

## Quality and Value Discussion – Ohio University, Athens Monday, March 31, 2014

A group representing the region's higher education institutions, career technical centers, K-12, and business community joined Chancellor John Carey and Dr. Gordon Gee for the sixth in a series of statewide meetings to discuss the Quality and Value initiative.

Chancellor Carey and Dr. Gee welcomed the group and said higher education has finally arrived at the question of "how do we increase quality by moderating our costs." Dr. Gee said higher education is a top priority in Ohio, adding that this initiative "is about a completion agenda. We have deans of admission but no deans of completion."

After welcoming remarks, Chancellor Carey and Dr. Gee opened the floor to attendees to share comments and ideas during the 90-minute discussion. Some of the comments shared by those in attendance are as follows:

From a representative from General Mills:

*"We come today as representatives to talk about the hiring that we do. We are in a unique spot; there are 30 plants in our supply chain, and Wellston is the largest in the country and we are in one of the smallest towns. We have had a lot of struggles trying to get folks to the area. We recently had some local outreach programs, and have done things with OU and other universities. We are always looking for students that fit the profile that we are (seeking). There are a lot of opportunities in Wellston; we have two recruiting programs and bring in interns from all over the country. We are a single source plant- the only plant in the U.S. that makes Totinos, which is almost a \$1 billion brand and is made in Wellston, Ohio. My message today is I want to see great engineering talent - send me the best."*

From a career technical center superintendent:

*"You hit on a point that is the heart of working in Appalachia, and that is the retention issue. How about growing some of your own talent? Work with the career centers; if we can start working with kids at the middle school level and develop them through the career centers, we might not have that retention issue."*

From General Mills:

*"There is somewhat of a healthy turnover in any industry, but we were seeing way too much. We would like to see a core group of very talented engineers that want to be in the southeast Ohio area for an extended period of time, whether local or not so local. That minimizes that turnover. But we still want to have 10-20 percent of the group bringing in fresh ideas."*

**Chancellor Carey said one frustration is "making that connection with the businesses in the area." He said "people in this area assume there are not opportunities when there are. We don't want a company to be here but say they can't find the people to work."**

From a university representative:

*"We have the same issues in terms of retention and recruitment. How do we improve our community so people will want to come and work here? How do we improve health care, educational*

*opportunities, arts and culture so people want to be here? Not just in Athens, but the region. Affordable housing is another issue.”*

From a college representative:

*“What we need from industry is involvement in our advisory board efforts and mentor programs for our students. We need you to be part of the process.”*

From a career technical center superintendent:

*“Businesses will tell us what our kids need to do, but then they say we don't have any jobs. We have to find a way to grow these students and put them in places where they can find jobs. I'm not against telling people they might have to leave to find a job, then bring something back to our county that will make others successful.”*

**Chancellor said there is a “disconnect between the schools and what jobs are available. It's forcing companies to go outside the area. How can we develop that talent here for these jobs? We need to think about how we draw the connection between opportunities that are available and workers that we have.”**

From high school counselors:

*“I have trouble having my students taking higher-level math and science courses. How can we best maximize their potential while keeping them competitive and balancing that with the apathy they get from hearing 'You aren't going to find a job here.’*

*“It's hard to get my students to see past Ross County for educational opportunities, let alone employment opportunities.”*

*“Getting college representatives to come to my school from across the state is key. My kids won't buy in to going to Kent State, Akron or Cleveland State if someone doesn't tell them about it. Someone coming to our school makes a world of difference. The students are eager to hear about program offerings from around the state.”*

*“Students could get different advice based on the district they are in and the counselor they have. It all varies by caseload and how your job as a counselor is described, and it is based on demands by administrators.”*

From a career technical superintendent:

*“We are wanting to move some education of students to the guidance office to help educate students about jobs. Our guidance folks are working more closely with the career centers that work closely with the industries and businesses in the region.”*

**Stephanie Davidson, vice chancellor academic affairs at the Board of Regents, said “We are trying to talk up our articulation and transfer network and how it can transfer everything between our two-year and four-year schools. We are really trying to get a lot of activity going, but we've got a long way to go.”**

**Rebecca Watts, the Board of Regents' deputy chancellor for P-16 initiatives, said “We are trying to make sure that teachers know about the resources available to help students (Ohio Means Jobs, our website, etc.).”**

From a university representative:

*"Students are not making good decisions about financial aid. How do we help students with financial literacy?"*

From a college student:

*"I've been constantly nodding my head as I listen to everyone. (It definitely fits) with everything going through my head. I know what I want to do, but I don't know what is out there. We need to know where the jobs are. Shawnee State brings in outside nurses and doctors to talk to students, and 100 percent of the students in that organization stay in the area because they are told what to do to get a job in the area. I assume every campus hosts a job fair; I recently went to a job fair where the guy talking to me was based out of Wheelersburg. I assumed the job (he was talking about) was there, but the job I would be taking was here in Athens. As students, we need to understand what is going on. I have no clue what is open in Portsmouth right now. I want to go to Columbus because I feel like that is where the jobs are."*

From a two-year college:

*"We have students come in frequently and say, 'I don't care what the program is, I just want to stay in the area. What should I take?' We hear that there are 80,000 jobs that need filled, but how many of those need postsecondary education? Students say they have a job but it is not what they want to do. They say, 'Give me the skills to get a job that pays beyond minimum wage and will let me support my family.'"*

*"When I would tell my students there are jobs available, but they may have to move, that was the biggest argument I got. I am from Texas, and that (sense of wanting to stay in the community) is more so here than I ever experienced. It is a cultural mentality."*

From a college representative:

*"I have a friend in San Diego who works with a fire department. He said they would pay for someone to move there, and provide a good job with good pay. I could not get any of my students to buy into it. It was mind-boggling to me. My fear is that we'll have students with certificates and associate degrees working at Speedway. There are opportunities beyond the region."*

**Dr. Gee said "it is important to keep in mind that it is not about exporting our talent; rather, it is about importing opportunities and keeping our talent here."**

**Chancellor Carey and Dr. Gee closed the session by thanking the attendees and thanking Ohio University for hosting. Dr. Gee said "We are talking about the right things, which are partnerships and relationships."**