 funding efforts are expanding student choice by spreading funding between public and private/independent schools
- This proposal does the opposite and will likely restrict student choice, with many private/independent colleges like mine unable to accept Governor's Merit Scholars due to our inability to comply with multiple requirements proposed in the House Budget.
- Allowing students to have choice in their market (thereby creating a competitive environment for our campus vs. our peers) would reflect the most freedom in student choice. For students to choose Ohio first, it would be wise to give them just that, choice.

4. What happens "next"?

- The Governor's Merit Scholarship impacts 3 of our current students. While that is admittedly a small "n", on my campus, every student and their aid is my business. \$5,000 annually is a big number to a student.
- Students could leave the state to get the clinical hours and healthcare education they would need that perhaps other institutions couldn't offer. With a nursing shortage well documented, sending our best and brightest who want to enter the healthcare field to other states is the opposite of what we want.

Overall, I'd sum up like this.

I believe we have the same goals – we want Ohio students to choose Ohio colleges and join Ohio's workforce. We'd like to leverage many tools (including budget dollars) in order to create an Ohio environment in which that scenario happens as much as possible. My argument today is that restrictions and parameters placed on student aid (such as the Governor's Merit Scholarship) do not accomplish that shared goal but instead create barriers to students and institutions.

I do appreciate that these are complex issues and you have many factors to consider in your budget deliberations. Again, I thank you for listening to and considering the impact specific to my campus and students and I genuinely do appreciate your commitment to public service. I would be happy to answer questions you may have.