

Quality and Value in Higher Education
“A Real Chance to Serve 21st Century Students”
A White Paper from the Ohio Faculty Council
Friday, April 11, 2014

I. Executive Summary:

The Ohio Faculty Council (OFC) is recognized by the Chancellor and the Ohio Board of Regents and represents the faculty at all of the four-year public universities in the State of Ohio. Ohio Governor John Kasich has launched an initiative to ensure Ohio’s public universities deliver greater value and quality to those they serve. Faculty have a unique perspective on how to best help our students succeed as a result of both their direct interaction with students, their parents and employers and also through their own training, research and experience.

Higher education in Ohio is at an important crossroads. Higher education has had a series of covenants with the State to address the changing needs of society. In the 20th century, higher education served as the foundation of economic development by focusing on producing graduates from traditional students (those who were well prepared and admitted directly from high school) who could lead the technological revolution. Today, 45% or more of working age adults in other states like Massachusetts, Maryland and Virginia have two- or four-year degrees compared to only 36% of working age adults in Ohio.

It is time for a new higher education covenant in Ohio that makes it easier for students who heretofore had not typically attended college to earn high quality and affordable degrees. The public institutions of higher education in Ohio must work cooperatively to realize affordable and accessible degree or certificate pathways for all primary areas of economic growth. They must also make available (in a format that facilitates direct comparisons) to every applicant a full disclosure and good-faith estimate of the costs, risks and rewards associated with completing a rigorous course of study.

II. The Higher Education Covenant:

- The majority of students currently graduating from high school are unaware of: 1) their own career options, 2) their own career potential, and 3) affordable delivery options and benefits.
- Ohio’s higher education system must move to establish (and ultimately deliver upon) a meaningful and effective covenant with (heretofore non-college-bound) students and their parents. To be competitive in the global economy students can no longer be comprised primarily of the “top 25%” of high school graduates. Typical students will need to be drawn from populations that had previously been under-represented at colleges. Because almost 85% of students enrolled in college attend public institutions the faculty of Ohio’s

thirteen four-year state universities must be actively engaged in the development of this new covenant with this new cohort of students.

III. Definitions of Quality and Value:

- **Value:** Value is created for both the individual and the State to the extent to which graduating students are prepared for a productive career in their discipline of study – especially when that preparation is achieved through flexible modes of delivery and at an affordable cost.

Individuals, the State and employers all derive value from the shaping of responsible citizens and engaged employees that takes place during the course of a college education as students acquire healthier lifestyles and develop critical thinking and communication skills that are not directly linked to preparation for a specific job or career.

- **Quality:** Attaining a respected credential and the proficiencies in the fundamentals necessary to allow a re-crafting of an individual's professional skill set several times over the course of a working lifetime.

Higher education has been the source of the innovation that served as the foundation for economic development in the 20th century. A focus on recruiting students in the top 25% of their high school classes who were well-prepared and admitted directly from high school resulted in quality being measured in terms of institutional selectivity and graduation rates.

Broadening access to higher education will be essential to the future of Ohio's economy and quality of life. Quality must be assessed with new metrics that look directly at the value-added to students such as: fraction of classes taught by full-time faculty; course completion; graduate employment/satisfaction; employer satisfaction; experiential learning embedded in real-world contexts, and graduation. Employers and society in general should expect that college graduates are engaged employees/citizens with well-developed problem solving skills.

IV. Strategies for Ohio:

- Encourage Ohio's public institutions of higher education to align curricula to the needs of our emerging workforce.
 - Maintain the balance between the need for specialized knowledge and the creation of a foundation that will facilitate the re-crafting of skill sets to meet emerging opportunities three or four times during the course of a productive career. Traditional academic disciplines should be actively encouraged to continue to develop interdisciplinary programs and training opportunities.
 - Strengthen a rigorous core demonstrably-relevant to major degrees.

- Evaluate and support all proposed programs of study on the basis of how well they are aligned with the individual institution's mission and their students' needs.
- Implement an Ohio Academic Coaching paradigm (with investments in systems, facilities, and people) with the goals of:
 - Individually assessing career aptitude to enable an informed choice of career pathway options.
 - Individually assessing current level of preparation as projected onto career choice options.
 - Individually assessing financial return on investment and financial viability of academic pathway options.
 - Individually developing a pathway and a plan to bring a student to their credential and employment goal that is consistent with their abilities and interests.
 - Plan includes support services, especially for the first-level transition from high school to Ohio's higher education.
 - Plan includes a personalized academic program of study incorporating relevant courses. This plan would ideally include the option of courses from multiple Ohio public institutions delivered accessibly (e.g. on-line and at a variety of different times) and affordably.
 - Plan includes substantial academic mentoring, support services, and intervention. All students should be regularly appraised of the consequences (both pro and con) of changing majors or dropping courses.
 - Plan includes direct ties to and collaboration with employers appropriate for the second transition from higher education to employment.
 - Scaling up successful programs like College Now (www.collegenowgc.org; formerly Cleveland Scholarship Program) that create a college-going culture in low-income households and among first-generation college students and then helps those students adapt to college life through on-going guidance and access to funds to prepare for and graduate from college.

V. Implementable Ideas:

- Ohio's public educational institutions will work cooperatively to realize a competitively-affordable and accessible degree or certificate pathway for all primary areas of economic growth and for every significant (though disparate and diverse) group of Ohioans. These degree or certificate pathways will include course options from all interested Ohio public institutions and include a wide range of delivery modalities.
- Ohio's public educational institutions will make available (in a format that facilitates direct comparisons) to every degree or certificate applicant a full

disclosure and good-faith estimate of:

- 1) the required investment on the part of the student (in terms of cost and time) and the State (in terms of anticipated State support),
- 2) the incurred risk (completion rate),
- 3) the anticipated reward (in terms of projected employment opportunities in Ohio & typical starting salary ranges), and
- 4) the track record of delivering on this covenant (in terms of compiled feedback from graduates/dropouts and employers as well as metrics such as: the fraction of classes taught by full-time faculty; course completion rates, and social mobility).