



**Ohio Conference of the American Association of University Professors**

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Testimony of David Jackson, PhD  
Ohio Conference of the American Association of University Professors  
Before the House Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education  
Representative Gayle Manning, Chair  
March 28, 2023

Chair Manning, Ranking Member Jarrells, and Members of the Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education:

My name is David Jackson, and I am a Professor of Political Science at Bowling Green State University (BGSU). I do not represent BGSU, but rather am here on behalf of the Ohio Conference of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), which represents more than 6,000 faculty at public and private institutions of higher education across the state.

The Ohio Conference AAUP is a proponent of the higher education components of House Bill 33, the state operating budget.

First, I want to express our appreciation to Governor DeWine, Chancellor Gardner, and their staffs for putting forth a thoughtful higher education budget that would make major strides in access, affordability, and quality education for Ohio's students. This is a budget that puts resources in the hands of students and rewards institutions when students achieve. We hope that this subcommittee will recommend that the proposed higher education funding remain intact.

It is important to be reminded of the purpose public colleges and universities serve and why they deserve investment. A college education used to be for only the privileged few. Public institutions were created to provide all citizens with the opportunities to advance their educations and to enter careers that otherwise would have been unattainable. Our public institutions used to have very low tuition or were even tuition-free.

Today, however, students are accumulating substantial debt to fund their educations. This debt inhibits our economy if students saddled with tremendous debt are unable to buy homes or cars or to start families—even well after they have graduated. If Ohio is serious about attracting and retaining students, as well as increasing the number of degree-holders, we must do better. HB 33, as it stands today, puts us on the right path.

The substantial proposed increase to the Ohio College Opportunity Grant (OCOG) is much-needed and long overdue. This increase will, in fact, create opportunity for lower-income students to attend four-year institutions. We also support the creation of the Ohio College

Access Grant (OCAG). For years, we have pointed out that students who attend community colleges and regional campuses—most often the entry point for students with the greatest financial need—have been ineligible for OCOG or similar, need-based aid from the state. We believe, however, that the state should support students attending public two-year institutions at least at the same level as it supports students enrolled at for-profit entities.

Ohio's public colleges and universities are in every area of Ohio—rural, urban, and suburban. They provide good jobs, and they have helped to create and sustain the middle class, the backbone of our economy. Without increased investment from the state, we will see the academic missions of our colleges and universities continue to be undermined through faculty and program attrition. We also will see the loss of good-paying staff jobs, many times in regions where such jobs are scarce. Investment in higher education always generates significant returns—not only for graduates, but also for the communities in which the institutions are located, and for the state as a whole.

Ohio must strive for greater affordability, but we also must ensure quality. We are competing in regional, national, and international educational systems and economies. Quality higher education, in part, means having robust full-time faculties and program offerings. Full-time faculty contribute in every way to institutions—teaching, research, scholarship, service, and student advising. We provide stability at our institutions.

Unfortunately, quality has been at risk for decades as institutions have reduced full-time faculty and either haven't replaced those positions at all or have replaced them with part-time faculty, also known as adjuncts. Adjuncts are often good instructors, but because they are paid poverty wages and permitted to teach only a couple of courses at any one institution so that the institution can avoid providing healthcare coverage and other benefits, they are typically trying to piece together a living by teaching at multiple institutions. They usually do not have the same strong ties to a single institution and are not as available to meet with students outside of the classroom as full-time faculty do. They also have neither the time nor the funding to take part in important professional development activities.

By our best count, since early 2020, over 500 full-time faculty positions have been terminated at Ohio's public colleges and universities, and at least a few hundred more positions have been eliminated through attrition and early retirement incentives. The result of these reductions is that many students are paying more in tuition and fees, yet much less of that money is being spent on their instruction. We must ensure that State Share of Instruction (SSI) is, in fact, being spent on instruction.

The piece of paper that someone receives when they earn a degree is not education. College graduates have better lifetime earnings than those with a high school diploma only because of the skills that faculty help them to develop, such as critical thinking and communication, which are vital to graduates no matter which field they enter. We must not lose sight of that indisputable reality by watering down the rigors of a college education.

Ohio's faculty are proud of the role that we play in educating Ohioans—in preparing them to enter the workforce and to be good citizens. As our state continues to attract and to keep employers, as well as to foster communities in which people want to live and work, we should not forget the critical role played by high-quality, affordable colleges and universities. Higher education is a public good that benefits everyone, directly and indirectly. The educated, skilled, well-rounded, and adaptable citizens that our colleges and universities help to produce are crucial to Ohio's success.

For too long, higher education has been treated as less than a priority in the state budget, when what we need, at the very least, is a consistent expectation of funding. The impacts of disinvestment are glaring: dramatic enrollment declines, increased tuition and student debt, and reductions in academic programs and faculty positions. We hope that the House of Representatives will keep the governor's funding intact and recognize that this could indeed mark a new day for state support of higher education.

Thank you for your time. I welcome any questions.