

# *Increasing College Access in Ohio*

A White Paper and Recommendations  
from the Stark Education Partnership  
and the Stark County P-16 Compact



*Working Paper*



# Introduction

This White Paper responds to two of the key questions which Tina Milano, CEO of the Ohio College Access Network posed to OCAN membership in August of 2003. Recommendations here are drawn from the experience of the Stark Education Partnership and Stark County P-16 Compact.

## Increasing College Access in Ohio

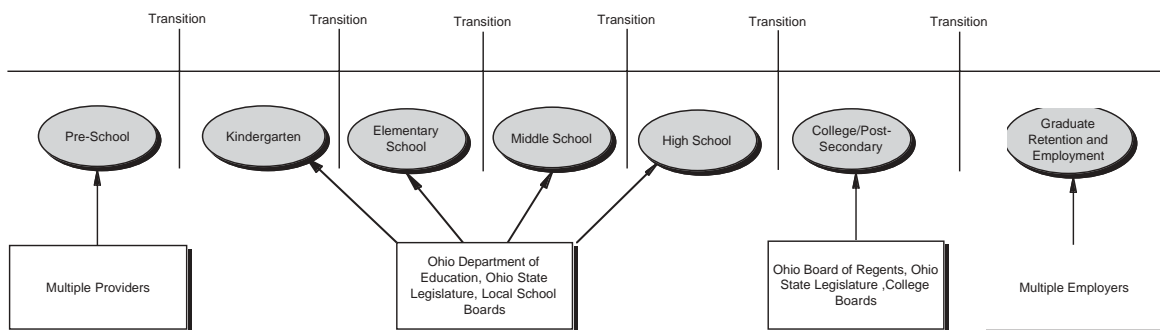
*History and tradition, however, have left us with a dysfunctional, disconnected American education system that lengthens the odds of success for the very students most in need of support and encouragement. Each level of the system – preschool, elementary, middle school, high school, postsecondary education – acts independently, leaving students and parents unsure about what is expected from one level to the next. This may have been acceptable when only some students needed to navigate the system through a postsecondary education, but today, everybody’s future is tied to education and everybody must achieve at higher levels.*[1]-Education Commission of the States

*Any state intent on building a knowledge economy has to address its key knowledge component: the education of its residents. This has to be a P-16 approach because, truth be told, the pipeline has leaks along its entire length.*[2]-Stephen R. Portsch

### Question 1: What are the policy barriers that keep people from pursuing and completing higher education in Ohio?

**1) The greatest policy barrier facing the State of Ohio in helping its citizens pursue and complete higher education is the lack of an integrated system of pre-school through college education. Lack of such a system and all that it entails places considerable barriers in front of students which transcend mere considerations of affordability and costs.**

*Ohio’s Current Education System*



There may be no more critical long-term consideration for the State of Ohio. Since the 1940's the state has seen a real decline in its per capita income while its relative position among the states in terms of college educated citizenry has likewise declined. Yet, the economic viability of worker's salaries at all levels is linked to higher education attainment today. As Enrico Moretti at UCLA's Department of Economics found in a recent study:

A percentage point increase in the supply of college graduates raises high school drop-outs' wages by 1.9%, high school graduates' wages by 1.6%, and college graduates wages by 0.4%. The effect is larger for less educated groups, as predicted by a conventional demand and supply model. But even for college graduates, an increase in the supply of college graduates increases wages, as predicted by a model that includes conventional demand and supply factors as well as spillovers.[4]

Gottlieb and Fogarty at Case Western Reserve University have found similar evidence:

- The proportion of adults holding a college degree was over twice as high in the most-educated large metropolitan areas (35% on the average) as it was in the least-educated metropolitan areas (16% on average).
- This statistic matters. Among the 75 largest US metropolitan areas, the ten that had the most college graduates in 1980 enjoyed per-capita income growth of 1.8% per year between 1980 and 1997. The ten with the fewest college graduates in 1980 experienced annual income growth of only .8% over the same period.
- The most-educated metropolitan cities also outpaced the least-educated on a rough measure of productivity growth over the period 1980 to 1994.
- Educational attainment was not found to be a significant determinant of the rate of employment growth in the 75 largest metropolitan areas. However, additional work ... suggest that education contributes to employment growth across all metropolitan areas in the U.S.

Gottlieb and Fogarty also note that some metropolitan areas have improved their relative education levels significantly in less than a single generation. Therefore, boosting educational attainment appears to be a reasonable objective for metropolitan policy makers (p.1).[5]

Such a consideration will not be satisfied by "tinkering around the edges". Only comprehensive legislative reform can begin the process. In a series of essays published by the Education Commission of the States and supported by the MetLife Foundation Change in Education Initiative and The Pew Charitable Trusts, the notion of a "mega bill" is suggested. The following are recommended components:

- The creation of a *standards-based report card* that provides a clear picture of students' strengths, weaknesses, achievements and needs, and follows them through the entire P-16 education process;
- A *parent information plan* that communicates the P-16 system's expectations of learners, from birth through college or work training;
- An *incentive system*, including college tuition assistance, that applies to all students throughout the course of their schooling;

- The creation of *standards and tests* designed to facilitate students' transition from one level of the education system to the next;
- The creation of a *governance* structure to oversee the process and assure that all elements of the P-16 delivery system are producing demonstrable improvements in student achievement;
- Periodic *policy audits* to identify gaps and conflicts in existing policies;
- Delineation of major *goals* for each component of the P-16 system (p.4) [6]

Florida is one such state which has drafted such a mega bill. Prompted by a change in its constitution, Florida has moved towards a P-20 system. Though part of the original ambitious plan was later revised due to political considerations, Ohioans might do well to consider Florida's original vision:

*In 1998, Florida voters amended their state Constitution to redefine the way education is governed. With the passage of Amendment 8, Floridians received a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to design a system of education governance for a new century: one seamless system of coordinated choices that links high expectations with performance, producing a continuum of opportunities for excellence from kindergarten through graduate and professional educational programs.*

*For the first time, Florida's highest elected official will be held accountable for the education of the state's citizenry.*

*For the first time, Florida's public K-20 education systems will work collaboratively to ensure every student's educational needs are met. The public school system, community college system and the state university system will unite under one common goal to serve the needs of students by providing high quality educational programs.*

*For the first time, Florida's education system will be perceived as dynamic and well coordinated. The delivery systems will be collaborative, progressive and proactive in seeking to provide new and expanded programs to meet the needs of students, businesses and communities. They can and should become partners in a move to expand opportunities for a quality education for students young and old.*

*For the first time, our state education system will be seen as serving the public, providing current and useful information on education choices for families, both in the public and independent sectors. The system will be focused on encouraging more choices within and outside the public education system.*

*For the first time, Florida will lead the nation in K-20 education governance reform. While other states are planning and collaborating on how to complete systemic K-20 education governance reform, Florida is fulfilling the vision through reforming its education governance and accountability structure.*

*For the first time, K-20 education in Florida will be student-centered.[3]-Education Governance Reorganization Taskforce*

***2) Ohio's P-16 system, however, needs to go beyond the inclusion of educational systems. Business, philanthropy, and education reform support organizations must also be part of the picture.***

Many of Ohio's great strengths lie within its diverse regions where local businesses, large cities and small towns, private and community foundations are based. It also lies in a higher education system where community and technical colleges, major universities and small private colleges are integral parts of the communities in which they are based.

While Ohio needs a state-level P-16 structure, it also needs regional P-16 Compacts where area relationships, so critical to genuine collaboration, can act to implement not only the concepts and spirit of a P-16 system but also secure the resources to sustain education reform and access programs. Such a model exists in Georgia:

Through the university system, the state of Georgia is divided into 15 local/regional P-16 councils that develop their own unique plans to implement the goals of Georgia's P-16 Initiative. Each council is a member of the Georgia P-16 Network which serves as a vehicle for maintaining close communication and building cross-regional relationships among participants for improving student success. The network brings representatives together several times a year to focus on local, regional or statewide needs. It serves as a forum for sharing lessons learned among local councils. Representatives from national organizations, other reform efforts in Georgia, and other states working on P-16 agendas are regularly invited to P-16 Network meetings to share their work and to help participants extend their thinking. Policies that are being considered at the state level are also discussed in network meetings.[7]

Columbus is important and Columbus should set the pace, establish policy, and offer technical support and state funding streams. Yet, the recent financial situation in which Ohio and most states find themselves underscores that state level resources are not endless.

Models like the Ohio College Access Network (OCAN) and the state's Graduate Retention Initiative grants illustrate how relatively minimal state resources can be used as a catalyst to create regional and community level collaborations to plan, implement, and sustain programs to strengthen college access and build Ohio's educated workforce.

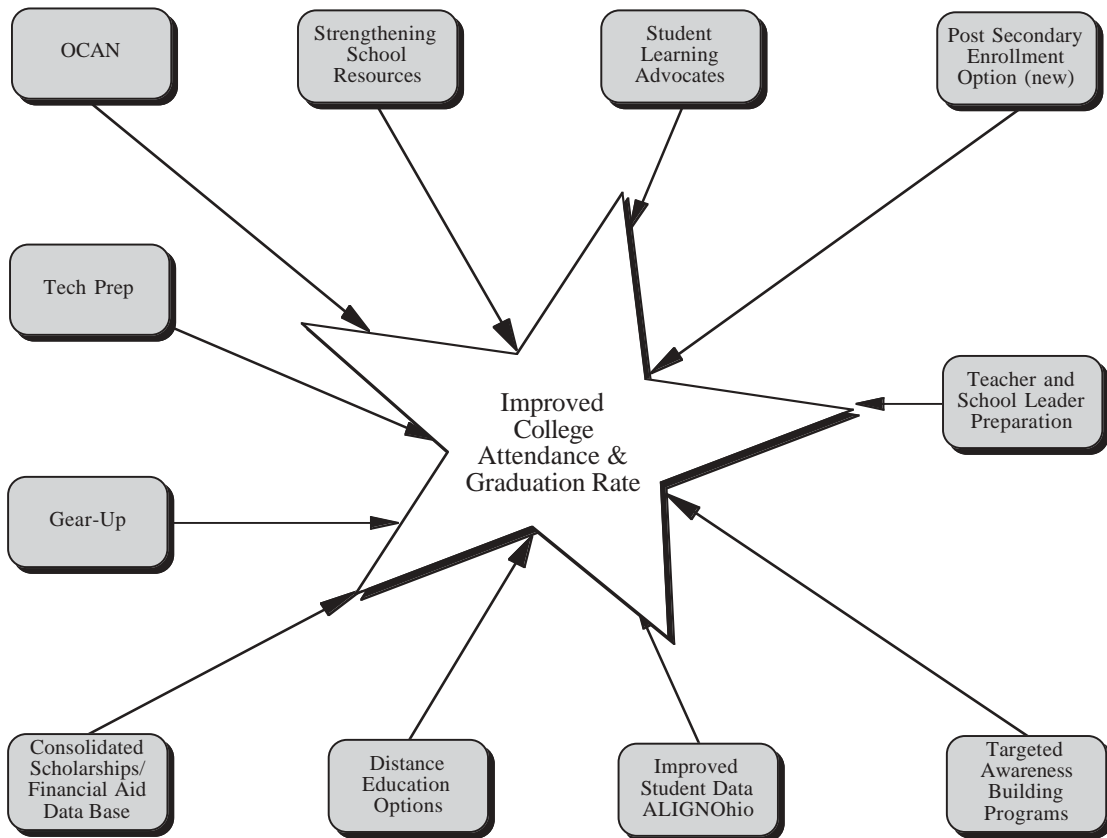
Many regional and community level resources have often been overlooked by the state as key players in processes such as education reform and college access. Among these groups are numerous community and private foundations. Many of the latter are a source for scholarships and "last dollar" scholarships. The state also has a handful of active education reform support organizations such as Lorain's Center for Leadership in School Reform, Reaching Heights in the Cleveland/University Heights area, Akron's Summit Education Initiative (SEI), and the Stark Education Partnership based in Canton.

Groups such as SEI and the Stark Education Partnership represent major community investments and both work in a P-16 context. The Stark Education Partnership has raised or managed nearly \$30 million in Federal and local private and foundation funds to support education reform in Stark County since its inception in 1989. These dollars have, in turn, been matched nearly 1:1 by in-kind district and other services in the community. By example, the Stark County investment equals many such investments in major urban areas, such as Louisville/Jefferson, Kentucky where the business community investment has been of equal magnitude.

In the spring of 2002 in association with the Stark County Educational Service Center and with Dr. John McGrath, president of Stark State College of Technology, the Stark Education Partnership convened the first county level P-16 Compact in the state of Ohio. This model can well serve to be a model for regional P-16 Compacts or Councils throughout the state.

Inversely, the findings of six months of study on the part of the Compact can also serve to advise the creation of a state-level P-16 system. Though local/regional in nature, alignment with, and investment in state and Federal efforts at the local level is evident. The findings are as follows:

- **Targeted programs** are needed to increase both student and parent awareness of the preparation needed for college, types of college education available, admissions requirements, costs, and financial aid and assistance available. These targeted programs should be developed to not only sustain aspirations on the part of students, but to raise parent (guardian) aspirations for their child.
- **A neighborhood level approach** is mandated in the inner cities. Neighborhood leaders, parents and guardians, particularly mothers should be engaged in the process of working to encourage completion of secondary and post secondary or continuing education for children.
- **The Post Secondary Enrollment Option (PSEO)** can be a useful tool in bridging secondary to post-secondary education. However, both the way in which the option is currently being used and the funding mechanism that is in place need to be examined in order to determine how this option can be used most effectively.
- **It is critical to create and improve relationships** in order to express to students that someone cares about their success and future. Every child should have a learning advocate. We need to strive to coordinate and strengthen existing mentoring programs, extend and coordinate advising, guidance counseling and college counseling services.



- **A compilation of scholarships and other funding sources** within and outside of Stark County needs to be made available both for students and parents. This compilation should be updated on a regular basis and made available both electronically and in print. Corresponding educational programs and sessions should be coordinated with parents, counselors, higher education institutions and others. Membership in the Ohio College Access Network (OCAN) will be a critical component here.
- **We need to review and recommend how the community might help schools strengthen their resources** available to parents and students to make informed decisions and gain additional support.
- **We need to promote shared integrated data management** to assure high levels of student achievement. Scaled up for all districts, assessment data on students should be shared with the colleges and considered as a replacement for the currently administered placement (Compass) test. This will enable the colleges to have access to school district student data to continue instruction without interruption.
- **We must support ongoing teacher and school leader preparation** aligned with the tri-partite theory of change now in use in Stark county. Enhanced teacher preparation is needed to continually improve results and enable students to more successfully transit to higher education. A continuous school leader preparation program, based not only on the change model, but on distributive leadership, will enable a solid and high performing P-12 base for higher education.
- **We must move beyond existing content standards** and help all educators P-16 integrate the lifelong learning or “new basic workskills” of abstraction, system thinking, experimentation and collaboration into existing content standards so that students are prepared for the requirements of the world of the knowledge worker who is “highly mobile, comfortable with ambiguity, entrepreneurial and creative.”
- **We need to learn from, build upon, and expand** current contextual learning concepts as they relate to student learning (GEAR-UP, College Tech Prep, Academies, etc.) and their relation to creating seamless paths to post-secondary education.(pp.10-11)[8]

## **Question 2: What Ohio Policies would you change to increase access and success in postsecondary education in Ohio?**

*1) Curriculum and coursework must be aligned between K-12 and higher education; successful college preparation mandates an academic core curriculum in high school.*

Consider what Stanford’s Bridge Project recently found as a result of a major study of state education systems.

...this research found that high school assessments often stress different knowledge and skills than do college entrance and placement requirements. Similarly, the coursework between high school and college is not connected; students graduate from high school under one set of standards and, three months later, are required to meet a whole new set of standards in college.(p.2)[9]



In addition, there is also a distinct need for high school students to take an academic core curriculum as a prelude to college. An academic core curriculum being defined, minimally, as 4 years of English, and 3 years each of mathematics, science, and social studies while in high school. The Ohio Board of Regents has been looking at the impact of the core on subsequent college grades. This is what they have found:

**Statewide Answers:** First term college students who graduated from high school in 2000 earned an average 2.64 (C+ to B-) grade point average. Almost one half a letter grade separates students' first term grade point averages for students who completed the academic core in high school (2.80 of B-) from students who did not take such coursework in high school (2.48 or C+). Students who enter college without having taken a college placement exam earn the lowest grade point average their first year and term of college (C).(Chapter 05-1)[10]

**2) Integrate K-12 (EMIS) and higher education (HEI) systems of data collection with a new emphasis.**

Venzia (2003) notes that “current data systems are not equipped to address students’ needs across systems, and no one is held accountable for issues related to student transitions from high school to college.”(p.2)[9] Ohio, however, has a strong base on which to develop an integrated P-16 data system. The current EMIS and HEI systems should be expanded, integrated, and enhanced with concepts being developed in the AlignOhio Project (State of Ohio, Battelle for Kids, the Timken Foundation, and SPARCC) which will give both K-12 teachers and higher education professors profilable data on students within their classrooms according to the new state academic standards. While colleges and universities do not have comparable standards, professional organizations, college catalogues, state professional and licensure requirements, Praxis, GRE and other tests all give a base which can be added into this matrix.

As standards based engaging work units have and are being developed for integration into this system at the K-12 level, corresponding lectures, experiments, syllabi and other materials can be integrated at the higher education level.

Discussions on how such integration can occur are already taking place in the Stark County P-16 Compact.

**3) Capacity is not our problem, sustainability is. Formulate programs and assistance to keep students in school, complete on time and return non-completers to higher education.**

The student count at Ohio’s public institutions of higher education in the fall of 2002 was 449,113[11] and another 126,073 were listed at independent Ohio institutions of higher education[12] in a previous year’s report. Hence, Ohio has an enrollment capacity of well over one-half million. Yet, as the table below notes, Ohio lags behind the rest of the nation in the rate at which it graduates students, despite the fact that Ohio’s rate was up from 86,485 graduates in 1999-2000 to 92,674 in 2000-2001.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	U.S. Average		Ohio	
	1990	2000	1990	2000
Any college	45%	52%	39%	47%
Associate or higher degree	27%	31%	22%	27%
Bachelor or higher degree	20%	25%	17%	21%
Graduate degree	7%	9%	6%	7%

*All Degrees by State-Supported, Independent, and Proprietary Colleges and Universities 2000-2001[13]*

Barton (2002) writing in an Educational Testing Service Policy Report notes that this is not just an Ohio concern. “The bulk of statistics available regularly track enrollment in college—and *enrollment* has been rising over the last 15 years. But until the last several years, completion rates have not; the *noncompletion* rate has been rising, a fact that seems hardly to have been noticed.” Further he states, “the United States has lost its preeminence in the world in higher education completion rates, and 13 countries have a lower dropout rate.”[14] Ohio could double its percentage of associate and bachelors degrees combined if those who once started college, finished college.

<i>EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT</i>	<i>Ohio</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Population 25 years and over	7,411,740	100.0
Less than 9th grade	331,801	4.5
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	930,284	12.6
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	2,674,551	36.1
Some college, no degree	1,471,964	19.9
Associate Degree	439,608	5.9
Bachelor’s Degree	1,016,256	13.7
Graduate or Professional	547,276	7.4[15]

***4) Increase incentives and options for graduate degrees, particularly in areas of critical need and economic viability.***

While Ohio needs to be rightly concerned about its bachelor’s level educational attainment gap, a corresponding gap exists at the graduate level. Looking at the Northeast Central region of Ohio (Medina, Portage, Summit, Stark, and Wayne Counties) Rochford, Auburn, and Beresh (2003) found that while the region needed some 6,672 bachelor’s degrees to reach the national average, the shortage was far worse at the graduate and professional level. Here 11,553 degrees were needed to reach the national average. This was despite the fact that Portage County (the home of Kent State Main Campus) actually had a surplus of 1,634 graduate degrees.[16]

***5) The cost of delivering degrees can be lowered through electronic and other means. While a P-16 System will entail additional costs, these need to be neither dramatic or extensive. Increased state productivity will more than compensate in the long run.***

...students are forced into financing options, such as borrowing under multiple programs, which interfere with persistence and lead to unmanageable debt levels exceeding industry guidelines. Although motivated by rational financial considerations, high school graduates are forced by high unmet need to make educational choices that lower the probability of degree completion considerably. For low-income students, these decisions are less a choice and more an inevitable response to high levels of unmet need.- *Empty Promises: The Myth of College Access in America* [17]

The long term effects of indebting a new generation of Ohioans well into the future to pay off college debt may be difficult to estimate. What is known is that the gap is growing between available aid and the costs of a college education. Around Ohio, genuine efforts are in play to reform K-12 systems, increase student academic achievement, and ready more students for college.

GEAR UP in districts such as Canton City and the Ohio High School Transformation Initiative through the KnowledgeWorks Foundation are two such examples. Yet, as the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Aid Assistance, U.S. Department of Education found: “the federal strategy ... over the decade must focus squarely on lowering unmet need and the debilitating work and loan burden that confront low- and moderate-income families ... efforts to increase academic preparation or enhance information about college and financial aid cannot overcome these daunting financial barriers...”(p.33)[17]

We would also argue that Ohio’s strategy needs to focus here as well. While incentives can be offered, limited resources will only go so far. A major issue becomes one of lowering the cost of degrees while maintaining quality. We do know that post secondary distance learning is on the rise. A major new Federal study released in July, 2003 found “in the 12-month 2000–2001 academic year, there were an estimated 3,077,000 enrollments in all distance education courses offered by 2-year and 4-year institutions.” The study also found that “there were an estimated 2,876,000 enrollments in college-level, credit-granting distance education courses, with 82 percent of these at the undergraduate level.”(p.iv)[18] Further, Ohio education systems, both K-12 and higher education must now compete in an international market, in some cases government supported, as the example below indicates:

Welcome to the UKeU website

Backed by the UK Government, UKeU delivers the best of UK university education online, across the world.

Working in close partnership with the best academic and technical providers, we have created a new approach to eLearning. This opens up a range of exciting opportunities for students, business and industry worldwide, UK universities and overseas academic institutions. [19]

Ohio should take steps to strengthen its own online learning organization, the Ohio Learning Network and to enter into substantive discussions with universities and faculty concerning faculty compensation and the cost of producing online courses. Not to do so will be to yield competitive advantage to out of state and out of country producers.

Some currently question the effectiveness and utility of the senior year of high school. For some years, Ohio has maintained a Post Secondary Enrollment Option which has been so ambiguous as to raise concerns as to what the program is trying to accomplish.[20] The most recent data indicates that only 7,147 high school students took advantage of this option in 2000. Although the option extends down to ninth grade, this number represents only 4% of the previous year’s graduating (12<sup>th</sup> grade) class alone.[21] Ohio needs, as part of its P-16 system, to overhaul the postsecondary enrollment option to not only allow students to secure a head start on higher education, but to make dual credit course the norm, rather than the exception for junior and senior years in high school. Other options might include a fifth year program.

One of the major objections associated with P-16 systems and additional system enhancements, such as dual credit is that the costs would be prohibitive. Augenblick and Josiah Pettersen (2001) writing for the Education Commission of the states in a series of essays supported by the MetLife Foundation Change in Education Initiative and The Pew Charitable Trusts indicate that this does not necessarily have to be the case.

In fact, extended opportunities for early childhood education, combined with smaller classes in 11th and 12th grade and the possibility of dual-credit enrollment, a longer school year and more professional development, would likely result in dramatically higher levels of performance, less time required to graduate from high school and college, increased enrollment in postsecondary education, and a variety of other benefits that could improve the efficiency of the education system. In the long run, beyond the five years we used to estimate benefits, even greater accomplishments would be expected at no increase in cost. (p.9)[22]

***Added Costs Associated with Implementing a  
P-16 Education System Using Alternative Scenarios***  
(all figures in millions)

Focus Area	Scenario		
	Low Cost	Medium Cost	High Cost
— Pre-K	-\$125	\$444	\$1,241
— Competency	\$116	\$599	\$1,099
— Grades 11-12	-\$3	\$24	\$78
— Savings	-\$17	-\$63	-\$125
— Other Costs	\$4	\$11	\$19
<b>Net Added Cost</b>	<b>\$100*</b>	<b>\$1,015</b>	<b>\$2,312</b>
<b>Net Added Cost as Percent of Total Current Spending</b>	<b>1.1%</b>	<b>11.4%</b>	<b>25.9%</b>

\*Excluding the savings of \$125 million for Pre-K.  
—Source Education Commission of the States[22]

## ***Summary***

This “white paper” has endeavored to explore certain concepts and factors pertaining to ways to increase college access in Ohio. By no means is the paper exhaustive. What is needed on the part of Ohio and Ohioans is a concerted effort to raise the number of degrees in the state, to strengthen college access opportunities for all citizens, and to bring Ohio into a position of leadership in college attainment among the states of the Union.

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## Appendix

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