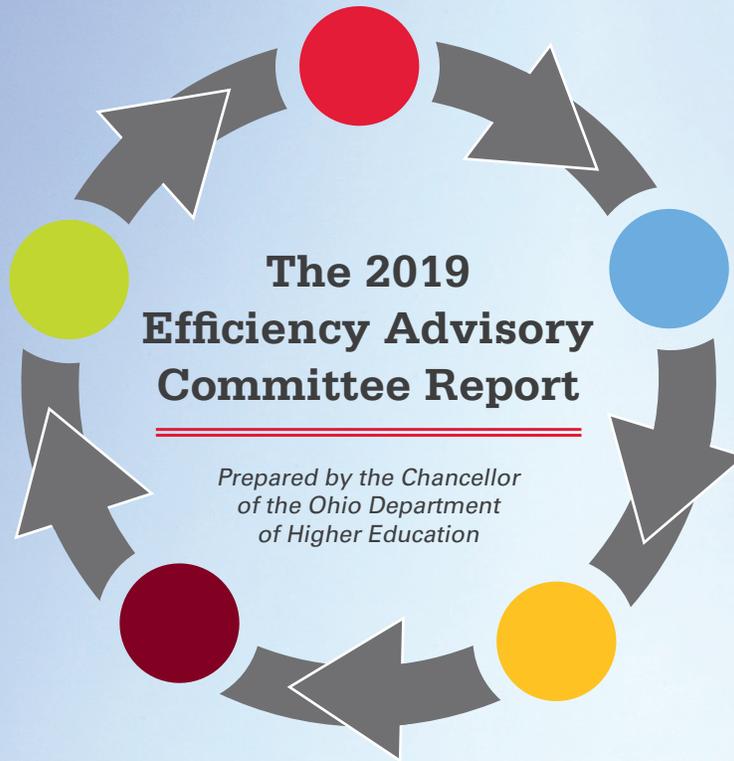




Department of  
Higher Education

Mike DeWine, Governor  
Randy Gardner, Chancellor

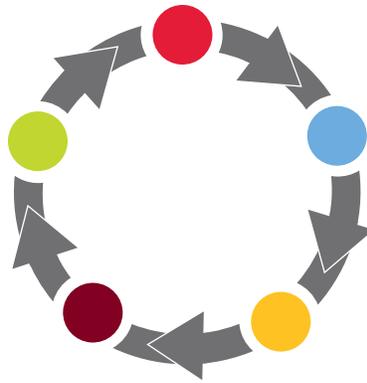


# The 2019 Efficiency Advisory Committee Report

*Prepared by the Chancellor  
of the Ohio Department  
of Higher Education*







## Introduction

Ohio Revised Code section 3333.95 requires the chancellor of the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) to maintain an “Efficiency Advisory Committee” that includes an “efficiency officer” from each state institution of higher education (IHE). Each IHE must then provide an “efficiency report” updated annually to ODHE, which is compiled by the chancellor into a statewide report shared at year end with the governor and legislature. The committee itself meets periodically at the call of the chancellor.

The Ohio Task Force on Affordability and Efficiency in Higher Education (Task Force) was created by [Executive Order 2015-01K](#). The Task Force’s charge was to review and recommend ways in which our public campuses can be more efficient, offering an education of equal or higher quality while simultaneously decreasing costs for students. The Task Force issued its report, [“Action Steps to Reduce College Costs,”](#) on October 1, 2015.

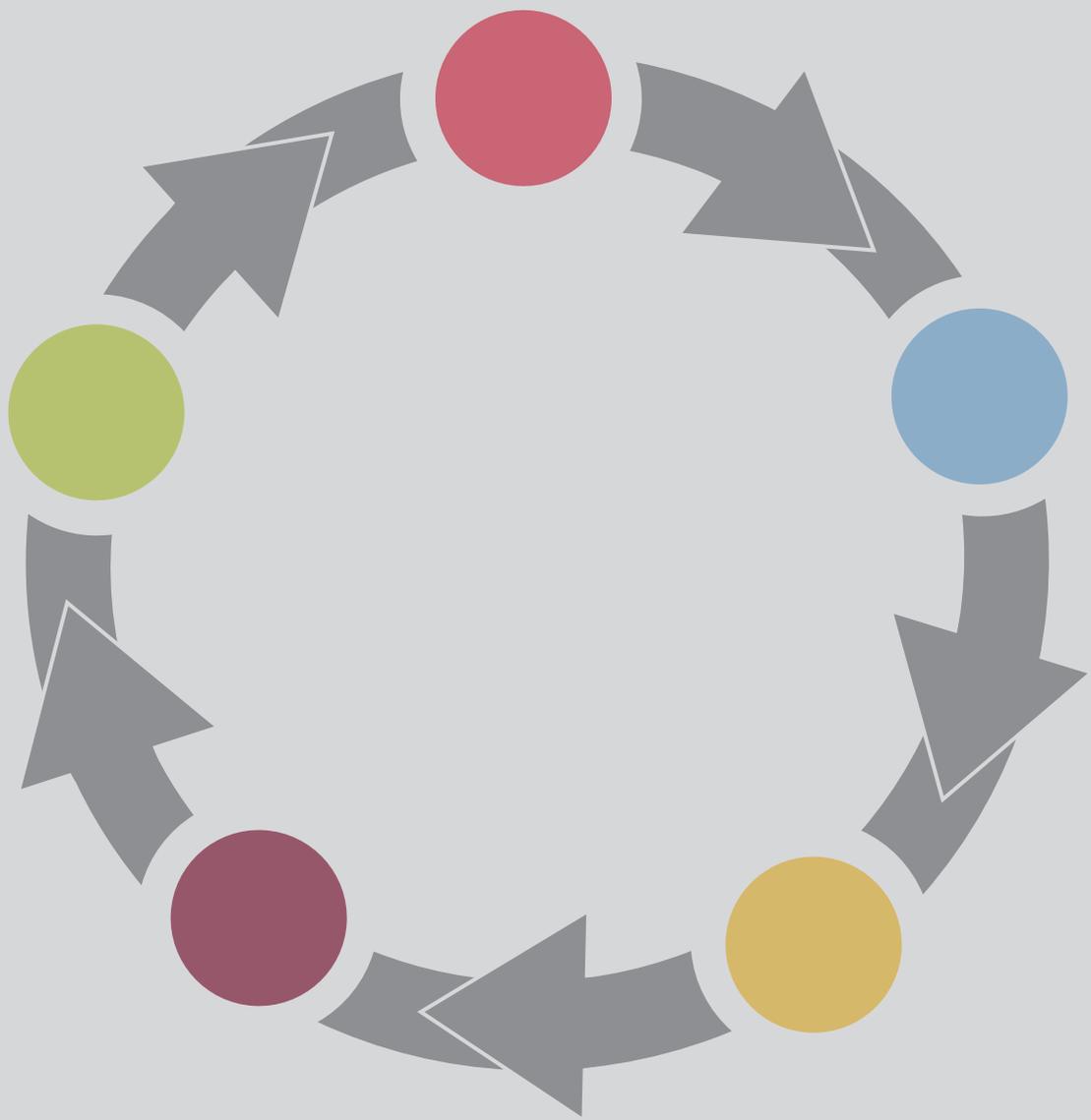
Even before the issuance of the Task Force’s report, higher education institutions in Ohio were being asked to develop and implement plans to reduce the cost to students of earning a degree. Since 2015 the institutions have also completed an annual efficiency review based on the recommendations of the Governor’s Task Force, and provided a report to the Chancellor that includes how each institution will implement the recommendations and other cost savings measures.

Such reports were completed this past fall to highlight the accomplishments and the status of institutional plans in FY 2019. Since this is the fourth year that IHEs have been required to report such progress to ODHE, changes were made to the format of the template used to collect the information. Whereas the old template served as an inventory of the Task Force recommendations, the new template selected specific areas of focus in line with the priorities of the DeWine-Husted administration. Much of the information collected is similar to that provided before. However, there are a few new points of emphasis in this year’s report, such as information requests regarding online and/or competency-based delivery models for education, financial literacy efforts related to college debt, and debt collection practices.

This year's reports continued to track progress by institutions regarding Operational Efficiency. For instance, questions remained regarding the use of joint purchasing contracts, partnerships and sponsorships with external entities, and efforts made to control health benefits costs and energy costs. In addition, institutions were asked to provide updates on the progress made within their Regional Compacts. Ohio Revised Code Section 3345.59 required regional compacts of Ohio's public institutions, with an executed agreement in place by June 30, 2018 for institutions to collaborate more fully on shared operations and programs.

Two specific areas within Academic Practices were identified for this year's report: Textbook Affordability and Time to Degree. Textbooks are often a significant cost for students and can be a barrier to access. Significant progress is being made to reduce this cost to students. Ohio Revised Code Section 3333.951(D) requires Ohio's public colleges and universities to annually conduct a study to determine the current cost of textbooks for students enrolled in the institution and submit the study to the Chancellor. Reducing time to degree is one of the most effective ways to reduce student costs. Institutions were asked to report their progress on several initiatives aimed at removing barriers to student completion.

For the first time, this year's report also asked the institutions to evaluate and report on their practices related to student advising relative to financial literacy, the awarding of financial aid and managing of loans and outstanding balances owed to institutions. A series of questions were asked relative to institutional practices and how they align with recommendations of the U.S. Department of Education and the Ohio Attorney General's Office.



## Operational Efficiencies

This section captures practices likely to yield significant savings that may be shared with students or benefit the institution generally. Topics include controlling costs in procurement, employee benefits, utilities, and avoidance of duplication.

Affordability and efficiency in higher education are high among the DeWine-Husted administration's policy priorities. For this year's efficiency reports, ODHE continued to encourage institutions to consider the Task Force's October 2015 report in developing their submissions.

The reports submitted by the institutions confirm that they continue to heavily utilize joint purchasing agreements to the degree they generate savings. Consistent with previous reports, institutions are moving away from stand-alone printers to print management programs that include networked printers. This leads to a reduction in the amount of equipment on campus, more economical methods of printing through gained economies of scale, and – very often – a reduction in printing.

- **Kent State University** reported that nearly 700 copiers were installed during FY19 with final installations completed in March. The university noticed a 24%, or \$52,000, reduction in its annual paper purchases and anticipates an additional \$230,000 annual cost avoidance due to the elimination of toner purchases. They anticipate total savings inclusive of annual lease payments, printing costs, reduced paper costs, and the total elimination of toner costs to be roughly \$570,000 annually.

Most institutions take advantage of purchasing agreements in place for computer hardware, and scientific supplies and equipment, as well as office supplies and equipment. The results are more mixed with regard to travel services and outbound shipping services, because this is an expense that varies greatly by type and size of institution. It is generally a minimal expense for the smaller institutions. Larger universities tend to more proactively implement procedures to manage and control these costs.

- At **Cuyahoga Community College**, the monetary savings from the joint contract in computer hardware was \$463,000 in FY 2019.
- **Bowling Green State University** reported a contract savings of \$203,000 through the joint contract agreement for scientific supplies and equipment.
- The **Northeast Ohio Medical University** currently uses State of Ohio and Inter-University Council (IUC) negotiated contracts as well as State Term Schedules (STS) for its computer hardware needs. In aggregate, this has yielded an approximate savings of \$450,000 in FY 2019.

Employee health benefits continue to be a major cost driver for all IHEs. This issue was included in the 2015 Task Force recommendations. Information on this topic continued to be requested in the most recent template. ODHE is especially interested in learning about best practices that could be applicable around the state. Several institutions described actions they have taken to aggressively manage this cost.

- **Cleveland State University's** consultant/advisor assisted them in modeling plan changes, which resulted in the university implementing changes that increased cost sharing by participants when they used the plan, but avoided changes to the employee payroll deductions. Increases in prescription drug rebates (savings) through a new contract reached \$533,000 for FY 2019 over those received in FY 2018. Prescription rebates will continue to deliver savings of about \$600,000 over prior contract levels over the remaining two years of the new contract.
- **Lakeland Community College** continues to see efficiencies by being part of the Lake County Schools Council, a consortium for purchasing health insurance. The Council went through strategic planning in FY19, resulting in refreshed plan designs including the elimination of the costliest plan and the addition of a narrow network and high-deductible plan with a health savings account. The Council began offering as an option a four-tier rate system (family, employee plus spouse, employee plus child(ren), and single) instead of a two-tier rate system (family and single), which saved the College approximately \$70,000 in premiums annually. The Council also expanded its strategic partnerships with a pharmacy vendor to curb drug costs.
- **North Central State College** continues its healthcare coverage with the Stark County Schools Council of Governments healthcare consortium. The COG insurance renewals have been in the single digits since North Central State joined in July of 2014. Prior to joining the COG, North Central State routinely experienced double-digit renewal increases. Also, the COG awarded three free months (i.e. premium holidays) of insurance to North Central State, which resulted in a savings of \$580,000 in FY 2019.
- In addition to managing health insurances costs, the **IUC Benefits Consortium** initiated a Request for Proposals (RFP) for Life, Disability, and Dental benefits. At least seven of the universities anticipate acquiring some benefits services through this joint procurement program. The statewide projected savings in 2020 will approach \$800,000.

Energy consumption is another cost driver that institutions continue to address. Energy efficiencies seek to refine sustainable methods utilized by the institution to procure and use energy, resulting in reduced consumption of energy. Initiatives identified include lighting systems, heating and cooling systems, electricity, natural gas, and utility monitoring. Much progress has been made and reported to DHE over the last several years.

- **The University of Akron** has a performance contract with Johnson Controls to measure and verify energy reductions realized through capital improvement projects completed over the past several years and to identify additional opportunities for savings. The performance contract has yielded more than \$3 million per year in utility savings.
- **Northwest State Community College** has an RFP with Terra State Community College and Owens Community College for an additional five-year electric purchase on top of reduced energy rates previously secured through May 2021. Increased savings of nearly 20% annually are anticipated starting June 2021.

## Partnerships

The Task Force encouraged IHEs to evaluate opportunities for affinity relationships and sponsorships that can support students, faculty, and staff. Institutions can use these types of partnerships to generate new resources by identifying “win-win” opportunities with private entities that are interested in connecting with students, faculty, staff, alumni, or other members of their communities.

Institutions have offered strong examples of partnerships over the last several years. A few new partnerships identified in FY 2019 include:

- In spring 2019, **Columbus State Community College** launched a new partnership that provided horticulture support to the Columbus Zoo while providing students in Columbus State’s Landscape Design and Management program hands-on experience performing important horticulture tasks. In addition, Columbus State partnered with Facebook and Pathstream, a curriculum development organization that partners with technology companies to bring real world skills to educators, to offer Pathstream’s curriculum at the college. Students are able to earn a Digital Marketing Certificate issued by Facebook through the non-credit course.
- Through the **Northwest Ohio Health Allied Education Consortium (NOAHEC)**, James A. Rhodes State College shares Allied Health programs with Marion Technical College, Northwest State Community College, Terra Community College, and Clark State Community College. In turn, students on those campuses have access to Respiratory Technology, Radiographic Imaging, and Occupational Therapy Assisting degrees. This allows each institution to offer degrees without significant investment in personnel, equipment, and supplies. This also allows Rhodes State students access to programs in Medical Laboratory Technology and Health Information Technology without similar investments.
- **Shawnee State University’s** Office of Counseling and Health Services is in the second year of a Memo of Understanding with Grace College through which master’s level counseling interns are provided. This program increases the number of clinical service hours available to students by approximately 1,000 hours and requires minimal investment by SSU. This results in an estimated annual cost savings to Shawnee State of \$14,000 in compensation plus benefits.
- Meetings between **Ohio University** and the City of Athens have resulted in community improvements in safety (Richland Avenue Pedestrian Passageway Project), transit systems, and development projects to benefit both the city and OU (sewer expansion, affordable housing, senior housing, the Ridges). In 2018, the International Town and Gown Association (ITGA) recognized Ohio University and the City of Athens with its annual Larry Abernathy Award for collaboration between city, university, and students.

Ohio Revised Code Section 3345.59 required regional compacts of Ohio’s public institutions, with an executed agreement, be in place by June 30, 2018. ODHE defined the regions last year and assigned each IHE to a specific region. All IHEs participated and executed the required agreements by the end of FY 2018. Per O.R.C. §3345.59 {E} colleges and universities must report within their annual efficiency

reports the efficiencies produced as a result of the compact. This year's template asked the institutions to "discuss efficiencies gained or opportunities for future partnerships as a result of each of the categories within the compact."

- The **Central Ohio Region Higher Education Compact (CORHEC)** includes Columbus State Community College, Central Ohio Technical College, Marion Technical College, North Central State College, and The Ohio State University. Each CORHEC member is also a member of the Central Ohio Compact that Columbus State has led since 2011. A Workforce Advisory Council was established in 2017 through the Central Ohio Compact. Membership is composed of chief talent officers from 26 of the region's employers. The Council met quarterly over the last year to advance student opportunities in key growth sectors such as advanced manufacturing, computer science, and healthcare; as well as to meet the needs of current and future emerging, incumbent, and transitional workforces.
- Within the **Northeast Ohio Regional Compact**, Cleveland State University developed more than 20 2+2 pathways to permit students from Cuyahoga Community College, Lorain County Community College, and Lakeland Community College to transfer course credits to CSU and earn a baccalaureate degree in two years. CSU also has campus-wide articulation agreements with these community colleges so that students who have received an associate degree from a community college are classified as having satisfied CSU's general education (GenEd) course requirements. It is estimated that 500 students can benefit from this arrangement each year. The savings impact per student is \$1,343 to \$2,686 per year; the total impact is \$671,500 to \$1,343,000 per year.
- Within the **Western Ohio Regional Compact**, Wright State University has a partnership agreement with Sinclair Community College, Edison State Community College, and Clark State Community College whereby students receive joint advising and have the opportunity to live in WSU housing and participate in WSU student activities, such as joining student organizations. Students are able to attend a community college at a lower cost while getting introduced to resources at Wright State. To date, there have been 1,500 participants from Sinclair, 350 from Clark State, and 35 from Edison.
- In FY 2019, the **Southwest Region** collaborated to successfully obtain an ODHE grant that will support the development and construction of an Online Transfer Toolkit. This will serve as an advising resource for Southwest Region transfer students, advisors, and other administrators at area two-year and four-year institutions. The toolkit will address such topics as scholarships, success tips for students and advisors, existing articulation/transfer agreements between institutions, lists of transfer pre-requisites for competitive majors, and statewide transfer agreements.

## Academic Practices

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This section covers areas more directly related to instruction, such as the cost of textbooks, time-to-degree, and academic course and program reviews. Academic improvements provide an opportunity to reduce student costs and/or improve student outcomes such as graduation rates, time to degree, and student loan debt.

One of the most significant expenses that most students incur beyond the cost of tuition is the cost of textbooks and learning materials. Ohio Revised Code Section 3333.951(D) requires Ohio's public colleges and universities to annually conduct a study to determine the current cost of textbooks for students enrolled in the institution and submit the study to the chancellor. This was a new requirement in last year's efficiency report. In turn, the institutions have submitted a second year of data to ODHE with their FY 2019 efficiency reports.

- Through a partnership that the **University of Cincinnati** has established with its campus bookstore retailer, UC has lowered students' costs by negotiating volume discounts on behalf of its large student population. In addition, course fees permit automated access to students through UC's Learning Management System, eliminating the need for students to purchase access codes. Discounted fees were in place for 40 course titles, taken by 12,000 students in FY 2019. UC reports that through its textbook affordability initiatives, a cost savings to students of \$2.4 million is estimated.
- **Sinclair** is implementing a virtual online bookstore during FY 2020. It is projected that this new bookstore model will save students 20% to 30% in textbook costs, projected to be between \$1.3 million and \$2 million in the aggregate. Sinclair recently contracted with a third-party textbook fulfillment vendor to provide lower-cost options, including rentals to students. The program goes live in the spring semester of 2020.

In addition to requesting the cost data referenced above, institutions were also asked to report on their use of alternative methods of providing learning materials to students. Specifically, they were asked about their utilization of inclusive access and open educational resources (OERs). Inclusive access refers to the practice of making digital texts available to the entire class for a fee (as referenced in UC's savings example above). Since all or most students purchase the content, the cost is generally lower. Another advantage is that the material is normally available by the first day of class.

- In spring 2018, **OhioLINK** negotiated and secured statewide wholesale price agreements with four major textbook publishers to benefit its member institutions. These agreements will reduce the wholesale price of e-textbooks to participating colleges and retailers by up to 80 percent and courseware by up to 55 percent, with the potential for nearly \$40 million in direct annual savings to Ohio's college students. OhioLINK concentrated on publishers with demonstrated cost savings across its 91 higher education institutions, with priority given to high enrollment in lower division courses and a title catalog widely assigned in Ohio.

OERs are freely accessible, openly licensed texts, media, and other digital materials that can be utilized

within course instruction in place of a traditional textbook. Faculty are increasingly developing and incorporating such methodology into their courses.

Institutions were asked to report whether they were utilizing these initiatives and to what degree they are utilized within their institutions. At least 10 institutions have implemented inclusive access in their institutions. Two institutions – Hocking College and Eastern Gateway Community College – have been especially aggressive implementing new programs campus wide. Most others are implementing inclusive access on a more limited basis that will likely expand over time.

- As of fall 2019, **Hocking College** implemented Inclusive Access campus wide. This structure provides two main benefits to students: price transparency – prospective and current students know exactly how much courses and all required materials will cost; and the opportunity to participate in the college’s learning materials program. In this program, the college provides course materials to students for a flat, per-semester fee. The fee is less than the cost that students would incur purchasing the materials themselves. The college is able to charge less by utilizing mass ordering discounts, loaning textbooks to students, and reusing and utilizing electronic materials through its vendor when possible.
- In 2019, a total of 23 courses (less than 1% of all university courses) were part of **Kent State University’s** Inclusive Access (Flash Books) model. However, these were typically large-enrollment courses, and a total of 8,276 students benefitted from these courses, which is 24.7% of KSU’s undergraduate student body. The projected cost savings to students was \$981,000.

Much more progress has been made with OER initiatives. Nearly every institution is utilizing OER in some areas of their curriculum. OER implementation has generally been implemented at the faculty level, so at this point there is limited, accurate information on how much it is utilized institution wide. Nonetheless, several institutions are strategically investing resources to expand the use of OERs.

- **Belmont College** reported that faculty have replaced print textbooks with free OERs in 21% of courses, benefiting 1,522 students and saving students collectively nearly \$277,000.
- **Clark State Community College** has more than 120 courses utilizing OER materials. In addition, Clark State has outsourced its textbook sales to an online provider. Between these two initiatives, Clark State estimates that it saved students more than \$650,000 in FY 2019.
- **Eastern Gateway Community College** offers OERs in lieu of purchased materials. Currently, 143 courses participate by offering OERs out of 447 courses, or 32% of Eastern Gateway’s total. This has resulted in \$328,000 in savings to students in FY 2019.
- Thirty-three different courses at **Marion Technical College** used OERs in FY 2019. Estimated cost savings to students in FY 2019 is slightly less than \$300,000; 1,829 unique students took at least one OER course in 3,522 different course sections in FY 2019.
- **Owens Community College** offers OERs in lieu of purchased materials, utilizing fee-based electronic materials purchases and all eBooks. The cost savings to students is \$1,195,000.

- **Miami University's** OER Committee partnered with the leadership of Miami's student government to develop the Affordable Education Leader Award, an annual award to be given to a continuing faculty member on any campus who demonstrates compelling and significant impact in areas related to affordable and open educational resources. The award has been given for the past two years.
- In June 2017, **Ohio State University** partnered with North Central State College, Ohio Dominican University, and 15 other community colleges to receive an Ohio Department of Higher Education Innovation Grant in the amount of \$1.3 million. The grant was awarded to support the development of OERs and other materials in an effort to reduce the cost of textbooks for students.
  - » The culmination of that work is the development of open course materials for 21 shared high-enrollment courses. Faculty teams representing Ohio's two-year and four-year colleges and universities, both public and private, put guides together to present alternatives to commercial textbooks for Ohio students.
  - » Full course guides using OER materials are available for many of Ohio's high-enrollment courses. They can be adopted in full or in part to meet the needs of course instructors. The courses have been divided into modules that meet the objectives of the Ohio Department of Higher Education's Transfer Assurance Guides (TAGs) and Ohio Transfer Module (OTM) guidelines.
- **Ohio State University** has a university grant program that supports faculty transitioning from conventional textbooks to OER resources. Through fall 2019, the Affordable Learning Exchange (ALX) has funded projects in 70 courses on all campuses. ALX is a partnership between units concerned with teaching and learning at Ohio State, and pairs excellence with affordability through grants, research, and faculty outreach. ALX projects have contributed to affordability at Ohio State by:
  - » Saving students nearly \$5 million by the end of academic year 2018-19;
  - » Switching to OERs in 0.7% of courses at Ohio State, benefitting 17,950 non-duplicative students; and
  - » Enabling research on student engagement and outcomes with OERs and other affordable learning tools.

## Time to Degree

The Task Force recommended that institutions streamline graduation requirements so that most bachelor's degree programs can be completed within 126 credit hours or less, and associate degree programs can be completed within 65 credit hours or less. Reducing time to degree not only reduces student cost, but also increases the rate of success to completion.

This year's template asked each institution to provide a list of every associate degree program that requires more than 65 credit hours and every baccalaureate degree program that requires more than 126 credit hours to complete. IHEs were also asked to report the percentage of programs and full-time equivalent students these programs represent. The significant majority of associate degree programs can be completed within the recommended number of credit hours. Even among the universities a baccalaureate degree can be earned within 126 credit hours for the significant majority of programs. Health and engineering programs were common fields that required more than the Task Force's recommended number of credits. The common justification for requiring additional credits was accreditation requirements.

Online courses and competency-based education (CBE) are two alternative delivery methods that appear to be growing within higher education across the United States. The Task Force recommended that institutions consider developing or expanding programs that measure student success based on demonstrated competencies instead of through the amount of time students spend studying a subject.

This year's template asked institutions whether they had implemented CBE and to identify which programs are available. Institutions were also asked how many academic programs are available online within their curriculum.

Five institutions offered examples of CBE programs being offered. This included a couple that are in the pilot stage. The programs tended to be in the information technology area. Several IHEs raised concerns about how to implement such programs within current accreditation standards.

- **Ohio University** is moving toward its first competency-based offering through the College of Business. OU's College of Business has developed a curricular framework for a proposed degree completion in business. This initial program will be accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) and is proposed to be offered to students with accredited associate degrees in business. This is a competency-principled model built on a scaffolding of stackable core sets of knowledge and demonstrable skills that embody the missions of both the College of Business and Ohio University.
- In FY 2019, seven **Bowling Green State University** students submitted 12 portfolios and earned 36 credits toward their degree programs. The online self-paced Alternate Resident Educator Program will begin accepting students for fall 2020. The program leads to a certificate at the graduate level and credits earned for the certificate can be used to earn a master's degree.
- In spring 2018, the **University of Toledo** collaborated with Blackboard to align its current technology with the infrastructure necessary for a CBE model of delivery. During FY 2019, eight CBE courses were piloted, with 37 students participating. During this time, the first CBE program was developed.

The RN-BSN CBE program was launched in fall 2019, with 15 participating students. In September 2019, UT also received Higher Learning Commission's approval for this program, allowing students to use their financial aid to fund it.

- **Lorain County Community College** offers competency-based education in nine courses within the Computer Networking (CMNW) degree and certificate program. Twenty-two students have enrolled in LCCC's CBE classes since their launch in 2018. Eleven different graduates have used CBE toward their degree/certificate.
- **Sinclair Community College** offers competency-based education in the following programs: computer information systems, computer aided manufacturing, unmanned aerial systems/geographic information systems, and management and marking.

Online delivery methods are much more established and every campus has at least some programs available completely online. In addition, all campuses have substantial lists of courses available online. The number of programs available by institution varies considerably from some institutions having minimal full programs available online to institutions having robust program offerings available online. Several institutions pointed out that even in programs fully available online, it is common for students to take a blend of in-person and online courses.

Institutions were asked if they are observing a difference in completion rates between CBE or online versus traditional land-based courses. There was great variance in the responses to this question. Some institutions are not currently measuring the variance in success rates. Others are observing higher success rates among land-based students and some observe higher success rates among online students. To the degree there are differences, few institutions are observing significant variances.

Per institutional responses, the tuition rates tend to be the same for online and land-based courses. Some institutions waive general fees specific to the campus for online courses since the student will normally not be utilizing campus services for such courses. Some institutions may also have a technology fee that actually makes the online course more expensive than land-based courses. The apparent benefit of online programming is the savings in other expenses, such as travel or day care for children; as well as the convenience of schedule implicit within the flexibility of online courses.

- **Lorain County Community College (LCCC)** offers 22 programs, including degrees and certificates, in a 100% online format. Certificate and degree programs are listed online in a centralized location and via a drop-down tab on the LCCC homepage. In addition to certificate and degree offerings, LCCC offers 250 courses in an online format, which can be easily identified and searched in its My Campus online course search, College Scheduler schedule planning tool, and by the public.
- For fall 2019, there were 992 students enrolled in the **University of Toledo's** fully online programs and another 7,874 students taking at least one online course. UT offers more than a dozen undergraduate programs, a dozen master's level programs, and a couple of doctorate programs online. In addition, UT offers several certificate programs.
- **Youngstown State University** had 838 course offerings in FY 2019. In addition, YSU had 330 enrollments in 17 online programs including bachelor's and master's degrees programs. Fee savings to online students was estimated to be \$30,000 for FY 2019.

## Policy Reforms

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This section captures state IHE responses to suggested policy reforms originating in gubernatorial task force efforts, legislative joint committee reports, and student loan debt advisory group reports. In recent years, a number of stakeholder perspectives have been shared with institutions. Much of the information requested in this section is new compared to previous efficiency reports. The emphasis in this section revolves around financial services to students ranging from improving student financial literacy to awarding of financial aid to collections of outstanding balances when necessary.

The Task Force recommended that institutions provide financial literacy as a standard part of students' education. In addition, the Ohio Attorney General's Student Loan Debt Advisory Group report of June 2017 made a similar recommendation as well as other proposals on how to improve processing of student accounts and debts.

Within the template, institutions were asked whether they provided a financial literacy course to incoming students. Most institutions include coursework on financial literacy within their First Year Experience course. Such a course is mandatory at most, but not all, institutions. In addition, many IHEs emphasized their outreach to students in assisting them with pursuing financial aid and helping them understand the differences between grants and student loans.

- **Central State University** offers more than 30 sessions of financial literacy topics each year. Every student receiving any university aid is required to attend four sessions. More than 80% of students attending CSU receive some form of university aid.
- Beginning in FY 2018, all first-year **Youngstown State University** students are required take a First Year Experience course that includes financial literacy and advising coursework. In FY 2019, YSU introduced the financial literacy training to students and their parents at summer orientation and communicated that students were required to complete the module between the time they attended orientation/registered for classes and the start of the term. This strategy resulted in 93% of freshman completing the financial literacy module.

On April 15, 2019, the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) issued guidance on how institutions should communicate financial assistance to students. The guidance calls for not describing loans as "awards," including the total cost of attendance in letters, breaking costs down into clear components, avoiding co-mingling grants, scholarships, loans and work-study together, and always including a net cost calculation in financial aid letters.

Institutions were asked to report on which of the recommendations in the USDOE guidance they have implemented. There is fairly uniform awareness among the institutions of the USDOE guidance. All campuses have either implemented the recommendations or are in process of doing so. One challenge referenced by several IHEs was that changing their award notifications may require changes to their IT systems used to initiate the awards. Others raised concerns about USDOE-recommended changes creating confusion for students as justification to phase in the guidance recommendations over time.

- **Kent State University** requires an active confirmation from students of their desire to borrow prior to processing any student loan. Furthermore, students are provided with their aggregate Federal

Direct Student Loan indebtedness when they are making their borrowing decisions. In addition, KSU's One Stop for Student Services discusses this topic with students/families in orientation and in general one-on-one advisement.

- The **University of Cincinnati** utilizes the CampusLogic Award Letter tool to provide students with a dynamic, real-time award letter experience. UC Financial Aid Offer uses the full nomenclature of aid programs as well separating these programs as recommended by USDOE. UC includes cost of attendance, direct costs, indirect costs, and estimated out-of-pocket costs, as well. Being dynamic, the Financial Aid Offer provides hyperlinks to aid program explanation videos as well links for payment plan, PLUS and private loan information.

ORC Section 131.02 requires state IHEs to certify their outstanding debt to the Ohio Attorney General's office (AGO) for collection either 45 days after the amount is due or within 10 days after the start of the next academic session, whichever is later. However, Ohio's institutions certify their outstanding debt pursuant to varying policies and practices. To ensure that all Ohio students are treated fairly and consistently, one recommendation of the Student Loan Debt Advisory Group was that state institutions adopt uniform certification practices that emphasize transparency for both debtors and the AGO (see [Recommendation Seven on page 13 of the report](#)). Specifically, institutions were asked to develop uniform practices for collecting debt with attention to the type, content, and frequency of notices issued to students; and the fees and other collection costs applied to student debts.

Institutions were asked to report on their review of the Debt Advisory Group's recommendations and how their institutional practices align with the recommendations. Again, there is fairly uniform awareness of the AGO report. Many institutions' practices already aligned with the recommendations. Some institutions are implementing changes and still others are reviewing the recommendations relative to their established practices.

Based on the responses received on this topic, there is some variation in how institutions collect on fees and certify outstanding balances to the Attorney General. This is a topic that likely warrants more conversation and may provide an opportunity for institutions to share best practices to assure consistent treatment of students and perhaps even reduce some of the barriers to student access and success.

- **Cuyahoga Community College** (Tri-C) follows the recommendations for late fees in the IUC-Recommended Uniform Standards for the Collections Practices of State Colleges and Universities of Ohio. Tri-C does not certify any late fees outside of these recommendations. Also, Tri-C certifies debt in accordance with the Attorney General's memo, New Procedures for Collection of University Debt, which was issued as an effort to implement the IUC recommendations. In addition, Tri-C provides many opportunities for students to settle their debt prior to certification to AGO.
- **Lakeland Community College** is working with a student loan servicing vendor to implement Past Due payment plans – allowing students to make arrangements for monthly payments beyond the end of the semester. This will prevent them from entering collections and accruing additional penalties and fees. Depending on a student's balance due, they can enter either a 12-month, six-month, or three-month payment plan. Once their debt falls below a certain threshold (amount is still to be determined), the student will be able to re-enroll.

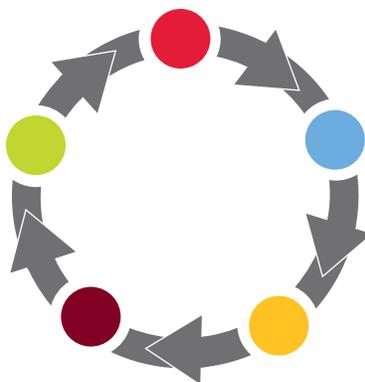
## Other Best Practices

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IHEs continuously implement practices that make college more accessible, affordable, and efficient. Some good examples of this may not have been the topic of a specific question in the reporting template. A section was included to invite institutions to share any positive practices they have implemented that benefit student affordability, efficiency, and institutional effectiveness.

- **The University of Akron's** Career Services developed a resource guide entitled "Connecting UA Majors to In-Demand Jobs in Ohio" and incorporated it into its career counseling strategy to help connect students with in-demand majors and jobs in Ohio. Providing this strong connection to viable career paths for UA students can help students persist to completion, bridge workforce gaps in Ohio, positively impact career outcomes, and help graduates manage student loan repayment.
  - » UA's career outcomes have continued to show positive increases: UA's spring 2018 overall placement rate was 92% in comparison to the spring 2017 overall placement rate of 89%. The national overall placement rate is 81% (*source: National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), 2017*). Experiential Learning rates also increased. The percentage of spring 2018 graduates who participated in experiential learning was 83%, in comparison to 80% of spring 2017 graduates.
- Since 2009, **Miami University** employees have completed 1,514 Lean projects valued at \$83,312,242 in cost avoidance, cost reduction, and new revenue. In FY 2019, Miami completed 167 of those projects at a value of \$15,289,984.
  - » More than 2,500 Miami employees have been introduced to Lean and 170 are currently in the Lean Certification Program, with 67 of them having completed the program to achieve Senior Lean Leader status (12 of the 67 attained this certification in FY2019). As part of the Lean program, Miami has developed a Lean structure, Lean database with dashboard reporting, and standardized processes for Lean project management.
  - » Miami's Lean program has extended Lean training to other colleges and universities in Ohio and across the continent. In FY2019, Miami shared the Lean program with Bowling Green State University in addition to universities in Oregon and Canada. Miami also continued to collaborate with Ohio State University, Wright State University, schools and universities in West Virginia and Indiana, and Wright-Patterson Air Force Base.
- The **Legal Aid Society of Columbus** (LASC), an affiliate of Ohio State Legal Services Association (OSLSA), recognized that community college students experience a host of legal issues that may impact their ability to complete their education and be successful in their professional lives. The organization received a grant through the Ohio State Bar Association to partner with Columbus State and work directly with low-income students who are facing legal barriers while trying to further their education. This partnership allows those students to obtain easy access to legal services in the areas of benefits, consumer, employment, family, housing, re-entry, tax, and wills/advanced directives.



## Conclusion

There has been much progress made over the last several years in both improving efficiencies and effectiveness at the institutional level. The colleges and universities are to be commended not only for the work necessary to complete the annual reports, but also for all their efforts to be responsive to the need to reduce costs and better serve their students.

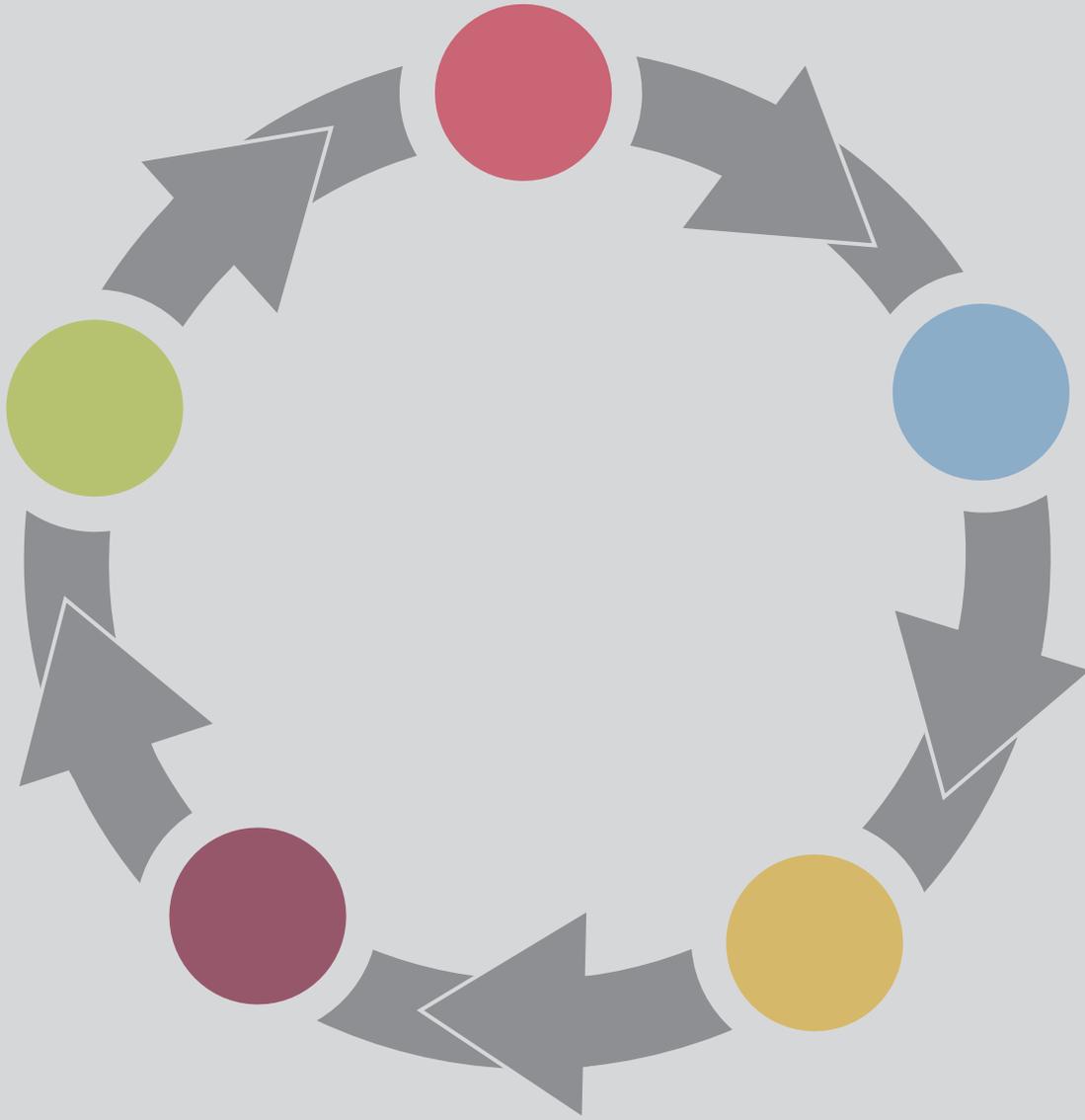
The institutional reports submitted this year provide increasing insight into the progress being made in areas that most directly impact students. There are significant opportunities to save students money in how colleges and universities manage the utilization of teaching materials including textbooks and OERs. Future efficiency reports will continue to track progress in this area.

IHEs need to continue to look at alternative delivery methods such as competency-based education and online offerings to best meet student needs and improve student success. As stated above, most institutions are in the early stages of their implementation of CBE offerings, but there is a clear interest in expanding in this area. There has already been plenty of progress in expanding online offerings.

With the growing national concerns about student debt, institutions clearly have a role to play in ensuring that students have an adequate understanding of the financial implications of their decisions related to borrowing. Most of Ohio's public IHEs are aligned with the recommendations of the USDOE guidance from April 15, 2019. In addition, most are aligning their collections practices with recommendations of the Attorney General's Office.

Finally, campuses need to continue to build partnerships to strengthen overall effectiveness. Plenty of examples have been provided of shared resources among IHEs as well as partnerships that include entities outside of higher education that have resources or expertise to share.

All of these are areas that would benefit from the continued sharing of best practices. Future reports will likely expand on some of these specific issues and track the progress we are making as a state. At the same time, new areas of emphasis may be added to address the priorities of the DeWine-Husted administration as well as the changing landscape of higher education.



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