



OHIO HOUSE FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION FRANKLIN UNIVERISTY

Christopher Washington, Ph.D., Executive Vice President and Provost
March 3, 2021

Chairperson Jon Cross
Ranking member Stephanie Howse
Representatives Carfagna, Ghanbari and Jarrells
Chair Cross and members of the House Finance Higher Education Subcommittee

It is my privilege to testify before you today on behalf of Franklin University, in support of House Bill 110, Governor Mike DeWine's proposed budget.

I am Dr. Christopher Washington. I serve as the Executive Vice President for Franklin University. At Franklin University, a private independent college with its main campus located here in Columbus, Ohio we are the proud inheritors of long and consistent history of serving adult students, one that spans nearly 120 years. Mr. Chair, on behalf of Franklin University President, Dr. David Decker, and our entire leadership team, I want to publicly applaud your efforts to advance education and workforce development here in Ohio, especially during this time of major disruption to our lives. **Governor DeWine's proposed state budget, which includes an increase in the Ohio College Opportunity Grant by \$500.00 per eligible student, is a means to amplify Franklin University's efforts to offer affordable and attainable higher education to Ohio's citizens.**

Franklin University provides high quality, relevant education enabling the broadest possible community of learners to achieve their educational and career goals. Distinguished members of the committee, as our society continues to respond to an unusual period of rapid technological and socio-economic change, Franklin University continued to impact Ohio's learners by offering professionally oriented programs of study at the Associates, Bachelors, Masters, and Doctoral degree levels without disruption. Instruction is offered at our downtown Columbus campus, and at various locations throughout our state and around the globe, largely in partnership with community colleges. As it relates to our ability to rapidly adapt to the Global Lockdown, since 1998 Franklin has offered degree programs of study via online formats that take advantage of the best features of online teaching and learning modalities. Our ability to offer high quality academic programs online enabled us to quickly shift to remote

teaching and learning for all of our students over the past year. Consequently, our total domestic enrollment is up more than 10% from last year.

Our university is a University of Opportunity, one that attracts a wide and diverse population of Ohioans. The average age of the Franklin student is 35, split almost evenly between male and female students. The ethnic diversity attracted to Franklin includes 25% American Indian, Asian Pacific Islanders, and Hispanic ethnicities, 18% African American, 55% White and 2% other. Our flexibility and cost also make us attractive to military personnel. Franklin has maintained military and Veteran friendly designation since the late 90's. Since 2009, Franklin has developed academic programs, an instructional design institute, and a talented faculty teaching pool right here in Columbus that has enabled us to offer our degree programs at academic institutions in nine other countries through educational agreements.

Franklin University's Guiding Principles

Franklin University is guided by a set of very specific principles. These principles include providing greater access to quality and affordable educational opportunities, adapting to the needs of our current and future students, and responding to changes in society and the professions.

In response to changes in society and the professions, we align our curriculum and instruction with corporate efforts to reinvent and modernize their workplaces, work, and worker knowledge and skills. We have taken a partner-centric approach to determining both the need and the relevance of educational offerings. Over the past 5 years we've added more than 20 programs of study, and eliminated some others. We find it necessary to continuously engage with internal and external constituencies to gain insight into their educational needs and expectations, and to learn about societal and workforce trends. For example, through our partnerships we've noted:

- An increasing rate of work digitization and technology adoption that is creating job redundancy in some roles (e.g. Administrative Assistants, Data Entry Clerks, and Assembly Workers) and job growth of new roles (e.g. Data Analysts, Cyber Security, Digital Transformation Specialists)
- A shortening of the time required to upskill and reskill employees as organizations align emerging technologies, worker roles, and job skills with their sustainability intentions
- A heightened awareness of health and safety needs in society and for workers and workplaces.

The faculty and staff at Franklin respond to these trends by: 1. Providing relevant lifelong learning experiences that prepare students for the inevitability of change and the opportunity to learn new knowledge and skills throughout their career; 2. Providing students and employers with a wide range of accredited educational offerings from full degree programs to micro-credentials that allow for more rapid upskilling of learners; 3.

Pursuing multiple strategies to increase the affordability of higher education; and 4. Assuring access to educational opportunities for the broadest population of learners via our operational policies and practices.

In Focus: Rapid Upskilling Initiatives

- In addition to offering Associate, Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral degrees, we also understand the region's more immediate need for workforce development in one year or less. As a pandemic response, Franklin University has accelerated efforts to provide more immediate and short-term learning opportunities that are stackable to more advanced credentials by establishing a Micro-Credentials initiative. This initiative responds to the need for employees to acquire verifiable credentials in a more rapid fashion. Franklin is leveraging the world's largest badging and credentialing platform, Credly, to provide just-in-time verifiable recognition of skill attainment through education. Currently we offer a range of Professional Certificates in Salesforce, Tableau, Facebook, Digital Marketing, and Asana Project Management for example. These micro-credentials enable lifelong learners to complete industry recognized credentials that stack to our degree programs, and enable learners to pursue education at their own pace based on career needs and interests without losing the credits/certificates they earned along the way. The university has awarded 3,800 badges in the past year.

Lifelong Learning through Partnerships

The faculty and staff of Franklin University have engaged in a number of partnership efforts that support providing higher education designed to upskill and reskill the workforce. In addition to the professional advisory boards that inform each of our academic programs, our classroom to career initiatives include:

- **Franklin Centers of Excellence.** In response to the need for workforce development our Centers provide both for-credit and non-credit certificate offerings on contemporary and emerging knowledge domain areas. The four centers include the: International Institute for Innovative Instruction; Center for Public Safety and Cybersecurity Education; Franklin University Leadership Center; and Global Center for Healthcare Education.
- **FranklinWORKS Partnerships.** Under the leadership of our Vice President for Strategic Alliances, Bill Chan, we have established 90 partnerships with corporations, businesses, organizations, state entities and non-profits, FranklinWORKS is strengthening Ohio business's workforce and professional development. Through the partnership, businesses increase the talent of their workforce by increasing their tuition assistance programs, collaborating with Franklin on leadership development programming and partnering with Franklin for just-in-time training solutions. FranklinWORKS provides onsite courses and

programs, training sessions, and certificates of completion and currently serves more than 800 of Ohio's workforce in attaining undergraduate, graduate and doctoral degrees. Franklin also provides onsite leadership courses and full degree programs with companies such as COTA and Discover. Franklin University is a proud partner of Ohio's TechCred, OneColumbus, multiple Ohio Chambers and workforce development committees such as AICUO, Ohio Business Roundtable, SOCHE, and OFIC. We are currently coordinating efforts with JobsOhio to create and deliver educational opportunities that support upskilling employees and displaced workforce.

- **Partnership Case Study 1: The Ohio SMART Car Initiative.** Under the leadership of Vice President for Academic Quality and Planning, Patrick Bennett, Ed.D., Franklin University's International Institute for Innovative Instruction is partnering with BrandMotion to offer in person and online mechanics training on behalf of the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) and DriveOhio. The installation training supports Ohio's collective initiatives for connected vehicles (CV). This technology enables connected vehicles to "talk" to each other and the roads, infrastructures, smartphones and other devices. The online training will launch with full video production in February 2021.
- **Partnership Case Study 2: the Ohio Society of Certified Public Accountants (OSCPA).** Franklin University is partnering with OSCPAs to develop online training for emerging CPAs throughout the state of Ohio. The training includes 16 educational modules. Topics covered range from basic business acumen to advanced accountancy concepts. This training supports OSCPAs's biannual conventions.

Deeper articulation with Ohio Community Colleges

Franklin University's Community College Alliance program is a transfer partnership with Ohio Community Colleges since 1998. The partnership is founded on transferability, affordability, and flexibility.

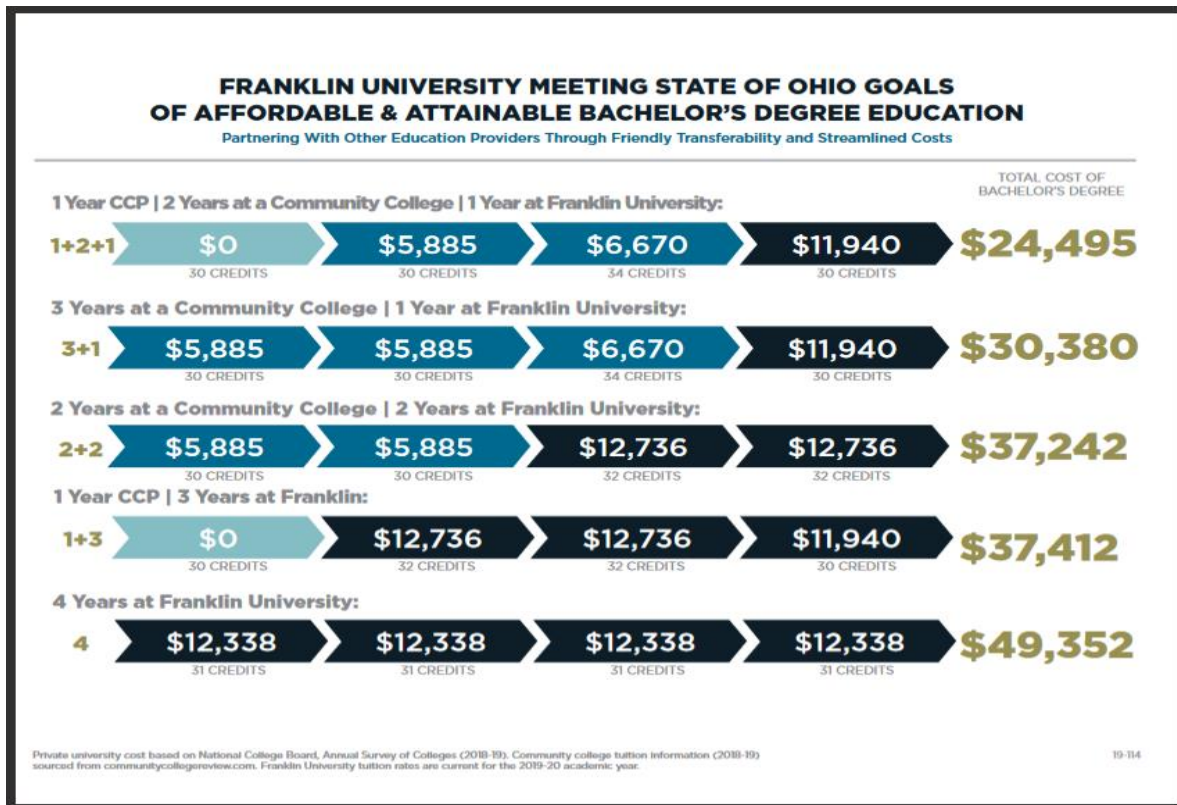
- Franklin University serves approximately 1,500 Ohio community college transfer students each year. Top transfer colleges are Columbus State CC, Sinclair CC, Cuyahoga CC, Clark State CC, Central Ohio Technical College, Zane State College, Edison CC, Hocking College, Lakeland CC, and Rhodes State College. In terms of transferability, Franklin co-locates with Edison State College and Columbus State Community College.
- Franklin University is organized to best support community college transfer. We have a 10-person staff serving our Ohio Community College partners, including seven onsite regional managers throughout Ohio who provide support to community college advisors, students and faculty and who support community college events and programs.

- Franklin accepts ODHE's Transfer Assurance Guides. Ohio community college students transfer approximately 84 credits to Franklin University. Top transfer programs include Business Administration, Accounting, Human Resources Management, Computer Science, Healthcare Management, Marketing, Criminal Justice Administration, Psychology, Finance, and Cyber Security. Through our Community College Alliance, 9,410 Ohio community college students have graduated from Franklin University.
- To strengthen our partnership with Ohio Community Colleges, over the past year we created the Ohio Strong initiative. This initiative has resulted in 100 relationships between our faculty and the faculty of Ohio community colleges, and added nearly 38,000 Ohio community college courses to Franklin's MyTransferCredit student transfer portal.
- Our Exact Track program is a prime example of how deep articulation with Columbus State Community College and our corporate partner Huntington National Bank works. Started in Fall 2019, three student cohorts comprised of 60 Huntington Associates are going through a program of study that they will start at Columbus State and Finish at Franklin. Huntington has added 2 more cohorts to start in 2021. Other Community College partnership initiatives include: the Career Advancement Program (CAP); co-branded digital and offline (radio and billboards) marketing campaigns in central, northeast and southwest Ohio; Choose Ohio First Grant initiatives; and an Ohio community college Hackathon program.
- Franklin University supports student scholarship funds through the Foundations at both Rhodes State College and North Central State College.
- Through Franklin's partnership with the Ohio Association of Community Colleges, Ohio community college faculty and staff receive 15% tuition discount on undergraduate, master's and doctoral level programs. To date, 103 community college faculty and staff graduated from Franklin University including 27 undergraduates, 72 masters level, and 4 doctoral graduates.

Increasing Affordability

Franklin University strives to meet the state of Ohio's goals for affordable and attainable bachelor's degree education. At \$398 a credit hour, Franklin has one of the lowest undergraduate tuition rates for bachelor's degrees in Ohio. We also partner with other educational providers through friendly transferability of college credit to bring down the overall cost of a four-year degree.

- Franklin's affordability is reflected in the chart below. For starters, the annual cost of attending Franklin University is approximately \$12,338 a year. However, approximately 90% of our students transfer in credit from other institutions. The cost implications of our many transfer pathways are significant.



- Many of Franklin University students participate in either 2+2 partnership agreements or 3+1 agreements. In a 3+1 agreement, students earn an associate degree from a community college while enrolling at the community college for three years at an average cost of between \$5,800 and \$6,700 a year, transfer to Franklin to enroll in higher level courses and satisfy bachelor's degree requirements at the Franklin rate. This could reduce the overall cost of a four-year degree to approximately \$30,000.
- Our support for Ohio's College Credit Plus (CCP) program and commitment to collaborating with our high school partners enable us to further reduce the cost of education to Ohio families. A student who takes 30 credit hours via one year of participating in College Credit Plus, subsequently enrolls for two years at a community college in Ohio, and enrolls in their final year of study in one of Franklin University's Bachelor degree programs could achieve the goal of a college degree at a cost of under \$24,495.

4. We have mass migrated more expensive course material to more cost-effective electronic resources. To date, 94% of all running course sections utilize e-resources with an opt-out rate of less than 5%. This leads to a course materials savings of more than \$500,000 for our student population each of our three academic terms!

Access for a Broad Population of Learners

Attaining a bachelor's degree or higher has never been more important. Degree attainment matters for both workforce development and a healthy and educated citizenry. The vast majority of job postings on Ohio Means Jobs require/desire a bachelor's degree. Every degree level attained means higher lifetime earnings and lower expected unemployment.

Our access strategies recognize that our students come from a wide range of work-life circumstances, socioeconomic and academic backgrounds, and locations. Keeping the needs of students at the forefront of Franklin's operations is reflected in our University-wide committed to:

- Providing 100% of our academic programs and student services are available online.
- Supporting an open admissions process.
- Maximizing transfer of college credit.
- Providing a variety of course formats including face-to-face, online, hybrid, and accelerated courses.
- Offering rolling admissions, flexible scheduling, and multi-year scheduling for life planning. Courses are offered in 6, 8 and 12-week formats.
- Accommodating students' class section requests.

Conclusion

At Franklin University, we recognize that higher levels of education will be in greater demand as employers increase investments in information technologies, automation, and robotics. At Franklin our aim is to assure that the education we provide prepares our students for the jobs of tomorrow, while maintaining our commitment to accessibility and affordability. We believe the Governors Proposed Budget will enhance our efforts to respond to changes in society and adapt to the learning needs of Ohio Citizens.

Chair Cross, and members of the committee, thank you for your consideration of my testimony today on behalf of Franklin University. We hope to continue to partner with the state in preparing Ohioans with the knowledge and skills needed to advance professionally and succeed in their careers and in our communities.