



Testimony for the Ohio House Finance Committee
Lillian B. Schumacher, President

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Timken, Ranking Member Ingram and members of the Ohio Senate Finance Committee, on behalf of Tiffin University (TU), and my colleagues in higher education across the great State of Ohio, I thank you for your time and attention today as we discuss the vital importance of higher education in fostering a stronger Ohio. Your dedication to a state defined by prosperity, opportunity, and growth is deeply appreciated, especially by those of us committed to preparing tomorrow's workforce.

I am honored to speak on behalf of Tiffin University, an institution grounded in a mission to educate students by linking knowledge to professional practice. As a proud leader within this institution, I have witnessed firsthand how education can reshape lives, families, and entire communities.

Tiffin University is committed to delivering accessible, innovative, and outcomes-driven education. We believe in providing not only a degree, but an experience that produces ethical leaders, critical thinkers, and engaged citizens, people ready to contribute meaningfully to Ohio's workforce and economy.

Today, I will focus on three core areas that are central to our work and relevant to your deliberations: affordability, partnerships and innovative programs, and workforce development.

Affordability

We are grateful for the state's continued support for our students through programs like the Ohio College Opportunity Grant (OCOG), the Choose Ohio First Grant, Ohio Governors Merit Scholarship, and the War Orphans Scholarship which are often critical to making college accessible for our students, as 72% of our domestic students are Ohio residents. Further, many Tiffin University students are first-generation, Pell-eligible, or from underserved communities.

Tiffin University has 14 Ohio Governors Merit Scholarship recipients for the 2025-2026 academic year. This program being cut for private institutions would significantly impact these families financially. In addition, it would take away the student and families right to choose the institution that is the best fit for them.

A few key facts about Tiffin University:

- 35% of our student population are first-generation college students, among students who file the FAFSA and need to utilize aid, our first-generation population is 43%
- 75% of our Fall 2024 on-campus undergraduate class were first-time, first year students
- 33% of our student population are from underrepresented groups
- 52% of our undergraduate student population are Pell Grant eligible.
- 98% of our full-time undergraduate students received some form of financial aid
- In 2024-2025, \$28,894,755 was awarded to students from unfunded institutional aid
- Tiffin University enhanced our Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) initiative where students earn credit for certificates, military training, exams for credit, and experiential learning which reduces the time and cost towards a degree.

Partnerships and Innovative Programs

Tiffin University has made intentional efforts to establish robust partnerships with employers and community stakeholders to ensure our students gain relevant experience and meaningful job opportunities. The majority of Tiffin University's undergraduate academic programs require an internship in their field as part of their degree requirement.

Examples include:

- Tiffin partners with institutions such as Terra State Community College and Lourdes University to provide career pathways in healthcare and education.
- Our School of Criminal Justice & Social Sciences maintains long-standing relationships with law enforcement and correctional facilities, helping to train the next generation of public servants.
- Tiffin University's Drone Academy partners with the Ohio State Highway Patrol, Ohio Department of Transportation, Ohio Homeland Security, CSX Railroad, Sheriff's Office, and local police departments to conduct continuous drone training to community members and respective employees.
- Our Cold Case Fellowship, established in the Fall of 2022 and will have 75 students in this program this fall, partners with law enforcement agencies from Ohio to gain experience while working to solve current cold cases.
- Students work at several organizations in Tiffin through the Community Work Study program.
- Institutionally funded discounts are offered for students who are employed by hundreds of companies and organizations (i.e. Marathon, Whirlpool, AICUO, etc.).
- Each year, TU students collectively volunteer 28,500 hours and 100% of first-year students engage in service-learning projects, further solidifying TU's commitment to community engagement.
- Tiffin is a proud Purple Star campus, supporting active-duty military members, veterans, and their families with specialized resources, credit for military training, and dedicated advising.
- Our Life@TU program which provides compelling, academically oriented, non-credit programming is designed for adults age 50+ has over 140 members.
- Tiffin University created a Dean of Retention and Persistence position and implemented an early alert system to increase retention that will ultimately lead to higher graduation rates. As of May 7th, the retention rate of the Fall 2024 class is at 73%, a 12.7% increase from the Fall 2021 cohort.
- Tiffin University partners with Student Connections to increase the outreach efforts to borrowers in repayment, offering individual assistance in the repayment process to help former students with the federal student loan repayment process.

These partnerships enrich our academic programs, build community trust, and keep our graduates in Ohio.

Workforce Development

Tiffin University understands the importance of preparing a workforce that is not only skilled, but also adaptable and ready to contribute immediately.

Highlights of our workforce efforts include:

- Tiffin University offers 59 workforce development certificates for learners looking to upskill or reskill through the Tiffin University Workforce Ready program.
- Tiffin University created in the Fall 2024 the Employer Advisory Board (EAB) which provides insider viewpoints into current market trends and employers needs including traits that employers are seeking.
- Our online and extended learning programs provide flexible degree options for working adults looking to advance or change careers.

- In 2023, Tiffin University opened the Dragon Armoire, an on-campus professional clothing boutique that allows students to select an entire professional outfit at no cost to them so they can be prepared for internships, interviews, and the workforce.
- Through our career services office, we work closely with students and employers to ensure strong job placement outcomes and alignment with workforce needs. We have over 113,000 job postings through Handshake (portal) with connections with 6,254 employers.
- In 2024-2025, the Career Services office held 40 career events including on-campus job fairs where 218 employers were represented and provided 56 classroom presentations in addition to reviewing over 300 resumes and offering a new Skills First resume building tool for students and alumni.
- The Fall 2024 graduate survey revealed 98% of undergraduate graduates were already employed or enrolled in graduate school.

However, changes made in the House budget would exclude Ohio's best and brightest from being able to attend Tiffin University. The budget proposal would mandate Ohio's independent colleges comply with certain provisions of Senate Bill 1, as well as automatically enroll the top 10 percent of each graduating high school class. Those provisions make it almost impossible for independent colleges to comply and also retain the very nature of our institutions.

Concerns Regarding Senate Bill 1 (SB1) and its Impact on Ohio's Private Institutions:

- 1. Religious exemption claim (Sections 3345.0216 and 3345.0217).**
 - a. Although Tiffin University is not a religious-based institution, our guiding principles are deeply rooted in our mission and identity. Many private institutions across Ohio were founded on Christian principles or other faith-based values, and for these institutions, such principles remain central to their governance, academic offerings, and community life.
 - b. The requirement to submit commitment statements, host speakers of broad ideological perspectives, and ensure these are searchable by keyword and accessible within three clicks from the institution's main website, conflicts with the mission, values, and academic priorities of many private universities. This mandate would place an undue burden on IT resources, significantly increasing workload and operational costs without advancing educational outcomes.
- 2. Automatic Admission to the Governor's Merit Scholarship Program**
 - a. While automatic admission of the top 10% of high school graduates may be manageable for some private institutions, it is not feasible for all. Students deserve the autonomy to choose the institution best suited to their needs, especially since they receive the Governor's Merit Scholarship directly, not the institution. Requiring institutions to participate could result in students entering learning environments without the necessary resources to support them fully.
- 3. Faculty Workload Standards and Emphasis on Undergraduate Teaching (Section 3345.45)**
 - a. The directive for standardized faculty workload guidelines may be appropriate for public institutions governed by state boards and supported by taxpayer dollars. However, independent institutions, such as Tiffin University, are structured differently, with many prioritizing graduate education, research, or specialized fields. The same institution might also prioritize teaching over research for its undergraduate programs in particular.
 - b. At Tiffin, annual faculty performance reviews include comprehensive evaluations from students, peers, and leadership, all tied to promotion and merit decisions. Our system, along with other private universities, are already rigorous and aligned with our mission.
- 4. Mandated Student Evaluations and Peer Review Systems (Section 3345.451)**

- a. This requires standardized student evaluations, including questions on whether classroom environments are free of religious bias. Faith-based institutions openly incorporate religious teachings into their academic and community life. The bill’s “exemption” language would not eliminate this requirement because asking the question does not conflict with religious practice, which is the basis of the exception.
- b. This same section mandates formal peer evaluation systems. Many independent colleges are small, with limited faculty and staff, and often do not use traditional tenure structures. Faculty are typically evaluated by supervisors or leadership—not always by peer committees. Regardless, all processes are robust and already well established. Instituting a one-size-fits-all model would erode already well-established internal review processes.

5. Board of Trustees Requirements (Section 3345.0217(B))

- a. The requirement for institutional neutrality, banning ideological litmus tests, and posting contracts publicly would fundamentally alter the role of private college trustees. Trustees serve to uphold the institution’s defined mission, often religious, philosophical, or professional. They are not public officials; they serve to uphold the mission of the institution. This proposed restructuring would erode the distinctiveness and independence that defines Ohio’s private institutions.

6. Syllabus Posting Mandates (Section 3345.029)

- a. At private institutions like Tiffin University, syllabi reflect proprietary academic work and are made available internally to all students through Learning Management Systems. Requiring syllabi to be keyword-searchable and publicly accessible within three clicks would impose significant burdens on IT departments, increase costs, and compromise intellectual property protections without providing clear benefit to students or the public.

7. Post-Tenure Review Requirements (Section 3345.453)

- a. While Tiffin University does not have a tenure system, many private institutions do. Imposing additional post-tenure review requirements would place heavy burdens on already lean administrative structures. Institutions would be forced to divert limited resources away from student services and academic innovation to comply with duplicative evaluation mandates.

Closing Thoughts

1. Ohio’s private institutions excel at delivering high-quality education, preparing career-ready graduates, and offering students and families distinctive, mission-aligned choices.
2. The mandates contained in SB1 would dramatically increase operational costs without improving educational outcomes. For many institutions, these new burdens could lead to closures, reduced financial aid, higher tuition, and a reduction in critical educational services for students.
3. Importantly, these concerns are unrelated to DEI issues, which have already been addressed and resolved at the federal level. This conversation is about governance, institutional autonomy, and operational structure.
4. Private institutions are fundamentally different from public universities; they are self-sufficient by design. Imposing additional state control moves private institutions closer to a public model, requiring public subsidies—this seems unmanageable and isn’t needed. Exempting private institutions from these mandates makes practical, fiscal, and educational sense for everyone involved.

Summary

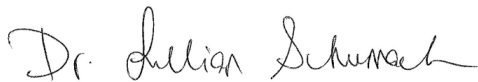
At Tiffin University, we are deeply committed to transforming lives through higher education. We do this by fostering affordability, building meaningful partnerships, and producing graduates ready to meet Ohio's evolving workforce demands.

We urge your continued investment in students like ours - students from all walks of life that ensure Ohio remains competitive, innovative, and inclusive.

On behalf of our students, faculty, alumni, and the greater Tiffin community, I thank you for your service and dedication. Please know that we stand ready to collaborate with you as you shape the future of higher education in Ohio.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Dr. Lillian Schumacher". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

President, Tiffin University