



**Testimony of Kristina M. Johnson, President
The Ohio State University
Ohio House Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education
HB 110 Biennial Operating Budget – As Introduced
March 3, 2021**

Chairman Cross, Ranking Member Howse and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education, I am Kristina Johnson, president of The Ohio State University. I appreciate the opportunity to present proponent testimony to the committee on HB 110, the state's biennial operating budget.

Ohio State University is open for in-person instruction and has been since the beginning of Autumn semester last year. While we have expanded our online classes and remote options for students, we value the teaching, learning, interaction and research that occurs in-person on all of our campuses. (Columbus, Lima, Mansfield, Marion, Newark and Wooster.) Like you, we endeavor to continue safely returning to normalcy as the state emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic. The operating budget before you is an important component for Ohio's higher education institutions as we produce more and more graduates who are eager to make their marks in the world and have the skills they need for the jobs of tomorrow that will power Ohio's economy in the 21st century.

In addition to speaking to you about the HB 110 biennial budget, I want to take this opportunity to give you some brief updates about Ohio State University:

- **Enrollment** remains strong. In the recent Autumn semester, we had a total university enrollment of 67,957 students.
 - The number of undergraduate students at the Columbus campus reached a record-high level of 46,984.
 - African-American student enrollment increased by 8.1% compared to Autumn semester of '19.
 - Our freshman class size at the Columbus campus in Autumn semester was a record high of 8,602.
 - Our Autumn semester undergraduate enrollment was 79.0% in-state students.

- **Student outcomes** are improving, too. In 2020, our undergraduate four-year graduation rate hit 68.7%, and our six-year graduation rate was 87.0%. Both are record highs.

➤ **Affordability:**

- We continue to utilize the Buckeye Opportunity Program, a student financial aid initiative we created in 2018-2019, to cover any gap in the cost of tuition and general fees for Pell eligible, in-state students.
- We also are continuing the President's Affordability Grant program established in 2015 to provide up to \$2,250 to approximately 15,000 low- and moderate-income Ohio students annually.
- Ohio State University started its tuition guarantee program in 2017. Ohio students and their families now have certainty for tuition, general fees, and room and board as they attend the university. (Prior to the guarantee program being implemented, Ohio State University had frozen in-state tuition from the 2012-2013 academic year through the 2017-2018 academic year.)
- The percentage of undergraduate students graduating with debt has declined from 55% of our student population five years ago to 47% in 2019-2020. Additionally, the average amount of debt for those who graduate with debt has decreased 3.6% over the last two years to \$27,133.
- I intend to make additional progress on affordability. By the end of the decade, our goal is to have graduating seniors leave our campuses debt-free, as I recently noted in my State of the University address.

➤ **Entrepreneurship:**

- Our focus on research, innovation and knowledge enterprise will grow entrepreneurship opportunities and deepen partnerships with private-sector start-ups. The Ohio State University Innovation District, along with Nationwide Children's Hospital, recently received a boost in support from JobsOhio. As part of our commitment to JobsOhio and the state, Ohio State will double our sponsored research in biomedical science and engineering, and will produce 22,500 additional STEM graduates cumulatively over the next 15 years.

➤ **Workforce and partnerships:**

- Our Office of Academic Affairs is working create even more ways to quickly respond to the labor market. We participate in Ohio's innovative TechCred program and have developed many certificates sought by employers.
- By improving and growing online offerings, Ohio State can help many more students (both traditional and adult learners) earn degrees at their own pace. While we look forward to returning fully to the post-pandemic on-campus instruction most of our students prefer, we are

taking the lessons we have learned to improve our remote learning offerings.

- Our regional campuses, too, continue to develop degree programs in conjunction with Ohio businesses for in-demand career fields. For example, the newly minted Bachelor of Science in engineering technology degree will help Ohio businesses fill plant manager roles with specific needed skillsets.
- We continue to work with our two-year community and technical college partners on 2+2 pathways for associate and bachelor's degrees.

With regard to the state budget, Governor DeWine and this General Assembly are to be commended for your support of higher education in very trying times.

HB 110 as introduced provides an excellent framework for Ohio higher education in FY 22 and FY 23. I would respectfully request additional state investment beyond the as-introduced appropriations:

- *State Share of Instruction (SSI)* – This line item is the main source of state support to state-assisted colleges and universities for operating costs associated with instruction. I am grateful for the Governor's proposal to increase funds for SSI by 1.0% in FY 22 and by 0.9% in FY 23. I would ask there be consideration of increasing the line item by the inflation rate in each year of the biennium.
- *Ohio College Opportunity Grant (OCOG)* – OCOG is Ohio's main need-based aid program. HB 110 contains appropriation levels that will support an increase of \$500 per eligible student over the course of the biennium. I would ask that the OCOG program be funded at a level to provide eligible students a \$500 increase per fiscal year, as was originally anticipated by the pre-pandemic budget for FY 20 – FY 21.
- *Cooperative Extension* – The Ohio State University Cooperative Extension provides services, in partnership with all 88 counties, as part of our land-grant university mission. Program areas include Agriculture and Natural Resources, 4-H Youth Programs, and Family and Consumer Science. I would request this line item be flat-funded at FY 21 appropriation levels which would be an increase of \$1,657,273 in FY 22 and \$1,255,509 in FY 23.
- *Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center (OARDC)* – OARDC is the research operation of Ohio State University's College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences. As another component of our land-grant mission, OARDC assists Ohio's farms and agricultural industry improve competitiveness and profitability at 12 locations across Ohio. I would request flat-funding at FY 21 appropriation levels for this line item which would be an increase of \$2,465,858 in FY 22 and \$1,868,074 in FY 23.

- *Sea Grant* – This appropriation supports the Ohio Sea Grant Program in the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences. This is part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Sea Grant College Program which works to protect Lake Erie and coastal resources. In addition, the Sea Grant partners with the Ohio Department of Higher Education and the Ohio EPA on water quality assessment, protection and improvement. I would ask that flat-funding at FY 21 levels be appropriated here which would require a \$12,269 increase in FY 22.
- *Ohio State University Clinic Support & Ohio State University Clinical Teaching* – The Clinical Teaching and Clinic Support line items assist with Ohio State University’s laboratory and clinical teaching components of medical and other health-related curricula. I would ask that these line items be flat-funded at FY 21 levels which would require a \$28,910 increase in the Support line item and a \$364,664 increase in the Teaching line item in FY 22.

I would also like to ask for your support in retaining the appropriation in the budget bill for:

- *The Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine (OSUCVM)* – We support this new line item because more than 80% of practicing veterinarians in Ohio graduated from the OSUCVM. This state support is vitally important to the college’s mission to educate the next generation of Ohio veterinarians, protect Ohio’s food supply, prevent infectious disease outbreaks and assist agricultural production. Additionally, this appropriation will help with access and affordability for in-state students. Please see the attached material with regard to veterinary medicine. I would remind the committee that The Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine is the only vet med college in Ohio, and I ask that you retain this appropriation.

Mr. Chairman, members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today. We remain committed to our core mission as a land-grant university, and I look forward to working with you as a partner in the years to come.