



# 3-Year Degree Saves Students Money

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Saving money, encouraging completion and providing opportunities are three reasons Ohio needs 3-year baccalaureate degrees.

Accordingly, there is a provision included in the Ohio fiscal year 2012-2013 budget bill requiring public universities to produce plans for 3-year baccalaureate degrees. The goal is to transition 10% of programs to 3-year degrees in 2012, with 60% of programs available in three years by 2014.

The main goal of this provision is to ease the financial burden on students while still providing them with a quality education.

Completing a bachelor's degree in three years instead of four years – or the five or six years that some 4-year programs take to complete – will save students money. A 3-year degree also will help students complete their college education. Only 56% of students in Ohio public universities complete their bachelor's degree within six years. A shortened time-frame to obtain a degree, in addition to the savings, will help these students avoid or clear some of the hurdles they may encounter.

While a 3-year program will give many students the opportunity to graduate early, it gives other students the opportunity to pursue a dual major, to spend time studying abroad, or to complete an internship. These are opportunities a traditional 4-year student might not be able to take advantage of.

To be clear, a 3-year degree does not diminish the required number of credit hours, but provides another pathway for students to attain a college degree – a high-quality, low-cost pathway.

There are already several programs in place that will aid universities in creating a 3-year degree plan (see right).

In addition to those programs, I am advocating for a college readiness assessment to be conducted in the 10th grade. This will enable students to either complete college readiness or begin to earn college credits by the completion of 12th grade. Students need to take advantage of their last two years of high school.

Increasingly, high school students are entering college with college credit earned through one or more of these programs. The reduced amount of time to earn a degree in a 3-year baccalaureate degree program will save students money, increase completion rates and provide more educational opportunities for Ohio students.

**Advanced Placement** – Advanced Placement (AP) courses are advanced classes offered in high school that count towards graduation. Students earn college credit by taking the AP exam at the end of the course. Students pay a small exam fee instead of paying tuition for the college credits they earn.

Ohio is one of only a few states to offer guaranteed college credit to students who achieve at least a median score on the AP exam. Ohio students scoring at least a '3' on an AP exam are guaranteed college credit at any Ohio public institution. The exact number of credits and how those credits apply toward a degree varies, but they usually count toward general education curriculum requirements.

**Post-Secondary Enrollment Options Program (PSEOP)** – Sometimes referred to as "dual enrollment," the Post-Secondary Enrollment Options Program (PSEOP) allows high school students to simultaneously earn college credit and high school graduation credit through successful completion of college coursework.

**Career-Technical Credit Transfer (CT<sup>2</sup>)** – CT<sup>2</sup> allows high school and adult career-technical students who successfully complete specified technical programs to enter public colleges and universities with credits in-hand, saving students money and time. Ohio business and industry benefit from more employees with higher education and advanced skills.

**Early college high schools** – Early college high schools allow students to earn both a high school diploma and an associate degree or up to two years of credit toward a bachelor's degree. Early college high school programs have been started in Akron, Canton, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Elyria, Toledo and Youngstown.