



**Ohio Association of Community Colleges
Ohio Senate Higher Education Committee
Testimony on Ohio House Bill 96
May 13, 2025**

Chair Roegner, Vice-Chair Timken, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Higher Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony today on Amended Substitute House Bill 96. My name is Avi Zaffini, and I am the President and CEO of the Ohio Association of Community Colleges.

OACC proudly advocates for Ohio's 22 public community colleges, representing the presidents and trustees. Altogether, our members serve approximately 250,000 Ohioans annually on their journeys to earn high-value career credentials, associate degrees, bachelor's degrees, and workforce training. They also support more than 40,000 non-credit learners who are embracing the education and training qualifications that today's job creators demand. Ohio's community colleges are the top workforce partner for Ohio employers and are the best value in higher education for Ohio students.

State Share of Instruction

On behalf of our member colleges, I'd like to start today by thanking the Ohio House, especially Chairmen Young, and Stewart, for proposing a budget that supports an overall increase in funding for higher education through a 2% increase in State Share of Instruction (SSI) funding.

This increase in SSI funding is a direct and efficient way to support our community colleges. It will help them continue serving students and meeting industry needs within their local communities. In today's economic environment, community colleges are facing unprecedented cost pressures. Inflation has significantly increased the cost of goods and services necessary to maintain high-quality education and student support. Not to mention, community colleges are constantly launching new programs, updating technology, and expanding student services to respond rapidly to workforce needs and meet the demands of Ohio's employers.

As you and your colleagues deliberate on the Senate version of the budget, we respectfully ask that you preserve this additional SSI funding. If you're not able to maintain the 2% increase, we ask that the General Assembly grant our community college boards of trustees the authority and additional flexibility to increase tuition by up to \$10 per credit hour if absolutely necessary. This solution doesn't cost the state anything and gives trustees a responsible lever to pull only when needed.

Ohio's community colleges are committed to affordability and accessibility. Keeping tuition low has always been, and continues to be, a priority.

Our community college trustees will continue to safeguard affordability, but they need the tools and authority to keep their community colleges financially viable, responsive, and sustainable for the students and communities they serve.

SSI Outcome Metrics

We were encouraged by the administration's proposal to tie a portion of SSI to post-graduation employment outcomes. This focus on real-world results reflects our shared commitment to ensuring that higher education delivers tangible value to both students and the state. Community colleges have long supported the inclusion of workforce outcomes in the SSI formula, and we believe this approach aligns with the mission of our institutions and the needs of Ohio's economy.

We commend Chancellor Duffey and the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) team for their leadership in already beginning the thoughtful, collaborative work of developing such outcome-based metrics. Their process has been thoughtful, transparent, and grounded in research. Because these changes modify existing funding, it is vital that any SSI formula changes be implemented carefully with consideration for any unintended consequences. For example, it's important to ensure that institutions aren't disadvantaged due to regional economic differences or unique geographic factors that affect the populations they serve.

As we continue to engage regularly with ODHE, we are confident the department is thoughtfully considering these important contexts and believe the proposed formula changes will be implemented appropriately. Should the Senate consider introducing any additional changes to the SSI formula, we would like to be included in those discussions. It is also essential that our colleges be given adequate time to plan for and adjust to any new outcome measures, given the critical role SSI plays in our institutions' funding.

Another provision proposed in the executive budget that we strongly support is the \$10 million for bonuses to increase technician-aligned associate degrees. Ohio's community colleges are already leading in this space, producing nearly five times as many technician-aligned associate degrees as other education sectors. We appreciate the changes made in the House to enable Ohio community colleges to compete for all of these funds rather than a predetermined share.

Commonsense Compliance

One barrier that can impede operational efficiency for our members is overly duplicative regulatory reporting. Over the years, the number of reports our colleges are required to submit has grown, becoming more burdensome and often duplicative. We certainly acknowledge and understand the need for reporting and monitoring, and we're in no way trying to avoid accountability, but our community colleges are stretched to meet the same or similar compliance requirements as large institutions, although their funding and staffing may be far less.

As a solution, we'd ask that the Senate incorporate a common-sense approach to compliance that enables colleges to fulfill more reporting requirements with data that has already been submitted instead of having to format and upload numerous versions of what is essentially the same data. This simple amendment (SC0242) would streamline reporting and enable our institutions to focus first and foremost on serving their students.

Conclusion

Ohio's community colleges connect students with opportunities, businesses with talent, and communities with prosperity. They serve as an economic engine for our state, working to fulfill a dual mission to first meet local workforce needs and then support broader statewide industry needs. At the local and regional level, community colleges are partnering with businesses to provide tailored training programs, ensuring a skilled workforce that supports economic growth and job creation in their regional economy. At the same time, they are an important statewide economic development partner, equipping students with in-demand skills in high-growth sectors like advanced manufacturing, healthcare, and technology. By serving both immediate and long-term workforce needs, community colleges are driving prosperity at every level.

As other states ramp up workforce development and higher education investments, we must continue leading the way. Our students, our businesses, and our communities are counting on us. Now is the time to double down to ensure that every Ohioan has access to an affordable, high-quality education that leads to a good-paying job and a stronger future for our state.

The choice is clear: investing in Ohio's community colleges is an investment in Ohio's economic future.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. I am happy to answer any questions.

ADDENDUM

OHIO COMMUNITY COLLEGES: QUICK FACTS

THE TOP WORKFORCE PARTNER FOR OHIO EMPLOYERS

1,000+
active partnerships
with Ohio employers

OHIO'S ECONOMY NEEDS COMMUNITY COLLEGE EDUCATION

TOP INDUSTRIES FOR MIDDLE-SKILLS JOBS IN OHIO BY 2030



74% of our students are
working while learning...



... **half** of which are **working full-time** while learning.

THE BEST HIGHER EDUCATION VALUE FOR OHIO STUDENTS

OHIO COMMUNITY COLLEGES PROVIDE AFFORDABLE PATHWAYS TO CAREERS



\$10,682

average tuition & fees to earn
an associate degree in Ohio



350,000+

associate degrees & certificates
awarded in last 10 years



85%

of our graduates
stay in Ohio



25

affordable 4-year degrees offered at
Ohio community colleges



NEARLY
\$600M

saved in college tuition for Ohio
high school students



60,000+

students enrolled in high school
AND earning college credit

WHO WE SERVE

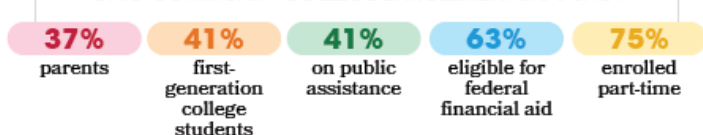
200,000+

for-credit students advancing
their education each year

40,000

non-credit students gaining
skills for career growth

OHIO COMMUNITY COLLEGE ENROLLMENT SNAPSHOT



AMONG ALL OHIO PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS



We serve **73% of high school students** enrolled
in College Credit Plus



We serve **63% of adult learners**
aged 25+

Data Sources include Lightcast, Ohio Department of Higher Education, and the Trellis Student Financial Wellness Survey. Last updated in December 2024.

Akron Beacon Journal

March 31, 2025

Our company's partnership with Stark State is a win-win for workforce development [\(Link to Full Article\)](#)

Alex Wright is the President and CEO, Ariel Corporation

Today, the demand for skilled workers across Ohio is greater than ever, particularly in industries requiring specialized technical knowledge. At Ariel Corporation, we found a key learning and development solution through our 15-year partnership with Stark State College, one of Ohio's 22 community colleges.

Ariel is the leading manufacturer of reciprocating gas compressors in the global energy industry, and it does it right here in Ohio. Our employees are essential to our company's growth and success. That's why learning and development are bedrocks of our organization.

Our people deserve the opportunity to gain the technical skills they need to excel in their roles, build careers rather than jobs, and adapt to the advancements in the oil and gas industry. Plus, as demand for energy products grows, we need to strategically scale our team while bringing on new talent as staff retire.

To meet these objectives, we've fostered a longstanding partnership with Stark State. More than 550 of our employees have enrolled in the college's CNC precision machining and assembly programs. Employees new to our company, as well as incumbent workers advancing within our operations, are eligible to participate.

With Stark State, our employees are not only working with credentialed and qualified instructors in a state-of-the art lab, but they're also earning college credit toward a one-year certificate and potentially up to an associate degree.

Our belief is that our investment in education strengthens the loyalty of our employees, helps us to retain an upskilled and talented workforce, and upholds our legacy as a responsible, forward-thinking employer. Through these efforts, we're enhancing our workforce while reinforcing our reputation as a family-centered business that values its people. These learning and development opportunities help ensure a strong pipeline of knowledgeable team members ready to lead Ariel into the future.

Our company has also directly benefitted from Stark State's responsiveness, flexibility and expertise to tailor their programs to the needs of our company and industry.

Stark State educates our employees where we need them most, whether it's on site at our headquarters in Mount Vernon, our machining facility in Akron, or at the college in North Canton. We're able to adjust our enrollment to coincide with our business cycles. We can take advantage of cost-savings programs like Ohio TechCred, where employers can upskill their workforce through training providers like Stark State and receive reimbursement from the state upon completion.

Partnering with a community college like Stark State can enhance a company's workforce recruitment and development efforts, help increase employee retention and loyalty and close the skills gap. The cost-effective training available through these partnerships can help build a workforce with strong technical and problem-solving skills that contribute to continuous improvement, efficiency gains and innovation. For Ariel, these are critical factors in helping us maintain a competitive edge in the oil and gas industry.

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February 7, 2025

VOICES:

Ohio businesses like ours thank community colleges for our success

[\(Link to full article\)](#)

Adam Clark is chief executive officer of Tangible Solutions, a leading contract manufacturer of American-made 3D-printed titanium orthopedic implants

As CEO of a growing med-tech company in Fairborn, I can testify to all the things that make up Ohio's great business climate: a favorable tax structure, geographical proximity to much of the U.S. population and a business-friendly state legislature, for starters. But Ohio has another incredibly valuable business asset that should be mentioned in the same breath: its robust network of community colleges.

Tangible Solutions, (Now Marle Tangible) is a perfect example. My Co-founder, Chris Collins and I started out as two guys in a garage with a couple of 3D plastic printers. Among the first and most important business relationships we forged were with two community colleges in our area, Clark State and Sinclair. They not only assure that our workforce has the skills we require, but they have been incredible partners who've been critical to our success.

Clark State offered a cost-effective ISO certification training class, which enabled our small business to achieve this important certification. The program was instrumental in our success. When we originally participated in ISO training, we had 5 employees and we have grown to over 40 employees in a few short years. Not only did the Clark State ISO program set us up for success in our FDA-regulated market, but it also served as a foundation for solid business practices that we continue to utilize and refine to improve our business every day. For a small business like us, it was instrumental to have access to this affordable program and get the support we needed to elevate our business to what it is today.

We've been able to speak directly with students and other business professionals through the various events hosted by our local colleges. This has enabled us to stay connected and help drive learning outcomes; assuring our future workforce has the skills necessary for our success. Meeting with other business professionals at these events gave us insight into emerging technologies which originally led us down the path for Tangible Solutions to become a contract manufacturer in the medical field.

It took 20-hour days on our part, and we still have the cots in the office to remind us. But we would not be the company we are, known around the world, without the support we got from our local community colleges.

When we needed to acquire a larger facility and support with funding incentives, Clark State connected us with the Fairborn Economic Development team who knew of a great location. In a beautiful bit of historical resonance, it once housed an ink-on-paper print shop.

These days, our community-college relationships center on workforce development, and the partnership is as essential as ever. At this point, at least half of our staff members have attended Clark or Sinclair, taking coursework to earn industry certifications or work toward associate's degrees that can enable them to advance in their careers. The affordability of community colleges makes it possible for our employees to take those steps.

Our staff even act as mentors and even tutors to those currently studying. When one of our deburr technicians (an entry-level position involving cleaning and polishing precision machined products) was taking classes to qualify as a machinist and ran into a class problem she couldn't immediately solve, the machinists on the floor got together and helped her figure it out. It was a refresher for them and a reminder for all of us of the teamwork that defines our success.

I like to think the benefits of our relationship go both ways; Tangible Solutions has helped develop curriculum for Clark State, and when the college was starting its advanced manufacturing program, our relationship helped secure larger grants for the project. Clark State is now the only Ohio community college with a program for laser material processing technicians.

But I know we could not have gotten our company off the ground without the help of our community college partners. As we continue to grow, I know they'll continue to be essential to our future.

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January 24, 2025

COLUMN:

For Ohio businesses, community colleges are critical workforce partners

[\(Link to full article\)](#)

Michael Hutecker is CEO and president of Bluffton-based GROB Systems

As Ohio looks to reclaim its historic status as a manufacturing powerhouse, many companies like ours face a common challenge: Finding the skilled workforce required for today's advanced manufacturing is never a given, especially in relatively rural areas.

But at GROB Systems, we believe we've cracked the code with our partnership with Rhodes State College. And, thanks to Ohio's robust statewide system of community colleges, it's a model that can work in any Ohio community.

As GROB's apprenticeship sponsor for Ohio, Rhodes State provides the classroom and laboratory instruction that, paired with on-the-job training in our Bluffton plant, transforms promising high-school graduates into skilled electromechanical engineering technicians over the course of a four-year program.

Apprentices are paid, with benefits, from Day 1, as they attend classes two days per week and work on site as trainees the other three days. They earn a Rhodes State associate's degree in two years, after which they complete two more years of full-time training on the shop floor. They then have journeyman status, with a Certification of Completion of Apprenticeship from the Ohio State Apprenticeship Council.

It's a tuition-free degree rolled into a full-time job for the apprentices; for us, it's rock solid workforce development. For the past 12 years, we've accepted 40 to 50 young people per year into the program, and every one has taken a full-time position at GROB at the end.

This steady pipeline is critical to our success in Ohio, and a big part of why we were able to take on our current expansion project. We broke ground in December 2023 on a 135,000-square-foot building addition, set to open in March, that will increase our production and shipping space by 35% and add 200 jobs to the 960 or so current positions.

And, while companies like ours deeply appreciate how community colleges are building Ohio's skilled workforce, these institutions are equally important for the opportunities they provide individual Ohioans. Our partner college's namesake, Gov. Jim Rhodes,

was passionate about jobs. Seeing education as the pathway to better jobs, he determined that every Ohio student should have access to a college education within 25 miles.

That's why Ohio is rich with 22 other community colleges like Rhodes State, offering affordable alternatives to four-year degrees, ranging from career certifications to job focused associate degrees to two-year programs designed to allow seamless transition to four-year colleges and universities.

Thanks to the strong leadership of Gov. Mike DeWine and former Lt. Gov. Jon Husted, local leaders in the Ohio General Assembly, including House Speaker Matt Huffman and Senate President Rob McColley – and the ongoing support of organizations like JobsOhio and Regional Growth Partnership – our state continues to be a top destination for business expansions and relocations. This growth means more and more good jobs that offer quality pay and benefits, but also require specialized skills. Community colleges are the obvious solution.

Because community colleges are nimble and locally focused, they can be endlessly innovative in matchmaking between industries that need talent and people who need career opportunities.

In our case, Rhodes State works continuously with us to understand how our industry is changing and what we need them to include in the classroom curriculum for the apprenticeship program. One result is the Electro-Mechanical Engineering Technology program: We saw that more and more of our technical positions required knowledge of both mechanical and electronic engineering, and Rhodes State created a program combining the two. It's now in its third year and producing great results.

It's a two-way partnership; support from GROB helped Rhodes State garner a \$440,000 award from the Ohio Legislature's One Time Strategic Community Investment Fund and more than \$750,000 from the Ohio Department of Higher Education's Regionally Aligned Priorities in Delivering Skills (RAPIDS) program. These funds helped expand the college's Advanced Manufacturing Center and acquire new robotics technology.

GROB would not be the company it is without our apprenticeship program, and Rhodes State is central to that program's success. We believe that partnerships like ours could benefit businesses and workers across the state.

When Ohio's community colleges succeed, they drive the success of businesses like ours, strengthen our families, and uplift our communities. By continuing to prioritize and invest in these institutions we can help build a prosperous future for all.

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January 13, 2025

Conrad Winkler - Community colleges key to business success ([Link to full article](#))

Conrad Winkler is president of North Star BlueScope Steel

When I joined North Star BlueScope Steel in 2022, I knew it was well served by Ohio's solid business ecosystem, including a business-friendly General Assembly led by leaders like Senate President Rob McColley who understand the importance of investing in workforce development.

The state's competitive economic development strategy under the DeWine-Husted administration, as carried out by JobsOhio and the Regional Growth Partnership, is another key pillar of Ohio's success. The Glass Innovation Hub, a \$40 million-plus initiative announced by Gov. Mike DeWine in July, is just the latest example of our state and region's business power.

Since coming to northwest Ohio, however, one of the most positive things I've learned about doing business here is just how much Ohio businesses benefit from close partnership with community colleges. In our case, that partner is Northwest State Community College (NSCC), a critical collaboration partner for a quarter-century. Based on our experience, I cannot overstate the importance of Ohio's continued cultivation and support of its robust community college system.

Developing a high-quality workforce is a challenge for any manufacturing company, but in rural areas that challenge is magnified, making Ohio's community colleges a perfect partner for companies like ours. The state of Ohio invested decades ago in a network of community colleges to ensure that all Ohioans would have access to greater educational and vocational opportunities. And just as those colleges improve the lives of Ohioans, they are indispensable partners to businesses; serving simultaneously as engines of economic development.

Today's steel industry demands well trained employees — not only in critical skills like electronic controls, programming, advanced fluids, welding, industrial maintenance, machining and advanced manufacturing techniques, but also in cyber security, safety, sustainability and leadership. Northwest State offers credit courses as well as certification and licensing programs in these areas and many more.

As North Star BlueScope contemplates new investments in the region, such as the one we recently announced for up to \$130 million, the community college system is part of what makes these expansions possible — our faith that we will be able to find and train the team members we need to continue to serve our customers so well.

Northwest State has helped us design in-house training programs to prepare new hires for their positions in maintenance, and to help entry-level team members upskill to more advanced jobs. NSCC also helped design an internal leadership development program to help us enable future leaders reach their full potential.

Our partnership with NSCC makes us better known in the community. Taking part in NSCC-hosted recruiting events puts us in front of skilled candidates. In a tight labor market for advanced manufacturing, that's invaluable.

Once new employees are aboard, the college has curriculum to ensure their training remains up-to-date as technology evolves. For employees who come to us from other industries, NSCC helps us create programs for their transition to steel manufacturing.

The affordability of community colleges puts all these services within reach of our company and our employees. Our collaboration with NSCC unlocks opportunities for grant funding and other incentives, and makes these workforce development tools available at a cost far lower than what we could achieve alone, in-house.

At North Star BlueScope, we are proud of our position and reputation in the steel industry; and our reputation benefits from our association with Northwest State. Together, we drive regional economic growth. Working with NSCC helps us reach a more-diverse talent pool, building career opportunities and improving our industry in the process.

Our industry is going to continuously change. We're confident our local community college will help us and our workforce adapt — to new technologies, evolving sustainability goals and whatever else the future may bring.

We are extremely grateful for our strong partnership with Northwest State and we believe they've contributed a lot to our success, just as other Ohio companies owe their prosperity in part to their local community college partnerships. We're glad Ohio invested in community colleges and continues to support these institutions.

It's imperative for business and North Star BlueScope is counting on continuing our winning partnership for a long time.

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April 11, 2025

Southern State Community College Helps Our Rural Community Thrive

[\(Link to Full Article\)](#)

Tim Parry is the President and CEO of Highland District Hospital

As a lifelong Highland County resident and now CEO of Highland District Hospital, I know as well as just about anyone the challenges facing rural communities and institutions like ours.

Fortunately, I also know what works best in addressing those challenges: Partnership. Communities like ours do best when we all bring our talents and resources to the table to solve problems together.

One of our hospital's most critical partners is just down the road and provides essential workforce training for our organization. Beyond the obvious nursing preparation,

Southern State also helps us fill critical roles in information technology, business, and other areas. Southern State provides pathways to good jobs that make it possible to stay and raise families in the region.

That win-win proposition behind Ohio's community colleges helps create individual opportunity and fuel economic development across the state, especially in the communities fortunate enough to host one.

Southern State is observing its 50th anniversary this year, and April is Community College Month, so this seems like the perfect time to celebrate the value the college brings to our community.

Nursing programs have been important to Southern State from its beginnings, and today, the licensed practical nurse (LPN) certification and the associate degree leading to a registered nurse (RN) license supply many of our nursing staff at Highland District Hospital. Like all of Ohio's community colleges, Southern State can be nimble and respond to new needs and opportunities when they arise.

When we saw a steep decline in state-tested nursing assistants (STNAs) in our area, Southern State responded with an STNA training program that helped address our staffing needs, opening up entry-level opportunities for people in our community.

Our relationship with Southern State's nursing programs is dynamic; the journey doesn't necessarily end with an entry-level job. Many STNAs continue their studies and go on to earn LPN and RN certifications. This ability to grow our own nursing talent is important enough that we work with the college to allow employees the flexibility they need to do their jobs and go to school.

This partnership is mutually beneficial in a variety of ways. The hospital contributes to the partnership by providing clinical placements for student nurses and lends our expertise to developing new health sciences programs. Hospital leaders serve on advisory boards for the college, and some of our retired nurses have gone on to serve

on the college staff.

In addition to nursing and other health sciences programs, the college has strong computer science and cybersecurity programs, as well as certificates and degrees in education, engineering, and human and social services.

A number of Southern State business and IT graduates have joined the hospital staff along with many Southern State nurses, and we're equally grateful for their talent.

Furthermore, the Truck Driving Academy can prepare candidates for a Class A commercial driver's license in four weeks or eight weekends, increasing employment opportunities for supply chain jobs which are crucial to the healthcare industry.

Like many Ohio community colleges, Southern State has articulation agreements with popular and reputable universities such as the University of Cincinnati, The Ohio State University, Shawnee State University, Wright State University, and other four-year universities that allow community college grads to continue seamlessly to bachelor's degree programs.

As JobsOhio and our state leaders continue to work to attract new, cutting-edge industries to our region — with the addition of Amazon Web Services, McKesson, and Honda/LG — they will find a strong and ready partner in Southern State. The college is preparing the workforce rural Ohio needs to support these transformative investments, whether that means expanding its nursing and health programs, strengthening its IT and cybersecurity offerings, or helping local residents quickly upskill into high-demand roles.

Southern State plays a critical role in ensuring our community is not only prepared for the future but positioned to thrive in it.

Rural communities like ours have to be intentional about keeping families and businesses in the region. We succeed when there are opportunities for people to learn and work right here at home. I'm grateful that our partnership with Southern State makes this possible.

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River Cities Tribune & Register

April 8, 2025

Strengthening Ohio's healthcare workforce: Why Holzer Health System stands with Rio Grande Community College ([Link to Full Article](#))

Lisa Detty is Executive Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer, Holzer Health System

At Holzer Health System, we are proud of our legacy, rooted in a young surgeon's decision in 1909 to make service to southeastern Ohio his life's work.

Rather than leave after a one-year residency at what was then the Ohio Hospital for Epileptics (now the Gallipolis Developmental Center), Dr. Charles E. Holzer heeded the community's call and instead stayed and established the community's first hospital, with seven beds in a converted house.

More than a century later, the seed planted by Dr. Holzer has grown into the region's largest health system, with two full-service hospitals, numerous outpatient and specialty centers, post-acute and long-term care centers, pharmacies and more.

As our region's healthcare needs continue to grow, Holzer will continue to evolve and expand, but one thing will remain constant: We'll need a work force of well-trained and highly skilled people to serve our patients.

That is why our longstanding partnership with the University of Rio Grande and Rio Grande Community College (Rio) is so essential — not just for Holzer, but for the vitality of healthcare in our region.

Like its fellow community colleges across Ohio, Rio is an essential partner in providing the education and training necessary to fuel a 21st-century economy — helping businesses and institutions like ours fill essential jobs and enabling people in our community to build careers that support families.

Community colleges work for Ohio because the administration of Gov. Mike DeWine, in collaboration with JobsOhio and the Ohio General Assembly, has demonstrated a strong commitment to economic development and workforce investment.

We applaud these efforts and urge Ohio's leaders to continue making support of Ohio's community college system a priority. These nimble and locally rooted institutions are pivotal in meeting the state's workforce demands, particularly in the healthcare sector.

At Holzer, we have firsthand experience of Rio's impact.

Rio graduates consistently come to us workforce-ready, with the skills and knowledge necessary to excel in healthcare professions. Whether in nursing, allied health, medical assisting, or other critical roles, they help us meet growing patient needs and ensure high-quality care for the communities we serve.

Just as important, Rio's affordability and accessibility allow local students to train close to home, keeping talent in our region — a vital factor in addressing workforce shortages and ensuring the vitality of Ohio communities.

Our collaboration with Rio goes beyond simply hiring people after they graduate. We collaborate with the college to shape the curriculum, to ensure students are learning what they'll need in a fast-changing industry.

Rio's flexibility in offering certification programs and clinical partnerships along with its degree programs has been invaluable in preparing professionals who are ready on day one. This ability to rapidly adapt to industry needs is critical as health care continues to evolve, whether in response to technological innovations or emerging public health challenges.

A tight labor market adds even more urgency to our need to attract and retain qualified professionals. Holzer benefits immensely from Rio's commitment to workforce readiness, as do the patients and families who rely on us for care. Investment in Rio — and Ohio's broader community college system — is an investment in Ohio's healthcare infrastructure, economic development, and overall quality of life.

As Ohio's next state budget takes shape, we urge state leaders, JobsOhio, and other economic development partners to continue championing Ohio's community colleges.

By strengthening institutions like Rio, we ensure a pipeline of skilled professionals that directly supports local businesses, economic stability, and the well-being of Ohioans.

Holzer Health System is proud to speak up for Rio and its students. Together, we can build a stronger, healthier future for Ohio.

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Times Recorder

April 18, 2025

Business owner: Community colleges like Zane State help Ohio businesses thrive
([Link to full article](#))

David T. Stewart is the executive vice president of Stewart Glapat Corporation.

Since my grandfather founded our family company in 1939, Stewart Glapat has been sustained by the Zanesville community. It has been a mutually beneficial relationship from the start and nowhere is this clearer than in our partnership with Zane State College (ZSC).

Stewart Glapat would not be the success story it is without the employees who come to us from ZSC. The electrical/electronics engineering technology program provides graduates with skills that are foundational to our business, from day one.

Ohio made a smart investment more than a half-century ago by putting post-secondary education throughout the state. For me and my family, this story is personal. My grandfather and founder of Stewart Glapat, Charles T. Stewart Sr., was an innovator who helped shape the future of manufacturing. His Adjustoveyer became the cornerstone of our company and it still sets the industry standard today, supporting global brands like Wal-Mart, Federal Express and Frito Lay.

But his impact didn't stop with business. He was passionate about having advanced technical education in our community. He understood a technical college in Zanesville would create opportunities for generations and be a resource for local businesses like ours. His leadership was instrumental in securing the initial funding for Muskingum Technical Institute, which became Muskingum Area Technical College (MATC), and is now known as Zane State College.

The tradition continues years later, as an outgrowth of the partnership that grew up between the college and our company, William (Bill) Stewart — my dad — taught 32 courses at MATC. He was one of many business leaders to lend his expertise and experience. Luckily for me, he had the nerve to date (and marry) the boss' daughter. Walker Huffman, MATC's first president, was my maternal grandfather, so my attachment to the company and the college come naturally.

My appreciation of ZSC is based on more than my family history. The college offers a free application and open access policy. Students are matched with success coaches for personalized guidance. Flexible courses allow students in various stages of life the chance to earn a degree. ZSC offers engineering technology, healthcare, IT, public safety and business programs (I'm also proud of the influence our employees have had on the business programs).

As makers of extendible and retractable conveyor systems, we've expanded many times with changing business conditions. The most dramatic was during the pandemic, with the surge in online shopping and home delivery. That meant more single packages,

as opposed to pallets stacked with goods for retail stores and, thus, more need for a conveyor that can be extended into a truck to more efficiently load. From fewer than 30 employees in 2020, we reached a peak of 90 in recent years.

Each time we've been ready to expand, we've been able to count on ZSC to provide graduates. We've found we have our best success when we hire locally, among people who know the community and want to stay and raise families. I'm grateful for the value Zane State brings to my company and our community.

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