

**ACHIEVING THE DREAM IN OHIO:
STATE POLICIES AFFECTING ACCESS TO, AND SUCCESS
IN, COMMUNITY COLLEGES FOR STUDENTS OF COLOR
AND LOW-INCOME STUDENTS¹**

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ABSTRACT

This report provides an audit of state policies in Ohio affecting access to, and success in, community colleges for students of color and low-income students. It was commissioned by Lumina Foundation for Education as part of a series of policy audits of the states involved in Achieving the Dream. Lumina Foundation is the primary funder of the initiative (Dougherty, Reid, & Nienhusser, 2006; Dougherty and Reid, 2006).

Ohio is one of two states in the second round of the Achieving the Dream initiative. In joining the initiative along with Connecticut, it brings in a northern Midwestern state that is quite different from the five southern and southwestern states that comprised the first round of the Achieving the Dream initiative. Ohio has an economy that is historically centered in heavy manufacturing, a diverse white ethnic community, and a political culture that in Elazar's (1984) terms, is individualistic rather than traditionalist.

This report is the product of intensive interviews that we conducted in Ohio and an analysis of documents produced both by state agencies and external organizations such as the Education Commission of the States. We interviewed officials of the Ohio Board of Regents, state legislators and staff, gubernatorial advisors, state and local officials representing public two-year colleges, and heads of organizations representing African Americans and Latinos.

We first set the stage by explaining why we focused on certain policies and what methods we used to investigate them. We then move to analyzing the state context: the size and composition of the state's population; the nature of its economy; and the structure, governance, and finance of the community college system. We then describe the state's policies affecting access to and success in community college for students of color and low-income students. The Achieving the Dream initiative is focusing on student success, but access remains an issue in Ohio and therefore is covered as well. This report also addresses the state's provisions for performance accountability. It has clear relevance to the aim of the Achieving the Dream initiative to use the analysis of data as the main lever to improve both community college efforts and state policies to improve student access and success. As we go along, we note any evaluations that our interviewees made of those policies and any policy proposals they themselves offered. In the summary and conclusions, we describe policy directions the state may wish to consider in its quest for greater equality of access and success in community colleges.

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THE POLICIES EXAMINED

To identify the important state policies shaping student access and success, we solicited the opinions of key policy actors and observers² and reviewed the research and policy literature on community colleges and higher education more generally. We examined reports by leading research and policy organizations,³ publications by the lead state agencies dealing with community colleges in the Achieving the Dream states, and journals and books dealing with community colleges and higher education.

Access Policies

Despite the huge growth in higher education in the United States over the last 100 years, large differences in college access still remain, particularly by race and income. For example, among 1992 high school graduates, 75% had enrolled in some form of postsecondary education by the year 2000. However, the figures for Hispanics, Native Americans, and those in the bottom quartile in socioeconomic status (SES) in the eighth grade were only 70%, 66%, and 52%, respectively (Ingels, Curtin, Kaufman, Alt, & Chen, 2002: 21).⁴

With regard to access, we have looked at state policies addressing student admissions, tuition, student financial aid, outreach programs, provisions for a comprehensive curriculum, and facilitation of access at distant locations and nontraditional times.

Admissions policy is of interest because, while community colleges are open door in ethos, this policy is under pressure as colleges face both increasing enrollment demand and more stingy state and local government funding (Cavanaugh, 2003; Hebel, 2004). Moreover, the increasing number of undocumented students raises important questions for an institution committed to access for the disadvantaged.

Tuition and financial aid are of immediate concern given that both tuition at state institutions and state student aid significantly affect whether students go to college (Heller, 1999; St. John, 1991). In the case of tuition, we have examined not only its average level but also whether a state has policies extending in-state tuition to undocumented immigrants.

In the case of state financial aid, we have analyzed the extent of need-based aid available (particularly in comparison to merit-based aid) and whether states have any substantial programs specifically for minority students. Furthermore, we have examined whether undocumented and part-time students are eligible for state aid. Part-time students are of interest here because so many low-income and minority students attend college part time. Hence, we have looked at whether states have student aid programs specifically for part-timers, rather than simply making them eligible for general aid programs.

Because outreach is so important for low-income and minority students, we have looked for state support of programs to encourage interest in college on the part of minority and low-income students. We have particularly investigated whether states fund early intervention programs similar to the federal Talent Search and GEAR UP programs and authorize and fund dual-enrollment programs allowing high school students to take college-level courses and get high

school credit for them (Academic Pathways to Access and Student Success, 2005; Karp, Bailey, Hughes, & Fermin, 2004, 2005; Perna & Swail, 2002).

Provisions for an accessible curriculum are of interest because many low-income and minority students are attracted to higher education by the availability of occupational and adult education programs (Grubb, Badway, & Bell, 2003; Prince & Jenkins, 2005). Hence, we have investigated whether these curricular options are mandated and financed by the states.

Finally, because minority and low-income students are more place and time bound (Choy & Ottinger, 1998: 51), we have sought to determine whether states have encouraged community colleges to establish satellite campuses, schedule courses at nontraditional times, offer distance education, or offer short-term courses or fractional credit.

Success Policies

Success within the community college remains an issue because many community college entrants leave higher education without a degree, with this number particularly great for low-income and minority students. For example, in the Beginning Postsecondary Student Longitudinal Survey (BPS:96) of first-time students entering college in 1995-96, 47% of those entering public two-year colleges had left higher education by June 2001 without a degree. But the figures for non-Hispanic Blacks, Latinos, and those with parents who had a high school degree or less were even higher: 61%, 52%, and 52%, respectively (Berkner, He, & Cataldi, 2002: 12, 61).⁵

With regard to success, we examined state policies involving remedial and developmental education, academic and non-academic counseling and guidance, transfer to four-year colleges, provision of the baccalaureate degree at community colleges, noncredit to credit articulation, and workforce and economic development.

Remedial education (also called developmental education) is crucial because so many low-income and minority students come into college with inadequate academic skills (Parsad & Lewis, 2003). But what state policies ensure that students will receive it, particularly in high quality form? As part of this analysis, we have looked at state policies affecting such factors as alignment of high school exit and college readiness requirements and mandatory testing and placement at college entry.

Academic and non-academic counseling and guidance have been found to have significant impacts on college persistence (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005: 404-406). But these are also practices that are easy for community colleges to skimp on, as they face cost pressures from other areas. Hence, we have examined what kind of support – financial and programmatic – states provide for community college counseling and guidance programs.

Transfer to the four-year college has become increasingly important as more students are encouraged to attain a baccalaureate degree but it has also become more difficult to do so. Low-income and minority students are increasingly priced out of four-year colleges and states increasingly encourage baccalaureate aspirants to start at community colleges because it is

cheaper for the states (Robertson, 2005; Wellman, 2002). We therefore have investigated the ways in which state policies aim to make transfer more likely and friction-free.

Baccalaureate provision at community colleges – either by community colleges themselves or by universities through centers at community colleges – has become increasingly attractive, particularly in response to the needs of place-bound students, labor market shortages, and cost-pressures on state governments (Floyd, Skolnik, & Walker, 2005). Still, this movement is very new, so we have investigated the degree to which it is receiving state support and guidance.

Noncredit to credit articulation has become increasingly of interest with heightening awareness that many low-income and minority people enter the community college through the noncredit side, whether through English as a second language, adult basic education, high school equivalency (GED), or other such programs. But if they are to find a secure pathway to economic advancement, such noncredit entrants need to find their way to the credit side of the curriculum, where the most remunerative credentials are to be found (Grubb et al., 2003; Prince & Jenkins, 2005). Hence, it becomes important to see what state policies are available to foster this transition from noncredit to credit education.

Finally, because minority and low-income students must find jobs, it is important not only that they get trained but also that remunerative jobs be available. Hence, the role state policy plays in aiding community colleges both to train workers and create new jobs is of interest (Dougherty & Bakia, 1999).

Performance Accountability

Performance accountability spans both access and success. States are increasingly using measures of community college performance in facilitating both student access and student success as ways of monitoring and rewarding colleges. But to effectively serve the goals of equality of access and success, the right measures must be used, particularly ones that directly address equality for minority and low-income students. Moreover, there must also be means to ensure that state policymakers and local community college officials actually respond to those performance outcome indicators (Dougherty & Hong, 2006).

Therefore, we have examined state performance accountability policies, analyzing what measures the states collect and publicize and how these data guide policy making by state government bodies and programmatic efforts by community colleges themselves. In the case of state government, we have analyzed whether state appropriations to community colleges are allocated on the basis of institutional performance (whether in the form of performance funding or budgeting) and whether state bodies use performance outcomes to devise new access and success policies. In the case of the community colleges themselves, we have also been interested in determining whether they use data on their performance to make changes in their own institutional practices affecting student access and success.

RESEARCH METHODS

To secure information on what policies the states have and how well they are working, we conducted many interviews and reviewed the written academic and non-academic literature on these subjects. We have also informally conversed with community college policymakers at events sponsored by the Achieving the Dream initiative.

The written academic and non-academic sources included research and policy publications issued by national and regional organizations and state agencies and articles in newspapers in the states. The organizations were the same as those that we reviewed when creating the policy taxonomy (see above).

Our interviews were conducted over the telephone. We interviewed officials of the Ohio Board of Regents, state legislators or staff members from both houses, the presidents or top officials of five public two-year colleges, and representatives of community organizations representing the African American and Latino communities in the state. The local two-year college officials were associated with five institutions: three community colleges (two locally controlled and one state controlled), a technical college, and a two-year university branch. They are scattered across the state and vary in degree of urbanicity. What they have in common is that they are near the median for their particular category in the proportion of their students who are nonwhite and/or low income (defined as Pell grant eligible) in background.⁶ Below we use the terms “community colleges” and “public two-year colleges” interchangeably to refer to these various kinds of public two-year colleges.

THE STATE CONTEXT

A distinctive feature of Ohio is the existence of multiple major metropolitan areas, each with distinctive racial-ethnic composition and economic needs. This decentralization – which leads many Ohioans to characterize their state as a collection of “city-states” – acts as a barrier to the development of statewide identification with a set of issues. We will develop this theme as we go along in the report.

Another distinctive feature of Ohio is that historically it has not been a leader in higher education spending. For example, in fiscal year 2002, the state ranked forty-fourth in state appropriations per student and thirtieth in overall revenues per student (Governor’s Commission on Higher Education and the Economy, 2004).

The state is also distinguished by a diverse array of public two-year institutions. It not only has locally controlled comprehensive community colleges but also state community colleges, technical colleges, branches of state universities, and vocational centers, each with distinct governance systems. As a result, traditional community colleges are only one part of a state approach to enhancing the educational and economic prospects of non-university students.

Population Size and Composition

Ohio's population in 2004 was 11,459,011, making it the seventh most populous state in the union. In that year, 83 percent of the population identified itself as non-Hispanic white, 12 percent as African American, 2 percent as Latino, 1 percent as Asian or Pacific Islander, 0.2 percent as Native American, and 1 percent as mixed race (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006: 21, 22, 27).

Between 2001-02 and 2017-18, the composition of public high school graduates will greatly change. The minority share of high school graduates is projected to rise from 13 percent in 2001-02 to 17 percent in 2013-14, with African Americans accounting for the bulk of this increase (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 2003).

Economic Structure

The state's gross state product in 2004 was \$418 billion, seventh largest in the nation. However, this ranking belies the fact that many Ohioans are not financially secure. The state per capita personal income in 2004, at \$31,322, was only twenty-sixth in the nation. Further, the state's poverty rate was 12.1 percent in 2003, just slightly better than the national average of 12.7 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006: 446, 452, 471).

Ohio's economy has long been concentrated in manufacturing, particularly of durable goods, and that manufacturing economy has been hit hard by imports and the export of jobs abroad. Still, in 2004, about one-sixth (15.3 percent) of the state's civilian labor force was employed in manufacturing, significantly higher than the 10.9 percent average for the nation as a whole. Moreover, the state's labor force still includes many blue collar workers. One-quarter (23.7 percent) of Ohio's civilian workers are employed in production, transportation, and material moving, construction, maintenance, and natural resource extraction occupations, which puts the state at about the national average of 23.4 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006).⁷

Nature of the Community College System

There are 23 "state assisted and locally autonomous" public two-year colleges in Ohio. They include six locally-controlled colleges that receive local as well as state funding, nine state community colleges, and eight technical colleges. Seven of the technical colleges are co-located with branch campuses of the state universities. In addition, there are 24 regional campuses of the state universities (Ohio Association of Community Colleges, 2006; Ohio Board of Regents, 2006o, pp. 12-13).

Governance and Finance

In fiscal year 2004-05, state funds (appropriations, grants, and contracts) accounted for 33 percent of the funds received by the locally-funded community colleges, 42 percent for the state community colleges, and 37 percent of the funds received by the technical colleges. The six locally-controlled community colleges also received 24 percent of their funds from local appropriations and grants and contracts.⁸ In contrast, the state community colleges and the technical colleges only received 0.8 percent and 0.3 percent, respectively, of their revenues from local grants and contracts (they received no local appropriations) (Ohio Board of Regents, 2006b).

State support is primarily based on enrollment, with a small performance component (see the Performance Accountability section, below). The formula is based on the average program costs for four-year colleges and two-year colleges combined, and is based on a college's enrollment share relative to all other colleges. The funds are not earmarked by the state and each college has full authority over allocations and expenditures.

All public higher education institutions are coordinated by the Ohio Board of Regents. The Board does not have regulatory authority, but rather has a coordinating, "direct, non-governing relationship" with the colleges and universities. The nine members of the Regents are appointed by the governor to nine-year terms. In addition, there are two ex-officio representatives from the State Legislature. The Regents appoint a chancellor, who leads a staff of higher education professionals. The Regents have a role in managing state higher education funds and state-funded financial aid programs. In addition, the Board works as an intermediary with the state and the colleges to coordinate policy and links to the K-12 system. All new institutions, academic centers and branches, and degree programs must be approved by the Regents. Each college and university has its own board of trustees, and considerable autonomy over institutional policies and practices (Governor's Commission on Higher Education and the Economy, 2004: 52; Ohio Board of Regents, 2006a; Smith, 1999).

Workforce education and adult basic education services are implemented primarily through Career and Technical Centers that are the responsibility of local school superintendents and are overseen by the Ohio Department of Education, responsible for the K-12 public school system. As a result, there are considerable turf battles over workforce education and any efforts to reform it are organizationally and politically complicated.

In its dealings with the colleges, the Board of Regents relies on persuasion rather than prescription, concertation rather than command. As a community college official notes,

There's a tremendous degree of institutional autonomy in the State of Ohio...[The Board of Regents'] power is more in bringing us together, getting agreement among people who may not naturally agree with one another so we get along pretty well actually as a result of their facilitation. They have a lot of influence that way, but formally it's really the colleges that have a tremendous degree of autonomy in those kinds of academic issues.

The structural diversity of the Ohio higher education system, when coupled with the limits to the power of the Board of Regents, has allowed for a growing role for non-governmental organizations. The Ohio Association of Community Colleges and several grant-funded collaborative initiatives to improve community college access and success have come to play a major role in community college policy making in Ohio. The grant-funded initiatives – notably the Ford Foundation’s Bridges to Opportunity project and, in time, the Achieving the Dream initiative – provide a way of creating conversation and introducing new ideas into a system that otherwise can become easily deadlocked by turf wars. Coordinated by the KnowledgeWorks Foundation, these initiatives have brought together key agencies and staff people to begin discussing policy needs with respect to the education of both traditional students and low-wage earning adult workers. In an education system riven by many divisions, organizations such as KnowledgeWorks play a key role in creating greater mutual awareness, trust, and eventually capacity for action across institutional boundaries (Boswell, Palmer, & Pierce, 2006).

Enrollment Demands

A repeated refrain in our interviews was that the state’s declining manufacturing economy requires the state to increase its college going rate. As a state official told us,

our economic prospects in general have been slower to rebalance than the rest of the country because of our deep manufacturing base and that has caused people to think differently about what’s next for them in terms of careers....The second piece is that those jobs that are available and even our manufacturing sector are demanding more skills than in the past so as you know across the country, jobs are demanding more training outside of high school.

As it happens, the Education Commission of the States has estimated that Ohio has to increase its postsecondary enrollments by 56 percent (365,000 more students) between 2000 and 2015 if it is to match the performance of the best-performing (“benchmark”) states (Education Commission of the States, 2003).⁹ This increase will depend overwhelmingly on an increase in the state’s college going rate rather than in an increase in the size of its college age cohort. Between 2001-02 and 2017-18, the number of public high school graduates in Ohio is expected to increase by only 1,244 students, an increase of 1.2 percent (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 2003).

ACCESS POLICIES

Public Commitment

According to a state official, Ohio has taken several initiatives to increase college access:

The state has had a long and relatively successful effort to increase access. For example, I believe in 2004, our college continuation rate for recent high school graduates was either at or above the national average for the first time in the history of the state....So we probably had the highest enrollments in the history of our state [yet] our demographics are flat to declining. [Question: What accounted for this?] Our marketing campaign, such as the Ohio College Access Network....We have a marketing campaign called the Knowledge Economy Awareness Campaign. I think the word is getting out that the economic realities are such that you will not progress in your life unless you have a college degree....We had efforts in the late '90s where we had something called Access Challenge that helped keep fees flat in 1999 and reduced fees by 5 percent in 2000, so that by 2001 two-year campus fees were below what they were in '98....In terms of the marketing sorts of things, we have been very successful on GEAR UP....So I think we have the infrastructure and the advocacy work on improving enrollments.

More recently, the Governor's Commission on Higher Education and the Economy (CHEE) declared a goal for Ohio to increase undergraduate and graduate credit enrollments by 30 percent or 180,000 over the next ten years (by the year 2015). Moreover, the report specifically argued that community colleges must play an important role in this increase in access. It stated that this enrollment growth could be funded by a combination of a small increase in state spending and commensurate cost savings on the part of higher education institutions (Governor's Commission on Higher Education and the Economy, 2004: 21-22, 41).

However, several of our respondents questioned the significance of this commitment, since it is not enshrined in legislation, no extra funding has been provided, and it is an initiative by a lame-duck governor.¹⁰ As one local college official put it,

One of the frustrating parts is, at the state level, we have a goal in the higher education... of 180,000 more citizens of Ohio attending college in the next ten years. It's frustrating when you get goals like that which are not funded....Higher education hasn't been, we feel, a high priority for Ohio. We feel that K-12 has gotten some attention, but higher ed has not.

Interestingly, the Governor's Commission goal to increase the number of college entrants did not involve specific goals for students of color or low-income students. In fact, we found little evidence that the state political environment supports policy discussions or solutions that openly address the issue of racial disparities in higher education outcomes. However, we did find a greater willingness to address income disparities, albeit somewhat indirectly. One of our respondents noted this:

Ohio being a fairly conservative political state, we certainly haven't tackled any issue on a race or gender basis or anything of that sort in a long time. But it does seem to be at least politically correct and acceptable to talk about low-wage workers and recognizing the needs of the working poor. Admittedly, it may not be the main constituency of the governing elites in our state, but they still are sensitive to the issue when framed in that way.

In keeping with this focus on income issues, virtually all of our respondents stated that Ohio's biggest challenge to greater college access is the state's high tuition levels. Moreover, state policy leaders have expressed an interest in slowing tuition inflation and creating new initiatives that focus on career pathways for low-income workers.

Below we review specific state policies that encourage community colleges to provide access for students of color and low-income students. Some of them are specifically addressed to such students. But many – while helping minority and low-income students – are not specifically directed to them. We focus on the state policies affecting these practices: open door admissions, tuition, student aid, outreach to potential students, providing a comprehensive curriculum, and making access to colleges convenient.

Open Door Admissions

Current Policy

Ohio's community colleges are "open door" institutions, accepting any high school graduate who applies. While this practice does not exist as a formal state policy, it is widely understood and accepted as integral to the mission of the community colleges in the state.

Undocumented immigrants are not guaranteed access to community colleges by state law, but neither are they barred. As a result, according to a local community college official, "every college handles it differently. Some don't allow that student in; some do."

Tuition

Current Policy

The board of trustees at each institution sets tuition and fee levels. The average resident tuition and required fees for full-time public two-year institutions were \$3,011 in 2005-06, which placed the state's tuition as the twelfth highest in the nation, 21 percent above the national average (Washington Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2006).¹¹ The estimated total net cost of attending a community college (tuition minus student aid) in 2004 was on average 44 percent of the median family income of the bottom 40 percent of the population in family income. This is well above the 34 percent average for the other Achieving the Dream States (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2006).

Keeping Down Tuition

The high cost of both community college and university tuition has come to be an important issue throughout the state. The Governor's Commission on Higher Education and the Economy (2004) stated: "[T]uition continues to rise and is a growing concern for many Ohioans who fear that a college and university education is not affordable..." (p. 21).

The General Assembly imposed tuition caps at least as early as fiscal year 1990 and – with the exception of fiscal years 2002 and 2003 – has kept the caps in place. For the 2006-2007 academic year, the General Assembly mandated in House Bill 66 that public higher education institutions may only increase undergraduate instructional and general fees for Ohio residents by the lesser of 6 percent, or \$500 per full-time student (HB 66, sec. 209.63.60; Governor's Commission on Higher Education and the Economy, 2004: 53).

Tuition Charged Undocumented Immigrants

Ohio has no statewide policy regarding tuition for undocumented immigrants. Instead, individual institutions appear to determine whether to charge such students in-state or out-of-state tuition by deciding whether to require proof of residency (such as a Social Security number). As a local community college official noted,

We're not finding clear direction in this area and so for our purposes, if a student is coming to us and has graduated from a high school and they're undocumented, we will charge them on the basis of their residency. So for example, if they graduate from a high school within our county....then we are going to assume that you're a resident and treat you accordingly.

There is little indication that any change in state policy toward undocumented students is in the offing. No state legislation has been introduced, as far as we could determine. In fact, advocates of in-state tuition for undocumented students seem to be primarily pinning their hopes on federal legislation.¹²

Student Aid

Current Policy

In 2004-05, Ohio awarded \$240 million in state student aid to college students at all levels. Two-thirds of it was in the form of need-based grant aid (National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs, 2006: 8, 19).

Ohio recently changed its student aid programs, with implementation to begin in the 2006-07 school year. Under House Bill 66 (ORC 3333.12), the need-based Ohio Instructional Grant

Program (OIG) and Part Time Ohio Instructional Grant Program (PTOIG) were merged to create the Ohio College Opportunity Grant Program (OCOG) and changes were made in aid eligibility and administration (see below). Over the next four years, the OCOG will be phased in, with a new cohort added each year, and the OIG and PTOIG will be phased out (Ohio Board of Regents, 2006c).¹³ The expectation is by the time that the full phase-in has occurred, Ohio will have doubled the size of its appropriations for need-based aid.

Need-Based Aid

In 2004-05, the state spent an average of \$370.41 in undergraduate need based grants per full-time equivalent undergraduate student, which was lower than the national average of \$410.41 (National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs, 2006: 23).

Students are eligible for the new Ohio College Opportunity Grant Program (ORC 3333.121-123) if they are first-time students, enrolled at least quarter time, and have a family income below \$75,000. The award is good for a maximum of five years of full-time enrollment or a longer period of part-time enrollment (Ohio Board of Regents, 2006c).

In the name of reducing the need for remediation and ensuring academic success at the postsecondary education level, HB 66 permits the Board of Regents to give priority funding to low-income students who, in elementary and secondary school, participated in or completed rigorous academic coursework, attained passing scores on the state achievement tests, or met other high academic performance standards. This development resembles the trend in a number of states to partially “meritize” their need-based aid programs (McPherson & Schapiro, 2002).

The state is also instituting, on an experimental basis, a program that addresses needy adults. The initiative, which is still in the design stage, would create a \$500 to \$1,000 supplement for OIG eligible students who are financially independent of their parents and have dependents of their own. Spurring this new program has been a sharp increase in the number of such college goers. The supplement is being funded by a \$30 million disbursement from the state’s surplus in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funding. The original intent had been to pay for childcare and transportation costs but it was decided this was not possible. Instead, students will be able to use the supplement to pay for books, computers, supplies, and perhaps tuition assistance.

Aid for Special Populations

Part-Time Students

Students who are enrolled at least quarter time are eligible for the new Ohio College Opportunity Grant (OCOG) Program. However, as mentioned above, Ohio is phasing out its separate program for part-time students.

Undocumented Immigrants

Undocumented immigrants are not eligible for state aid.

Evaluations by Respondents

The expanded state student aid program is facing large increases in cost. A state official noted:

We have a \$30 million deficit right now in our need-based aid program. We got a supplemental appropriation of \$60 million from the General Assembly to fix it....This is a sign of the success of our program and the relatively poor nature of the economy. But we also think something else is also going on that could be alarming. In the past we always looked at changes in per capita income in the state and used that to drive our estimates for OIG obligations. We think now that the state average per capita income numbers are no longer useful; we think they mask a huge disparity in income. A 3 percent increase in per capita income could be the result of a 20 percent increase in upper quintiles and a 20 percent decrease in the lower quintiles....People with less than a high school education, their incomes are declining. We think that this is driving some of the hole in our OIG programs.

In addition, one college president feels that the recent changes to the student aid programs might negatively affect part-time students. In the absence of a separate appropriation for part-time students, this president fears that their share of state student aid will drop.

Policy Proposals from Respondents

Many respondents discussed the work of the Higher Education Funding Study Council, whose final report came out in May 2006. One goal of this group was to look at revising state funding formulas with an eye to the needs of at-risk students (Higher Education Funding Study Council, 2006).

Outreach to Potential Students

Current Policy

Several state officials we interviewed and the Governor's Commission on Higher Education and the Economy (2004) argued that a lack of aspiration to attend college is an important access challenge for the state to address. They felt that many of the Ohio's citizens have not yet recognized the importance of getting a college degree in the current economic structure. The Commission stated: "Despite the clearly demonstrated link between education-attainment level and earning power, too few Ohioans are aware of the connection and too few aspire to and attain postsecondary education" (Governor's Commission on Higher Education and the Economy, 2004, p. 20). Clearly, this sentiment underscores the importance of early outreach programs to stimulate and strengthen college aspirations among nontraditional students.

Early Intervention Programs

The Ohio College Access Network – a consortium of the KnowledgeWorks Foundation, the Ohio Board of Regents, and the Ohio Department of Education – was established in 1999 to spur the development of early outreach efforts to pre-college students and their parents. Its aim is to develop local and regional programs throughout the state to provide advice on the importance of higher education, how to select colleges, financial aid possibilities, how to go about applying, and so forth (Ohio College Access Network, 2006a, b). Under HB 66, OCAN was appropriated \$1.1 million for FY 2006 and \$1.2 million for FY 2007 (Yoder, 2006: 3).

The Ohio Board of Regents established in May 2005 a "College Access Information Hotline." It offers information on preparation for college, admission, and articulation and transfer, as well as general facts about colleges and universities throughout Ohio. The hotline is paired with the existing State Grants and Scholarship Hotline to deliver information about student financial aid (Ohio Board of Regents, 2005a).

In 2005, the same consortium was awarded a six-year, \$3.3 million a year federal grant to run a statewide GEAR UP program (Ohio College Access Network, 2006c).

Finally, the Board of Regents is involved in a Knowledge Economy Awareness Initiative directed to fostering awareness that the state needs to move toward a new knowledge-based economy which will require more college educated workers (Ohio Board of Regents, 2006p).

Dual Enrollment

In 1989, the state enacted the Postsecondary Enrollment Option program, which allows public high school students the opportunity to take college courses. Students must meet academic requirements within the subject area where they wish to take courses. Ohio is one of the few states that expressly stipulates that dual enrollment opportunities must be made available to students in grade 9 and above. However, there is no state aid specifically allocated for dual

enrollment. In fact, the high school and the community college split the state high school appropriation funding for the enrolled student, and the local school district pays for students' college tuition, fees, books, and supplies (Academic Pathways to Access and Student Success, 2005; Karp, Bailey, Hughes, & Fermin, 2004: 18-24, 27; Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 2006a, 2006b: 124-125).

Evaluations by Respondents

The outreach need is most acute for adults, according to a community college leader: "We are doing things right with the traditional aged population – a higher than average college going rate despite tuition 50 percent above the average tuition level [across the United States]. It's the adults that have not got the message. This is where Ohio's deficient."

A number of our respondents criticized the fact that the state's Postsecondary Enrollment Option program forces high schools and community colleges to share state funding for a student. They believe that it creates a disincentive for high schools to promote dual enrollment. As a local community college official noted,

I think that the problem with the dual enrollment programs, or the Postsecondary Option programs, in the state of Ohio is, again, a funding issue. If a student comes to us from high school, then the high school loses the funding for that student. So in a lot of respects, and particularly in our area, some of the schools do not encourage postsecondary option students, because of their loss of income.

Another criticism, raised by a community college leader, is that the Postsecondary Enrollment Option is implemented very differently across the state.

Policy Proposals by Respondents

The Governor's Commission on Higher Education and the Economy (2004) recommended that the state should fund the Ohio Career Information System (OCIS) at a high enough level to make it available to every middle school and high school in Ohio. However, as of April 2006, no vote had yet been taken on the funding, though discussions were underway (Yoder, 2006).

The Governor's Commission on Higher Education and the Economy (2004) and the Higher Education Funding Study Council (2006) recommended that the state promote the opportunity for every high school graduate to earn at least one term of college credit before graduating from high school. A major motivation for this proposal is the desire to broaden educational access and yet control educational costs:

Better academic coordination across the P-16 continuum also could help address the need for increased space for higher education enrollment. Many P-12 districts in Ohio offer students an opportunity to obtain college-level skills and knowledge before high school graduation. These opportunities must be expanded...to help Ohio achieve the goal of increased higher education enrollment without dramatic and unnecessary expansion of college and university facilities. (Governor's Commission on Higher Education and the Economy, 2004, p. 50)

On the issue of financing dual enrollment, the state Partnership for Continued Learning is examining how to expand the program and not financially penalize local school districts.

Comprehensive Curriculum

One of the ways that students of color and low-income students are welcomed into the community college is through programs that are not exclusively academic, including occupational education and adult education.

Current Policy

Occupational Education

Under the Ohio educational statutes (ORC §3333.20), community colleges, technical colleges, and university branches are required to offer “an appropriate range of career or technical programs designed to prepare individuals for employment in specific careers at the technical or paraprofessional level.” They are also required to demonstrate “partnerships with industry, business, government, and labor for the retraining of the workforce and the economic development of the community.”

Adult General Education

Adult education programs provide a natural portal of entry into the community college for older students. However, Adult Basic Education and Adult Vocational Education are administered by the Ohio Department of Education. The state education code (ORC §3333.20) does not mention adult education as a required offering for community colleges, technical colleges, or university branches.

However, the Board of Regents is developing a program – AccelerateOhio – to encourage adults to invest in a college education. Students would be enticed into college by non-credit competency-based courses in such subjects as mathematics, communication (English), and information technology, often provided online. Student services – such as the provision of a mentor for students – would buttress the academic offerings. Student progression would be self-paced; as they pass each exam, they can systematically progress through the course modules (Ohio Board of Regents, 2006q).

Evaluations by Respondents

Despite the state's requirement that community colleges offer occupational education, many community college administrators and advocates feel that state officials give insufficient recognition to the role of community colleges in statewide workforce development. According to one college administrator,

There is an emphasis on getting more bachelors degrees because we lag behind the nation in bachelors degrees in Ohio. I don't think there is the awareness at the state level of how important an associate degree is to the economy and the jobs of Ohio in general, and that's, at the two-year college level, what we're trying to advocate for and impact the legislator's thinking on that.

Convenient Access

Especially for students who need to work while in college, access to the community college is greatly aided if community colleges reach out through nontraditional schedules, dispersed locations, and distance education.

Current Policy

Convenient Hours or Locations

Under the Ohio educational statutes (ORC § 3333.20), community colleges, technical colleges, and university branches are required to demonstrate "student access provided according to a convenient schedule and program quality provided at an affordable price." In fact, there has been a statewide commitment to making college geographically convenient for all citizens. However, beyond this commitment, there are no specific state policies or initiatives intended to address the need for wider access to higher education through more convenient hours or location.

Distance Education

Established in 1999, the Ohio Learning Network (OLN), which provides a central portal for courses and degrees offered at a distance by two- and four-year institutions. It was chartered by the Board of Regents, and two of the OLN board members are also officials of the Board of Regents. The OLN maintains an online catalog of 150 degrees and certificates and 3,500 courses offered by its 65 member institutions. Moreover, the network sponsors regional coordinators to advise students on their learning options (Academic Pathways to Access and Student Success, 2005; Ohio Learning Network, 2006).

Evaluations by Respondents

One of our community college respondents noted that, while two-year colleges are spread throughout the state, the distribution of community and technical colleges is not as even as it should be:

Of our 88 counties, we only have community college districts in 60 of those counties. Twenty eight of the counties are not served directly by a community college.... there are branch campuses nearby in those areas, but their tuition is about one-and-one-half times what community college tuition is and they don't have the full array of technical education and services that a comprehensive community college would, so there are geographic access limitations.

SUCCESS POLICIES

Public Commitment

Nationwide, community colleges are struggling to define student success, determine what institutional factors contribute to it, and develop policies to strengthen success. Ohio is no exception. Community college officials and stakeholders have been discussing how to improve student success in college (Governor's Commission on Higher Education and the Economy, 2004: 19; Higher Education Funding Study Council, 2006: 4). For example, the Higher Education Funding Study Council – established by state legislation in 2005 – has stated:

Ohio must also ensure its policies and programs are focused on making every student successful. Ohio should act to make certain, to the greatest extent possible, every student completes every course taken; comes back to college to progress towards and complete all educational objectives; and concludes his or her college experience successfully by achieving the highest level of education desired, as well as continuing to learn by periodic enrollment to update, upgrade, and add new skills and knowledge.
(p. 4)

Moreover, the Study Council endorsed the idea of a Two-Year College Success Challenge by which campuses would be rewarded for their success in awarding associate degrees and certain certificates and promoting transfer among students deemed at risk (Higher Education Funding Study Council, 2006: 9). (See the Performance Accountability section, below, for more information.)

It is not clear, however, how deep that conversation about student success has gotten, particularly at the state level. This lack of clarity may reflect the impact of the state’s higher education context of multiple institutional sectors and highly independent institutional cultures. As one local community college official noted, “the Ohio Board of Regents and the governor working through KnowledgeWorks – there is a commitment to do that. Do I hear public statements like that on a regular basis? No.” Another local official added:

I mean, we all are moving towards success. We all talk success... and a concern for low-income people of color [is] an issue for all of us. Absolutely. But I think we all approach it on this city-state, individual mentality, as opposed to a statewide, organized, systematic approach, at least from what I can see.

One emblem of this lack of a unified strategy is that the state has not issued a numerical goal for increasing graduation similar to the one that has been articulated by the Governor’s Commission on Higher Education and the Economy for increased college access (see above).

Below we examine the following state policies affecting success in the community college: remedial and developmental education, academic and non-academic guidance and support, transfer advising and support, baccalaureate provision, non-credit to credit articulation, and workforce preparation.

Remedial and Developmental Education

Current Policy

Under the Ohio educational statutes (ORC § 3333.20), community colleges, technical colleges, and university branches must demonstrate a “commitment to an effective array of developmental education services providing opportunities for academic skill enhancement.”

Financing

Remedial education courses are state subsidized, and remedial students are eligible for state financial aid. There is no state limit on how many times students can take remedial and developmental courses. However, insofar as the state’s new Ohio College Opportunity Grant aid system mirrors the federal student aid program, there may be restrictions on how many credits of developmental education students can finance with state student aid.

Entrance Testing and Assignment to Remediation

There are no statewide policies or procedures for remediation. Colleges are not required by the state to do placement testing for entering students. Each college is free to determine the procedures for assignment to remediation, the content of remedial work, and the standards for

exiting from remediation (Bettinger and Long, 2005: 20-21). When asked if the state has any remediation policies, a local community college official noted,

We all have assessment in place. But you know, it varies from school to school whether somebody that tests into a developmental course, whether they're actually required to take that course or not... We also use different cut-off scores. So potentially, somebody who may, at one school, be in a mainstream or gatekeeper, course, in another school would be in a developmental course. And that's an issue.

Reducing the Need for Remediation

In 2003, the Board published a plan that included a commitment to “promote K-12 academic content standards to eliminate college remediation requirements by 2007 and transfer the cost of college level remediation for traditional students to K-12 funding sources”(Ohio Board of Regents, 2003, p. 3). The High School to College Committee of the Articulation and Transfer Council that advises the Regents is looking at defining competencies in writing and math for college.

Policy Proposals by Respondents

In order to reduce the need for remediation, the Governor's Commission on Higher Education and the Economy (2004) recommended that the state's P-16 council, the Ohio Partnership for Continued Learning, develop a rigorous set of core courses that all high school graduates would be required to pass. The outgoing governor proposed the same in his 2006 State of the State address (Governor's Commission on Higher Education and the Economy, 2004: 24; Ohio Board of Regents, 2006d; Ohio Partnership for Continued Learning, 2006).

The Board of Regents and, in 2006, the governor proposed that remediation be limited to community colleges (Ohio Board of Regents, 2004, 2006d; Ohio Partnership for Continued Learning, 2006).¹⁴ However, the state universities have expressed resistance on the grounds that they, too, have underprepared students and they would be losing funds.

Academic Guidance and Support

Current Policy

The state does not provide funding specifically for academic guidance and support. Rather, colleges can fund these services, as they wish, out of their state appropriation for instruction and support (Ohio Board of Regents, 2001, 2005b). When asked if the state earmarks a portion of its aid for academic guidance, a state official replied: “No. We're very decentralized... We calculate allocations on the basis of a formula that includes that [student services], but campuses are not restricted for that purpose.... They are getting a general unrestricted appropriation.”

The state funds for instruction and support are lower in the freshman and sophomore years than in the junior and senior years, making it harder for the colleges that do not receive local funding to be able to pay for student support services.¹⁵ This problem was noted by a community college official:

[G]eneral studies and beginning freshman and sophomore education in general [are] subsidized at a lower state percentage so the student's share of the cost of education is the highest at the freshman and sophomore levels and that has a tendency to mean that we don't have the support services that we would ideally have for that population because we are not funded to support that population because of an upside down funding structure. We have six colleges in Ohio that have local tax support....They're pretty well supported locally and they could provide some of these necessary support services or be stars in workforce development...but that's something that's kind of elusive for the rest of us.

The state has not set standards for the form in which academic guidance and support is to be delivered by the community colleges. As a local community college official noted,

[T]he collaboration and the counseling and those kinds of things are encouraged by the state. I think that's the key word: Encouraged. [Question: Encouraged, but not necessarily encouraged through financing or standards?] Right. They would like more of it to happen, but they really leave us to our devices on how to make that happen.

Non-Academic Guidance and Support

Current Policy

The state provides funding for student services on a weighted full-time equivalent (FTE) basis, with part-time FTEs receiving more funding (Ohio Board of Regents, 2001, 2005b). However, the colleges can spend the funds as they see fit, so spending on non-academic guidance and support could vary widely across colleges. Moreover, there are no state standards for how non-academic guidance and support services should be provided.

Transfer Assistance

Current Policy

Ohio's desire to increase its college going rate, coupled with its concern about not spending more money on higher education, has provided a very strong impetus for considerable development of transfer and articulation policy. As a state official noted,

Affordability is an issue in our state and we wish we would not have that as an issue, but it is and so community colleges are a very good cost effective alternative to a four year institution.... Ohio has a very strong articulation and transfer model statewide here...our core courses will transfer to any [public four-year] institution.

Student Aid

The state does not have a student aid program specifically directed to transfer students.

Transfer Advising

The state has developed a website – CAS [Course Applicability System] Online (<https://miami.transfer.org/cas/index.jsp>) – to allow students to find out about the transfer requirements at different colleges and to get evaluations of the transferability of their lower-division courses. Moreover, HB 95 (2002) mandated that the Board of Regents should “examine the feasibility of developing a transfer marketing agenda that includes materials and interactive technology to inform the citizens of Ohio about the availability of transfer options at state institutions of higher education and to encourage adults to return to colleges and universities for additional education” (OCR 3333.16 A4).

However, the state does not earmark funds to support transfer advising at the community colleges. Neither does the state have any standards for what form that transfer advising takes.

General Education Transfer

In 1990, Ohio established a “transfer module” system to facilitate the transfer of general education credits. Each institution – following certain state standards – defines a cluster of general education courses. Students completing this “transfer module” at one institution are guaranteed that they will have fulfilled the transfer module at a second institution to which they have transferred. If students have not completed the module, then their general education credits are reviewed on a case by case basis (Ohio Board of Regents, 2006e, f, g).

Transfer of Academic Associates Degrees

Ohio does not have a policy that transfer students who graduate from a community college with an AA or AS degree are automatically given junior standing at a receiving public four-year college.

Occupational Education Transfer

HB 66 (ORC 3333.162) requires the Board of Regents to develop – in conjunction with the state Department of Education – criteria, policies, and procedures by April 15, 2007, to enable students to transfer “agreed upon” technical courses completed through a state institution of higher education – as well as an adult career-technical education institution or a public secondary career-technical institution – to a state institution of higher education “without unnecessary duplication or institutional barriers.” A Career Technical Credit Transfer Advisory Committee has been formed and it is focusing initially on developing credit transfer modules (transfer assurance guides) in nursing and engineering technology (Ohio Board of Regents, 2006g, j).

Specific Major Modules

House Bill 95 (2002) resulted in the development of TAGs (transfer assurance guides) that are intended to ensure the transferability of major-specific courses, typically introductory courses, in as many as 40 disciplines. As of spring 2006, the Board had recognized course clusters for 39 majors, of which half are in the arts and sciences (Ohio Board of Regents, 2006f, g, i, j).

Course Equivalence

HB 95 (2002) also mandated the creation of a “universal course equivalency classification system” (OCR 3333.16.A2). In connection with developing the TAGs, the Regents developed a system of Ohio Articulation Numbers (OAN), which provides a connection between courses that may be numbered differently by colleges but are regarded by the state as having equivalent content (Ohio Board of Regents, 2006k, l).

Evaluations by Respondents

Overall, our respondents saw Ohio’s recent efforts to improve transfer and articulation as promising, but they also believed it was too soon to judge the true effectiveness of the changes. Several of our interviewees felt that academic students were the primary beneficiaries of the TAGs system developed in response to HB 95, because many occupational disciplines are not included in these articulation agreements. However, it should be noted that about half of the 39 TAGs developed so far are in occupational fields: one in business, six in education fields, five in engineering technology, four in health, and four in communications (Ohio Board of Regents, 2006k: App. C).

Policy Proposals from Respondents

The Higher Education Funding Study Council (2006: 11-12) recommended that Ohio public universities develop applied baccalaureate degrees that would smoothly articulate with community college vocational associate degrees.

Another proposal involves the technical colleges that are co-located with a university branch. They can offer only technical degrees, not AA or AS degrees. Some of our respondents felt that the co-located technical colleges should be permitted to offer those two degrees as a means of allowing students to transfer more easily between the technical colleges and four-year colleges.

Baccalaureate Provision

Current Policy

None of the Ohio state two-year colleges offers baccalaureate degrees.

Evaluation by Respondents

A community college leader stated that baccalaureate provision by community colleges would be a mistake. What would be better is improved transfer to four-year colleges and provision of university upper-degree courses at community college campuses: “We have more than enough average four-year schools in this state. We need public universities to offer applied baccalaureates, perhaps 3 + 1 degrees.”

Policy Proposals from Respondents

The Governor’s Commission on Higher Education and the Economy (2004: 28) and the Higher Education Funding Study Council (2006: 14) have recommended that the state offer incentives to universities to provide baccalaureate degree completion programs at two-year colleges.

Non-Credit to Credit Articulation

Current Policy

Ohio is in the process of developing state policies to govern the movement of students from non-credit to credit programs. As mentioned above, HB 66 (ORC 3333.162) mandates that the Board of Regents, in consultation with the state Department of Education, public adult and secondary career-technical education institutions, and state institutions of higher education, develop policies and procedures to allow students to transfer non-credit technical courses from adult career-technical education institutions and public secondary career-technical institution to community and technical colleges. This provision builds on the Career Pathways initiative of the KnowledgeWorks Foundation, through its Ohio Bridges to Opportunity Initiative (KnowledgeWorks Foundation, 2006).

In addition, the AccelerateOhio program mentioned earlier carries the promise of facilitating the movement of students from non-credit adult education to credit bearing programs (Ohio Board of Regents, 2006q).

Evaluations by Respondents

One of the difficulties in facilitating student movement from non-credit to credit programs is the structure of adult education in Ohio. The Ohio State Department of Education (with primary responsibility for the K-12 system) operates Adult Career and Technical Centers, which provide primarily non-credit bearing adult education. Some of these schools have developed transfer agreements between these centers and the technical colleges. But according to one of our local community college respondents, the possibility of such agreements “really depends on the relationship of the vocational school ...with the two-year college.”

Workforce and Economic Development

Beyond graduating students, community colleges also face the task of placing them in jobs. This is one of the reasons community colleges have long been interested in workforce and economic development (Dougherty, 1994; Dougherty and Bakia, 2000).

Current Policy

Under the Ohio educational statutes (ORC 3333.20), community colleges, technical colleges, and university branches are required to offer “partnerships with industry, business, government, and labor for the retraining of the workforce and the economic development of the community.” The state administers the Jobs Challenge, an incentive grant that rewards colleges for their efforts in workforce preparation (Ohio Board of Regents, 2006m):

- EnterpriseOhio Network campuses each receive a Performance Grant of about \$53,000 in return for committing to certain performance standards, with an emphasis on helping small businesses.
- Workforce Development Incentive Grants are distributed to the same campuses as a match for the revenues they receive from third party entities for non-credit job-related training.
- EnterpriseOhio Network campuses and businesses can apply jointly for Targeted Industries Training Grants (TITG) for training of employees in manufacturing and information technology. The TITG grants can cover up to 75 percent of the training costs for eligible companies with 100 employees or less and up to 50 percent of the training costs for larger employers (Ohio Board of Regents, 2006n).
- Adult Workforce Centers receive funding to promote K-16 collaboration in the provision of coordinated, comprehensive training to local employers.

Policy Proposals by Respondents

The Governor's Commission on Higher Education and the Economy (2004: 29) recommended policies to require two-year colleges and workforce education centers to work collaboratively with each other and with local workforce policy boards and advisory councils to provide easy access for employers seeking contract training and individuals seeking skill upgrading.

PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY

Current Policy

There is a push in Ohio to strengthen performance accountability for its higher education system (Boswell et al., 2006). While the state is willing to provide more funding for colleges, this potential largesse is coupled with strong demands that the colleges cut their cost of operation (Governor's Commission on Higher Education and the Economy, 2004: 41).

At present the state has a performance reporting system and a small performance funding system for community colleges. We review the performance reporting indicators below and then analyze how the data are used (see Table 1).

Performance Indicators

The Board of Regents collects and publishes a variety of indicators on community college performance (Ohio Board of Regents, 2006o). They are reported by individual college but – except for enrollment – they are not broken down by the race or income of students.

Access Measures

The Regents report the following measures of student access: enrollment composition (by race and income as well as gender and age) and the number of students enrolling in remedial programs (Ohio Board of Regents, 2006o).

Success Measures

All the following measures are broken down by community college but not by student race or income (Ohio Board of Regents, 2006o).

Retention: The state reports fall to fall retention both for all students and for first-time, full-time, degree-seeking students.

Credits Completed: This measure is the proportion completed of credits attempted.

GPA of Returning Students: Average grade point average in fall of the second year for first-time, full-time degree seeking students.

Graduation: The state reports a number of different graduation measures, including the number of completers of associate degrees and certificates, the percentage completing an associate degree or certificate among first-time, degree-seeking students (both full time and part time), and the percentage of entrants who graduated (received an award) or were still enrolled three years after entering community college, among first-time, degree-seeking students (full time and part time).

Graduation Efficiency or Time to Degree: The Regents report two different measures: number of years to completion of associate degree and number of credits accumulated on the way to the associate degree.

Transfer to Another College: For each two-year college, the state reports the number of entrants who transfer to another public college. However, this report does not break out two- to four-year college transfer from transfer between two-year colleges or, conceivably, four-year to two-year transfer.

Licensure Pass Rate: The Regents report the proportion of health care graduates who pass the licensure exam for their particular field (nursing, X-ray technology, etc.)

Job Placement: The state reports the percentage of associate graduates who are either employed or enrolled in further schooling in Ohio six months after graduation.

Data Collection

The Board of Regents maintains a data warehouse with data for the public two-year and four-year colleges and, more limitedly, the private colleges (only full-time students receiving state aid). There is no integration with K-12 data, except for dual-enrollment students (Jenkins, 2006).

**Table 1:
Ohio Outcome Data**

Measure	Reported to the Public (available in reports published on Board of Regents website)		
	By CC	By Race	By SES
ACCESS MEASURES			
Enrollment composition	X	X	X
Remedial enrollments	X		
SUCCESS MEASURES			
Retention: Fall to fall retention, all students.	X		
Retention: Fall to fall retention, first-time, full-time, degree-seeking students.	X		
Credits completed: Percent of those attempted	X		
GPA of returning students: Average grade point average in fall of second year for first-time, full-time degree seeking students.	X		
Graduation: Number of completers of associate degrees and certificates.	X		
Graduation: Percent completing associate degrees and certificates among first-time, degree-seeking students (full-time and part-time).	X		
Graduation or retention: Percentage who graduated (received an award) or were still enrolled three years after entering community college, among first-time, degree-seeking students (full time and part time).	X		
Time to degree: Number of years to completion of associate degree.	X		
Time to degree: Number of credits accumulated on way to associate degree.	X		
Transfers to another college (two-year or four-year): Number.	X		
Licensure pass rate: Percentage of health care graduates passing licensure exam for their field.	X		
Job placement: Percentage of associate graduates employed or in further schooling in Ohio 6 months after graduation.	X		

Source: Ohio Board of Regents (2006o).

Connection of Performance Measures to State Funding

Ohio has a small performance funding system for community colleges. The state has four incentive “challenge” funds, only two of which apply to two-year colleges. One is the Jobs Challenge, an incentive grant that rewards colleges for their efforts in workforce preparation (Ohio Board of Regents, 2006n). (See the description under Workforce and Economic Development, above.)

The other incentive grant is the Access Challenge, which provides money to colleges in proportion to their share of General Studies enrollments across all public access institutions. The effect of these funds is to keep tuition from rising as high as it might.

The state is considering spreading to the two-year colleges a Success Challenge similar to that for the four-year colleges. Two-year colleges would receive additional funds depending on the number of their certificate and associate graduates and transfer students who complete a baccalaureate degree. As with the Access Challenge, a college’s share would be dependent on its share of total degree production across the public two-year institutions. One thing that will need to be worked out is getting better data on certificate completion.

Evaluations by Respondents

Use of Data by State Officials to Craft State Policies

Almost all of our respondents were aware that the state compiles and publishes yearly performance data on two-year colleges. However, there is some division of opinion over the degree to which the state government uses these data to shape its own policy making. Some state officials saw the state as relying on these data. Others were more skeptical. For example, a state official noted: “I’d say we collect a lot of data, often analyze a lot of data, but I am not sure we act upon data in a way that would be best.” A local community college official was even more skeptical. When asked about whether data were used to identify and act on problems with success and access, this official replied:

I think it’s ancillary. I think it’s not anecdotal maybe, but it’s not the primary driving force. I think the data analysis typically is done in terms of determining the subsidy distribution as compared to can we really understand what’s going on within our state. [Question: Do you think there’s any sort of movement on that or any sort of effort to use data differently?] Well, we have an information system – HEIS (Higher Education Information System) – in place that has improved the data that is available to the state and there is probably some study and analysis of data. I would not classify us as a heavy data analysis state at all.

Use by Community Colleges

It is not clear that the two-year colleges use performance data to any great extent in directing their own operations. One community college administrator mentioned the lack of funding or support for individual colleges to develop their institutional research capacities.

It appears that the state does not push community colleges hard to use data in their own decision making. It may be discussed with them but they are not compelled.

Policy Proposals from Respondents

Proposed Indicators

The following performance indicators were recommended by the Governor's Commission on Higher Education and the Economy (2004: 23). For the most part they are not collected (or at least publicly reported) at present:

General

- Annual rate of progress toward reaching the state goal of increased participation in postsecondary education.
- Annual benchmarking of Ohio's ranking of percent of population aged 18-34 participating in postsecondary education.

Participation

- Percentage of high school graduates who enroll in postsecondary education.
- Percentage of working-age adults enrolled part time in postsecondary education, including adult workforce education.
- Percentage of college-age population enrolled in college, by ethnic group.
- Postsecondary enrollment per 10,000 population per county.

Success

- Percentage of first-time, full-time students completing a baccalaureate degree in six years.
- Certificates, degrees, and diplomas awarded per 100 undergraduates.
- Percentage of community and technology college students completing an associate degree in four years.
- Ethnic distribution of degree completers compared with ethnic distribution of high school graduates.
- Percentage of adults with a baccalaureate degree or higher.
- Associate, undergraduate, and graduate degrees conferred per 100,000 population.
- Graduates' ratings of satisfaction with learning.
- Employers' ratings of satisfaction with graduates.
- Score and pass rates on selected tests and licensing exams. (There already is a similar measure collected by the state.)
- Employment rate of graduates. (There already is a similar measure collected by the state.)
- Starting salaries of graduates.

Areas of Demonstrated Need

- Number of degrees and percentage change in degrees in science, technology, engineering, mathematics.
- Number of degrees and percentage change in mathematics and science teachers.
- Number of degrees and percentage change in degrees in nursing.

Reduced Financial Barriers to Higher Education

- Proportion of students applying for financial aid who actually receive aid.
- Four-year tuition as a percent of family income.
- Two-year tuition as a percent of family income.

Reduced Barriers to Articulation and Transfer

- Percentage of students beginning in community colleges and technical colleges who complete baccalaureate degrees.
- Percentage of community and technical college students who transfer to baccalaureate granting institutions.
- Percentage of college courses that transfer among institutions.

Return on Investment

- Cost per full-time equivalent student.
- Cost per achievement unit (e.g., cost per successful placement in the workforce; cost per degree conferred).
- Measures of individual and collective benefits of degrees conferred.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Ohio has been making a strong push in financial aid and transfer policy. It has revamped its student aid program, widening student eligibility for need-based aid, addressing the needs of adult students, and bringing the state program into closer conformity with federal student aid. In the area of transfer policy, the state is making notable strides in facilitating movement from vocational centers to two-year colleges and from two-year college occupational programs to four-year colleges. Moreover, it has made a significant effort to facilitate the transfer not just of general education courses but also of major-specific ones.

However, there are several areas where the state may wish to consider further policy making efforts.

While undocumented students still are few in Ohio, their number is increasing. The state may wish to consider providing such students with guaranteed admission to public colleges, in-state tuition, and state student aid. However, a community college leader noted that it might be best to leave things as is: “Seems politically risky [to push for explicit eligibility for in-state tuition]. The current ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ policy may actually help more of the target population than trying to fix the problem.”

Ohio is strongly pushing the benefits of dual enrollment, but it still needs to address the issue that the current funding structure creates a disincentive for high schools to promote dual enrollment. One way to do this would be to follow several other states (Karp et al., 2005) in providing both the high school and the community college with the full ADA funding for a given student.

The state may wish to put more emphasis on ensuring easy access to community colleges statewide. Nearly a third of all Ohio counties do not have community colleges. While those counties may have technical colleges or university branches, they are not the same as comprehensive community colleges. The other colleges are typically more restricted in their curriculum and, in the case of the university branches, more expensive than community colleges.

Ohio differs from most of the Achieving the Dream states in having very little state direction for remedial education in two-year colleges. At this point it is not clear whether state direction is necessarily a good thing, given the fact that there still is uncertainty about what local remedial practices work best and what state policies best support effective local practices. However, it is safe to say that the absence of state standards on what placement exams and cut-off scores colleges should use results in great variation across colleges in whether a given student is assigned to remediation. The state may wish to explore – if only through conversation across colleges – defining a state policy on placement testing practices. Moreover, if some colleges do not allow students to take credit courses until they have completed all remediation, the state may wish to explore the utility of encouraging those colleges to allow students to take academic courses in skill areas where they do not need remediation, thus preventing students from feeling trapped in just remedial courses and exhausting much of their financial aid before they have made much progress in acquiring credits.

Like the other Achieving the Dream states, Ohio needs to consider providing state funding and standards for academic and non-academic counseling. Especially if it does not entail preconceived ideas of which jobs less advantaged students are destined for, such counseling can play an important role in expanding opportunity. Yet the lack of specific funding and state standards for counseling and guidance leaves these services at the mercy of the fluctuations in community college funding and of the belief that counseling can be cut back during financially lean years.

Ohio has been making a major push with regard to easing transfer, but much remains to be done. As with the other Achieving the Dream states, Ohio should consider providing student aid specifically targeted for transfer students and enhancing community college transfer advising efforts by earmarking state funds and establishing standards for effective transfer advising. Moreover, the state should consider mandating guaranteed admission and junior status for associate degree graduates. Finally, the state may wish to give technical colleges the right to award transferable AA and AS degrees, in order to ease movement from those colleges to four-year colleges.

Ohio should consider the possibility of having selected community colleges – particularly those far from a four-year college – award their own baccalaureate degrees. Such a provision will address the needs of place-bound students, particularly adults. It will also increase the likelihood that vocational students can receive BAs, if only by compelling the universities to become more

receptive to community college transfer demands in order to ward off the specter of competition in giving the baccalaureate.

Finally, with regard to performance accountability, Ohio should consider adding performance measures addressing success in remediation. Moreover, it is important – despite the political difficulties – that the performance measures be broken down by student income and race so that a clear picture emerges of how the community colleges are affecting students differing in background. The state should also create a state data warehouse encompassing the K-12, community college, and university sectors. Moreover, like all the other Achieving the Dream states, Ohio should consider providing specific funding and technical assistance to bolster two-year college institutional research. Doing so is particularly important for smaller, more rural colleges with limited resources to gather and evaluate data on their institutional performance.

One of the difficulties for Ohio in making policy changes such as the above is overcoming a legacy of underinvestment in higher education, particularly in its two-year colleges. Several of our respondents felt that higher education generally, and two-year colleges in particular, are still not a legislative priority within the state, compared with K-12 education, health care, or business development. This history of underinvestment in higher education can best be reversed if the state's various higher education sectors can overcome their distrust of each other and a persistent belief that other sectors are being funded at the expense of one's own sector (Boswell et al., 2006).

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ENDNOTES

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² We talked to Katherine Boswell formerly of the Education Commission of the States, Kay McClenney of the Community College Leadership Program at the University of Texas, Davis Jenkins of the University of Illinois-Chicago, Christopher Mazzeo then of the National Governors Association, Richard Kazis of Jobs for the Future, Frank Newman, Lara Couturier, and Jamie Scurry of the Futures Project, Sarah Rubin of MDC, Inc., Katherine Hughes and Tom Bailey of the Community College Research Center at Teachers College, Patricia Windham of the Florida Department of Education, and Frank Renz of the New Mexico Association of Community Colleges.

³ The research and policy organizations included the Community College Research Center at Teachers College, Columbia University, The Institute for Higher Education Policy, the Education Commission of the States (ECS), the State Higher Education Executive Officers, the Southern Regional Education Board, and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). Particularly useful were the state policy reports developed by the Center for Community College Policy at ECS and the State Policy Inventory Database Online (SPIDO) of WICHE.

⁴ The figure for Black, non-Hispanics was 76% (Ingels et al., 2002).

⁵ Meanwhile, among high school graduates in 1992 who entered the community college within the next two years, 62% had secured a college degree or attended a four-year college, but the figures for Blacks, Hispanics, and students in the lowest quartile in socioeconomic status (SES) were only 51%, 47%, and 51%, respectively. This study went on to analyze income and race differences in degree attainment and transfer to four-year colleges among students who entered the community college with the intention of receiving a degree. Once high school preparation and number of risk factors for high school and college dropout were controlled, SES and race differences in degree attainment and attendance at four-year colleges ceased to be significant. This underscores the importance of class and race differences in high school preparation and presence of dropout risk factors in creating class and race differences in degree attainment and transfer. The college risk factors analyzed were delayed college enrollment, part-time attendance, completion only of a high school certificate or GED, working full time when first enrolled, and being a parent (particularly a single parent) while enrolled in college (Hoachlander, Sikora, & Horn, 2003).

⁶ More specifically, we first broke the community colleges into three categories by urbanicity: urban (city or large town), suburban, and rural or small town. For each category, we calculated two statistics: the mean proportion minority (nonwhite) of the student body and the mean proportion receiving Pell grants. We then selected colleges that were as close as possible to each of those two means. We qualified this selection, however, to include at least one college that was part of the Achieving the Dream initiative and to ensure that the colleges were not all concentrated in one area of the state.

⁷ Of the remainder, 26 percent are employed in sales and office occupations, 17 percent in service occupations ranging from police officers to janitors, and 33 percent in managerial and professional occupations (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006: 405).

⁸ Underlying this figure is a big difference across the six colleges in how much they raise in local taxes. The four urban community colleges differ greatly from the two rural ones in the size of their property valuation and their tax millage.

⁹ One of our interviewees noted that another study, done for the Governor's Commission on Higher Education and the Economy, had come to a different figure: 180,000.

¹⁰ However, the newly elected Democratic candidate for governor has put forward a similar goal.

¹¹ The average nonresident tuition and required fees were \$6,317 (Washington Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2006: Table 10). The state's ranking would be different if the list of two-year colleges did not include some university branches.

¹² One of the policy advocates that we interviewed hopes that passage of the federal DREAM (Development Relief and Education for Minors) Act would ensure that more undocumented students have access to in-state tuition across the state. The act would allow students who have been in the U.S. for at least five years and entered before the age of 16 to be granted "residential" status for the purposes of tuition. Moreover, the act would provide students in good standing with a mechanism for applying for legal status. The DREAM Act has been debated in both the U.S. House and Senate, beginning in 2003, and was last introduced in the House in April 2006. The act has been somewhat

overshadowed by other immigration legislation since that time, and no vote of the bodies as a whole has been yet taken on the act.

¹³ The state also has student choice grants for private college and independent college students, which provide a subsidy to Ohio residents attending an Ohio institution.

¹⁴ It is widely expected that this will be enacted in fall 2006.

¹⁵ A state official noted that the lower funding of lower-division enrollments is substantially made up by the state's Access Challenge program. Moreover, a community college leader noted that the problem of lower funding of lower-division enrollments will be resolved to a great degree by the new funding taxonomy being developed by the Ohio Board of Regents.