

OHIO: A STATE POLICY PROFILE FOR COMPLETION BY DESIGN

THE OHIO ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES: THE COMPLETION BY DESIGN STATE POLICY LEAD ORGANIZATION FOR OHIO

The Ohio Association of Community Colleges is a regional council of governments, organized under Ohio state law, which focuses on issues impacting community and technical colleges. Its members include the trustees and presidents of all 23 community colleges in the state of Ohio. The OACC makes institutional and state-level policy recommendations to the Ohio Board of Regents.

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OHIO'S ENGAGEMENT IN THE COMPLETION AGENDA

Ohio has been active in several initiatives focused on improving student success. OACC led the state policy effort for Ohio in Achieving the Dream, a national nonprofit dedicated to helping more community college students, particularly low-income students and students of color, stay in school and earn a college certificate or degree. In 2009, the Ohio Board of Regents was selected to lead Ohio's work in the Developmental Education Initiative, focused on improving developmental education to dramatically boost college completion for low-income students and students of color. Last fall, Ohio was the pilot state for the Governance Institute for Student Success, a leadership development experience designed to help trustees and presidents improve student success. The institute was attended by both trustees and presidents from all 23 community colleges. As a result, there is a broad and strong leadership commitment for the student success initiatives in Ohio.

Ohio is home to six Achieving the Dream community colleges, five of which are Developmental Education Initiative colleges as well. The OACC is working to share the promising practices from those participants across all 23 community colleges in the state. Math scores went up annually at one college, for example, when faculty began advising their students to co-register for math and a two-credit survival skills course that instructs students to set goals, manage their time, assume responsibility for success and failure, and believe in their ability to succeed. To spread these practices within Ohio, in June 2011 OACC issued a series of policy recommendations designed to better support student success in developmental education.

Ohio is also a Complete College America state and participates in the Shifting Gears initiative and Project Win-Win. Ohio's CCA plan lists four strategies to meet completion goals: shift to performance funding; transform remediation; accelerate success; and restructure delivery for today's students.

Through Shifting Gears, Ohio aims to increase the educational attainment and earnings potential of lower-income working adults by expanding their access to postsecondary workforce education, shortening their paths to credentials, and speeding their progress with fewer interruptions. The strategies include: creating statewide standards that remove barriers to routine sharing of student assessment and advising information; developing software tools to facilitate data analysis system-wide; adopting curriculum models that integrate academic, technical, and career-readiness content and expand dual/concurrent enrollment policies; and ensuring that new state funding formulas benefit the Shifting Gears population and curriculum.

Project Win-Win seeks to identify students who have accumulated all or nearly all of the credits needed to graduate, but never actually graduated. In the two-year program, each participating institution analyzes its home database of student status; eliminates those who earned degrees or are currently enrolled elsewhere; conducts degree audits of the remaining population to determine who is truly eligible for the award of Associate's degree or potential completers; then locates and contacts potential completers, providing them with road maps for completion.

RECENT POLICY CHANGES RELEVANT TO THE COMPLETION AGENDA

Ohio has made it a priority to create productive partnerships between Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE) programs and community colleges. All 23 of Ohio's community colleges have submitted partnership agreements, as have four university branch campuses. Alignment between the ABLE programs and developmental education has been a focus as the agreements were developed. In the coming year, Ohio institutions will address programmatic supports and procedures that appear to be most effective in assisting ABLE students to subsequently return to community college for placement in a higher level of developmental education or in credit-bearing classes.

In addition to the successful partnering of ABLE programs and community colleges to align remedial education, the Developmental Education Initiative has helped launch a series of gatherings for college personnel to focus on key student success issues. Held in December 2010, the gathering "Building Ohio's Community College Student Success" attracted more than 130 participants and focused on the use of data to improve instruction.

Due to the results of a survey on developmental education classes, courses in Ohio will be coded as either lower- or upper-level developmental education. This coding will assist the state and the colleges to better analyze progress of students at various levels of developmental education.

Another policy win for Ohio community colleges is the initiative by the Ohio Board of Regents and the DOE, which aligns the new Common Core State Standards with the College Readiness Standards. This will produce a common set of expectations for all students graduating high school and entering college and should reduce the need for remediation. Additionally, a survey of Ohio's community colleges proves the need for uniform practices across the 23 schools, yielding recommendations for more effective/streamlined assessment and placement.

POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

Governor John Kasich and both houses in the legislature are Republican, elected in a sweep election in 2010. Governor Kasich appointed former Ohio attorney general Jim Petro (R) as the new chancellor for the Ohio Board of Regents in March 2011.

The funding for the Ohio community colleges varies depending on the type of institution. Generally, Ohio is a low-state-support, high-tuition state. Ohio hosts three types of community colleges: technical colleges, state community colleges, and community colleges. Each sets its own tuition within the increase designated by the legislature.

So far, Petro has backed requirements that public universities transition 10 percent of programs to three-year Bachelor's degrees in 2012, with 60 percent of programs available by 2014. He also founded the Chancellor's Aging and Higher Education Advisory Committee, the focus of which includes both increasing Ohio's skilled workforce by retraining workers age 55 and older, and encouraging more Ohioans to study the field of research on aging, from the Associate's level on up. Both cohorts would be linked with Ohio employers.

GOVERNANCE

Ohio's community colleges are each governed by an appointed Board of Trustees. The community colleges are housed within a larger state university system, headed by a chancellor who is advised by the Ohio Board of Regents, a nine-member advisory board to the chancellor with two ex-officio reps from the state legislature. Members are appointed by the governor with the advice and consent of the senate. Responsibilities of the Ohio Board of Regents include developing an independent annual report on the condition of higher education; issuing an annual performance review of the chancellor; and advising the chancellor on issues of statewide importance affecting higher education.

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