

Shame on Nevada. Cuts to state support of education there have taken it out of an 11th place tie with Ohio and put it solidly tenth on the list of states that invest the least in their public institutions of higher education. A report¹ released last month by the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) Association shows that Ohio, at 4.4%, now ranks 12th in the nation for the smallest fraction of tax revenues allocated to higher education. You probably missed this news. This change in status is hardly a cause for celebration. Rather it confirms that Ohio is continuing to miss an opportunity to make an investment in its citizens that most other states have realized pays off.

Public universities are primarily funded by two sources: 1) tuition and fees from students and their families, and 2) state support. The piece of information in the recent SHEEO report that has gotten the most attention is that, for the first time ever, more than half of the states were providing less than 50% of that funding. Ohio has been a charter member of the club that has shifted the cost of higher education to families. Only seven states provided less per capita support for higher education in 2017 than Ohio. So, while the total cost of educating each student in Ohio is close the national average, the families of Ohio students paid much more for higher education than families in almost all other states. That translates directly into an average student debt load in Ohio of \$29,579 – the 16th highest in the country².

If all or even most of the benefits of higher education came directly to those who were being educated then shifting the burden to students and their families could be justified. But, college graduates bring tangible benefits to states too. Sure, individuals with college degrees enjoy great benefits like 84% more earnings over a lifetime than those with only a high school diploma. But the state and federal government get twice as much tax revenue from those with college degrees than those with just high school diplomas³. Even more importantly, higher education gives society critical thinkers, effective communicators, and a better quality of life. Further, college graduates also help the bottom line of the state's budget by having dramatically lower healthcare costs and being less likely to commit crimes.

One of the best investments an individual can make is in themselves. One of the best investments Ohio can make is in its citizens. Families in Ohio get that higher education pays off. Investment in public higher education should be at least a much of a priority for the State as it is for its citizens.

¹ http://www.sheeo.org/sites/default/files/SHEF_FY2017.pdf

² <https://lendedu.com/blog/student-loan-debt-statistics-by-school-by-state-2017#interactivemap>

³ https://www.achievehartford.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/New-England-Public-Policy-Center-The-Fiscal-Impacts-of-College-Attainment-by-Phillip-A_-Trostel.pdf