



COMPLETE  
COLLEGE

Ohio

**TASK FORCE REPORT & RECOMMENDATIONS**

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# A MESSAGE FROM CHANCELLOR JIM PETRO

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Since becoming Chancellor of the Ohio Board of Regents, I have made it my mission to improve the completion rates here in Ohio and increase the number of Ohioans with a bachelor's degree, associate degree or other meaningful credential. The economic growth of our state is dependent on higher education, and on having qualified workers to fill the jobs of tomorrow.

With that in mind, I convened a Complete College Ohio Task Force earlier this year and charged its members with developing a set of strategic recommendations for increasing the percentage of Ohioans with degrees. I made it clear to task force members that the solutions and recommendations derived from their work must be student-focused and must build on existing student success initiatives.

The task force divided itself into three groups: the Ready for College group, No Time to Waste group and the Help Me Cross the Finish Line group. Groups met individually between meetings of the entire task force, and after several months of meetings, research and collaboration, I am proud to share the results of the task force's efforts in this Complete College Ohio Report.

As you read through this report, you'll see that the task force offers 20 broadly framed recommendations that encompass a full range of issues impacting college completion. Some of these recommendations are

directed to our institutions of higher learning and their partners; others are directed to policymakers. Some require action at the campus level, while others require a state-level response.

It's clear that there is no "one size fits all" solution to increasing completion. In making their recommendations, task force members recognized that different institutions have varying missions and varying student needs. Therefore, all but one of the task force's recommendations are offered as a menu of options that our colleges and universities can consider and customize based on their individual mission, culture and goals. The core recommendation would require each college and university in the state to develop its own Campus Completion Plan. This is an essential commitment that will drive our success in dramatically improving college completion.

The members of the task force and working groups are to be commended for the time and effort put into developing this report. I believe that these recommendations will set into motion the action needed to make significant progress in our effort to improve Ohio's college completion record and bolster Ohio's economy in the years ahead.

Sincerely,



Jim Petro  
Chancellor  
Ohio Board of Regents

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# INTRODUCTION

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Ohio’s ability to compete and prosper in a global, knowledge economy hinges directly on its citizens’ ability to succeed in jobs that require increasingly higher levels of knowledge and skills.

For our economy to thrive and grow, we must provide businesses with a continual pipeline of highly-skilled workers. The Complete College Ohio Initiative is a call to action that requires us to focus and best utilize our state’s resources to get our students to the finish line – earning meaningful certificates and degrees with the goal of providing a workforce of skilled, critical thinkers that will attract and keep business here in Ohio.

## Ohio’s Challenge

It is well documented that high levels of educational attainment yield substantial economic and noneconomic benefits for individuals and communities.<sup>1</sup> And yet, more than half of all Ohioans who enroll in college fail to earn a degree and often leave with high levels of debt.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, the percentage of Ohio adults with a bachelor’s degree or higher remains in the bottom quartile of states, typically five percentage points below the national average.<sup>3</sup>

These realities pose a serious threat to our state’s future. The vast majority of Ohio’s projected job openings and new jobs in the future – nearly 60 percent by 2020<sup>4</sup> – will require some form of credential from education and training beyond high school. Our state currently is not producing nearly enough individuals with college degrees or other postsecondary education credentials of value in the

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1 *Education Pays 2010*, The College Board

2 Ohio Board of Regents

3 U.S. Census Bureau

4 Complete College America, Ohio 2011 data

marketplace to meet current and future job demands for workers with globally competitive knowledge and skills. Projections show that if we do not increase our college-going and college completion rates at all over the next decade, Ohio will have 61,000 *fewer* adults in the workforce with postsecondary credentials.<sup>5</sup> Closing this gap will be no easy task. One study, for example, estimates that Ohio’s colleges and universities will need to increase the number of degrees they confer by 10 percent annually to meet workforce needs for 2018.<sup>6</sup>

Urgent action is needed. It is imperative that Ohio significantly increase the current educational attainment levels of Ohioans to improve our state’s competitiveness in a global economy, create greater economic opportunities for our citizens and ensure a robust supply of critical thinkers, problem-solvers and innovators. If our state is unable to meet business and industry’s growing demand for individuals with postsecondary education credentials and the ability to compete globally, Ohio will be left behind in the fierce competition for investment and jobs.

## Addressing the Challenge

Recognizing these present and future challenges, Chancellor of the Ohio Board of Regents, Jim Petro, convened the Complete College Ohio Task Force (“Task Force”) to study the issue of college completion and to develop a set of strategic recommendations for significantly increasing both the number and percentage of Ohioans who earn a postsecondary education certificate or degree.

The Chancellor’s charge to the Task Force was clear: Student success must be at the core of its work. He outlined the following guiding principles to frame the group’s work:

- All completions – one-year workforce certificates, two-year associate degrees and four-year bachelor’s degrees – are valued and need to be increased.

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5 National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, College Attainment Dashboard Tool, July 19, 2012. <<http://www.nchems.org/NCHEMSCLASPOhioModel.swf>>

6 Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, *Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements Through 2018*, June 2010

- Solutions must be student-focused.
- We need to increase both access and success; increased completion rates should not limit access.
- We need to build on existing and previous student success initiatives and campus-level experience and knowledge.
- Data should drive decisions.
- The quality of academic programs must not in any way be compromised.
- One size does not fit all. Solutions must recognize that different institutions have varying missions and varying student needs. Institutions should strive toward adopting systemic approaches.

It is critical that we increase the number of Ohioans who complete their education beyond high school. This will require improving access to college for greater numbers of our citizens – particularly low-income, minority students, returning adults and students who are the first in their families to enroll in college. In addition to improving access, it is vital that we increase the number of Ohioans who *complete* college and earn a postsecondary education credential of value. Our state needs to see significant improvement in college *completion*. This will require concerted effort and multiple strategies, but must not come at the cost of reducing access or diminishing quality.

Fortunately, much good work in this area already has taken place in Ohio, and many exciting and promising initiatives are currently under way. The work of this Task Force has been inspired and informed by several concurrent initiatives under way in Ohio, including Completion by Design funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Ohio Association of Community Colleges' Student Success Center funded by Kresge, and Ohio's performance-based funding formula.

More broadly, the collective body of work accomplished by major student success efforts of the past 10 years in Ohio has provided a solid foundation on which the Task Force's recommendations have been built. Among those initiatives are Governor Taft's Commission on Higher Education & the Economy,

Shifting Gears, Project Win-Win, Achieving the Dream and the Developmental Education Initiative. We are grateful for their example, insights and innovative ideas.

## Task Force Structure and Study

The Task Force had three working groups that conducted research for each recommendation. These working groups were co-chaired by Task Force members and engaged higher education faculty and administrators to propose solutions. The three groups were charged with the following:

- The **Ready for College Working Group** focused on strategies that secondary and postsecondary institutions can deploy to ensure students have the academic foundation necessary to be successful in postsecondary certificate and degree programs. This Working Group's three subcommittees addressed these questions:
  - » What steps can be taken to improve secondary and postsecondary curricular alignment, and are there examples of states that have done this successfully?
  - » What actions can be taken to ensure that systems are in place to support all students – especially returning adults – in completing gatekeeper courses necessary to earn degrees?
  - » What actions can be taken to provide students with comprehensive information and tools to help them decide their optimal paths to pursue postsecondary credentials and degrees?

- The **No Time to Waste Working Group** addressed strategies for reducing time to degree and minimizing students' drifting through college without earning a degree. This Working Group's three subcommittees considered these questions:
  - » What actions can be taken to enable students to accumulate credit for college-level learning that has taken place before enrolling in college, as well as to ensure that credits already earned count toward students' certificates or degrees?
  - » What actions can be taken to ensure that students receive services to help them stay on track to finish their degrees?
  - » What actions can be taken to restructure delivery of certificate and degree programs in ways that speed completion, reduce uncertainty in scheduling and improve retention and completion?
  
- The **Help Me Cross the Finish Line Working Group** explored strategies for rewarding student progress and incentives that can increase completion. This Working Group's three subcommittees considered these questions:
  - » What actions can be taken to develop strategies that provide credentials and reward progress for work that already has been completed?
  - » What actions can be taken to improve the role that finances can play in increasing completion for students through innovative financial aid, financial planning and cost transparency?
  - » What actions can be taken to strengthen the connection between a student's studies and future career, and/or additional educational opportunities to further incentivize completion?

Collectively, these three working groups have identified an array of policies, practices and programs for improving students' college readiness, reducing the time it takes for students to attain a certificate or degree, and incentivizing progress and completion. Each working group produced a significant amount of research related to its recommendations; this research is available at [www.ohiohighered.org/completion](http://www.ohiohighered.org/completion) and can be a valuable resource for those engaged in completion efforts.

## Strategic Recommendations & Tactical Options

This report offers 20 recommendations encompassing a full range of issues that impact college completion and providing a wide selection of tactical options. The 20 recommendations are grouped within seven general categories:

1. Campus Completion Plans
2. Foundations for Access & Success
3. Connecting with College & Preparing for Success
4. Ensuring & Supporting First-Year Success
5. Staying on Track & Accelerating Progress
6. Rewarding Success & Incentivizing Completion
7. Strategic Communications

Some of the recommendations and related tactics are directed to institutions of higher education and their partners, and require campus-level commitment and action; others are directed to policymakers and require a state-level response. Many of the ideas contained in this report already have been implemented, or are in the process of being implemented, on campuses across Ohio – though not necessarily in a concerted, system-wide effort.

The Task Force recognizes that we have great diversity among our colleges and universities in Ohio in terms of mission, culture and student and institutional goals. For that reason, the suggestions presented in this report are offered as a menu of options and opportunities for consideration, customization and action.

**The one exception is Recommendation 1, which would require each college, university and adult career technical center in Ohio to develop its own Campus Completion Plan. This recommendation is the centerpiece of this report.** The Task Force views campus completion plans as an essential institutional commitment that will drive our collective success in dramatically improving college completion throughout Ohio. We expect each institution to draw heavily from the recommendations and tactical options contained in the report, customized

to build on existing institutional strengths and align with institutional mission and priorities. What we seek are focused, impactful, locally driven action plans.

## **Implementing Completion Initiatives for Ohio's Future**

Increasing completion requires action. In addition to developing campus-based completion plans, colleges and universities will need to develop customized approaches to implementation. This will require campus-wide engagement to develop solutions that connect faculty and staff to completion efforts. Task Force members understand that many of the recommendations and tactical options outlined in this report may have certain costs associated with their implementation. Continuing fiscal restraints in a challenging economic environment may have an impact on what changes can be implemented and how quickly they can be taken to scale. Some actions represent little or no cost and may be considered for implementation under current university budgets. Others may require more substantial investments. The expectation is that in most instances institutions will re-evaluate and, as needed, redirect existing resources to better align with a student success agenda championed by the State.

The State of Ohio must act as well. The first task requires the Ohio Board of Regents to collaborate with adult career centers, colleges and universities to develop the framework for Campus Completion Plans. Additionally, this report also includes recommendations for establishing uniform, statewide approaches in a number of different areas, including credit-hour requirements for degrees, Prior Learning Assessments, internships and co-op learning experiences, post-secondary placement and funding approaches for dual enrollment. Regarding such situations, the Task Force wants to be clear that institutions will be engaged in the process of developing systemic responses and that institutions that exceed minimum requirements should not be expected or forced to modify their successful practices. As completion is critical to our state economy, the State of Ohio should re-examine priorities and resources to determine how best to support completion efforts on campuses. The Task Force report presents a variety of opportunities for policy improvement, many of which may be complementary to potential policy actions and administration priorities.



# REPORT & RECOMMENDATIONS

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## CAMPUS COMPLETION PLANS

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The Complete College Ohio Task Force believes the key to dramatically increasing the number and percentage of Ohioans with college degrees or other credentials of value in the marketplace is focused, intentional, sustained action at the campus level. Our core, centerpiece recommendation is, therefore, a statewide requirement for all public institutions of higher learning in Ohio to develop and implement institution-specific Campus Completion Plans. We believe the effective execution of these plans begins with college and university campuses embracing, enhancing and advancing recommendations offered by the Task Force. We also believe that the future landscape of opportunity and prosperity in our state will be shaped in no small measure by the quality and magnitude of the statewide response this report – and its core requirement for campus completion plans – inspires.

### RECOMMENDATION 1

#### **Require institution-specific Campus Completion Plans.**

*Require each college, university and adult career technical center in the University System of Ohio to develop an institution-specific Campus Completion Plan that is consistent with the institution's mission and strategic priorities. Each plan will include specific, measurable completion goals; a mix of strategies and tactics, including – as appropriate – strategies and tactics offered in this report; a communications strategy; and metrics for success, including both campus-specific metrics and common metrics shared by all USO institutions.*

## FOUNDATIONS FOR ACCESS & SUCCESS

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Certain definitional and foundational requirements provide a necessary framework for the improvement strategies and tactics presented in this document. Clear, comprehensive and uniform definitions of “college and career ready” and “college completion” will help ensure all stakeholders have a common understanding of Ohio’s completion objective and the standards and expectations that define readiness to achieve that objective. Collaboration and alignment across the P-16 continuum will ensure that, collectively, students are positioned to succeed, and a new high school assessment system will focus students more than ever before on what constitutes college and career readiness. These four recommendations create a foundation for access and success that is critical to creating an environment in which the Task Force’s other strategic and tactical recommendations can work as intended.

### RECOMMENDATION 2

#### **Adopt a consistent, statewide definition of “college and career readiness.”**

*Adopt a consistent, statewide definition of “college and career readiness,” identifying clear expectations for mastery of content knowledge and skills. This definition should be completely aligned with the college readiness and “remediation-free” standards developed by Ohio college and university presidents with input from faculty panels and the College Readiness Advisory Committee.*

The under-preparedness of students moving directly from high school, in particular, is a significant problem in our state. In Ohio, 41 percent of the full-time students entering a public college or university directly from high school in 2010 required some remedial English or mathematics coursework. A consensus definition of “college and career readiness” – created with input from

representatives of higher education, P-12 and Ohio’s Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE) – will provide a clear, consistent set of goals for students entering postsecondary education directly from high school, as well as for adults returning to school. A clearer understanding of critical readiness factors and expectations will help (a) more students leave high school prepared to succeed in postsecondary learning; (b) more students graduate from high school having earned postsecondary credit; and (c) more adults return to school ready to re-enter and re-engage successfully in the educational pipeline.

In response to a provision of House Bill 153 (129th Ohio General Assembly), the presidents of Ohio’s public colleges and universities are in the process of finalizing their work to establish uniform statewide standards in mathematics, science, reading and writing that each student enrolled in an Ohio public university or college must meet to be considered in “remediation-free” status<sup>7</sup> and ready for college-level work. The Task Force urges Ohio to adopt and apply the remediation-free standards that emerge from the presidents’ work, which was informed by faculty panels and the Ohio College Readiness Advisory Council.

Ohio’s participation in the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) potentially represents another key component of efforts to establish college readiness expectations for mastery of academic content. PARCC is a multi-state assessment that will help align outcomes of the Common Core Standards in high school with postsecondary expectations.

The Task Force therefore recommends that a consistent, statewide definition of “college and career readiness” reflect (a) the PARCC College and Career Ready Determinations and Performance Level Descriptors and (b) the common set of college readiness expectations and remediation-free standards to be adopted by Ohio’s public college and university presidents by Dec. 31, 2012.

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7 “Remediation-free” status refers to a threshold above which a student would not need additional assessment or consideration for placement into remedial coursework.

## RECOMMENDATION 3

### **Adopt a consistent, comprehensive statewide definition of “college completion” and uniform statewide credit hour requirements for common college credentials.**

*Adopt a consistent, comprehensive definition of “college completion” that includes bachelor’s degrees, associate degrees, workforce certificates and other industry-recognized credentials. Ohio also should consider adopting consistent statewide definitions of postsecondary education workforce certificates and establishing a consistent statewide number of credit hours required for an associate degree (60 hours) and a baccalaureate degree (120 hours), unless accreditation requirements mandate additional hours.*

Defining college completion more broadly than bachelor’s degrees and associate degrees reflects a more accurate picture of the reality of today’s college-going students’ circumstances and learning goals. Common definitions for certificates and industry-recognized credentials for both credit-bearing and non-credit-bearing programs, including apprenticeship programs, at community colleges and adult workforce centers will strengthen alignment with workplace expectations and provide additional success milestones along the path to degree completion. Institutions will be able to highlight their productivity and keep current with information that prospective students want about the likelihood of a program preparing them for viable careers.

Over time, students have seen a steady increase in the number of credit hours required to earn a degree in many programs and majors. (The minimum number of credits required for a baccalaureate degree at Ohio’s four-year public universities, for example, ranges from 120 hours to 128 hours.) More credit hours means longer time to degree and higher overall costs. Establishing uniform statewide requirements of 60 credit hours for an associate degree and 120 hours for a baccalaureate degree will help reverse the trend of expanding degree requirements. Exemption from these uniform requirements would be permitted if a program’s accreditation requires additional hours. Campuses

would have the right to petition the Ohio Board of Regents for permission to establish higher credit hour requirements on a case-by-case basis. Additionally, consideration should be given to evolving competency- and mastery-based systems that measure completion through demonstration of ability.

College/university faculty should be included in whatever process is used to develop the statewide standards for credit-hour requirements for degrees. Upon completion and adoption of the new policy, colleges and universities would need to review major and core requirements to bring their credit-hour requirements in line with the new standards.

## RECOMMENDATION 4

### **Establish stronger collaboration and tighter alignment across the P-16 education continuum.**

*Establish mechanisms for increasing collaboration among higher education institutions and P-12 partners to align academic standards, assessments and curricula that result in tighter overall alignment of high school completion requirements and college readiness expectations.*

Tighter alignment of high school requirements and college readiness expectations is critical to improving completion rates. Alignment will help ensure that (a) more students leave high school prepared to succeed in college and careers; (b) more students graduate from high school having earned postsecondary credit; (c) more adult learners transition successfully from ABLE/GED programs to postsecondary education; and (d) the need for remedial education courses at colleges and universities is reduced. Collaborative partnerships that facilitate alignment across the P-16 continuum will help support successful implementation of the Common Core curriculum and the aforementioned college readiness standards under development.

The rationale for this recommendation is strong:

- **The need for earning some credential after high school to qualify for most of the jobs that are available now and will be created in the future is growing.** By 2018, almost as many available jobs will require an industry-recognized certificate or a two-year degree as will require a bachelor's degree or beyond. Currently, however, many of our students and their families have little awareness of what jobs will exist and what education is required. Students deserve the opportunity to explore college and career pathways earlier on the educational continuum (Carnevale, A., Smith, N., & Strohl, J., 2010) – beginning in the early stages of high school. Alignment begins with designing and delivering high school course content that is relevant to students' lives and clearly demonstrates how high school work is connected to postsecondary education and career opportunities.
- **Regional P-16 partnerships are successfully preparing students across Ohio for the expectations of college and career.** P-16 partnerships work to align expectations and resources to foster and support a college-going culture. Ohio has many strong P-16 collaborations that appear to have a positive impact on student outcomes. Efforts such as the Summit Education Initiative in Akron, the Stark Education Partnership in Canton, the Strive Partnership in Cincinnati, the Higher Education Compact of Greater Cleveland, the Central Ohio Compact in Columbus and the Northeast Ohio Council on Higher Education bring together colleges and universities, career centers, school districts, community-based organizations and business leaders to align resources, set transparent goals and make cross-system connections for student success.
- **Partnerships between high schools and colleges can result in bridging opportunities that make the transition to college-level work more successful.** Collaborative partnerships make it possible for high school students to experience college through opportunities such as, but not limited to, the Post Secondary Enrollment Option, Dual Enrollment, Tech Prep, Early College High Schools and other P-16 collaborations. While these programs target

the college-ready high school student, colleges and universities also offer bridge programming for underprepared traditional-age students as well as adult learners returning to school after time away. Additionally, ABLE bridge programs, such as Columbus Public Schools' (and other participating ABLE programs) "Go Prepared" program, represent purposeful efforts to ensure college readiness is part of the ABLE delivery system. Ohio needs more of these types of collaborations.

- **In addition to engaging in collaborative partnerships, K-12 and higher education are linked by the teacher preparation programs that train our newest teachers.** Teacher preparation programs must help teachers understand how to prepare students with the 21st century skills and knowledge they need to be successful in college and careers, the increased need for all students to be prepared for postsecondary education, and the ways in which technology is changing the way 21st century students learn.

Building partnerships that produce stronger alignments between high school requirements and college readiness expectations will create a seamless transition for students as they move along the educational continuum. A truly aligned P-16 system will ensure that articulation and transfer policies are strengthened to ensure that postsecondary credits and credentials earned with the University System of Ohio transfer within the system.

Some tactical options for postsecondary institutions to consider include the following:

- Actively engage in local P-16 councils
- Provide opportunities for faculty to participate in P-16 councils
- Promote faculty-to-faculty conversation and collaboration
- Serve as conveners to begin and sustain an ongoing collaborative dialogue with K-12 partners

## RECOMMENDATION 5

### **Establish a new system of high school assessments to improve preparation and readiness for college.**

*Replace the Ohio Graduation Test with a new high school assessment system designed to inform and enhance high school students' course-taking decisions, increase the probability that students will be college ready by the time they graduate from high school, and improve first-year college and career course placement decisions.*

A comprehensive assessment system for high school students, beginning in the freshman year and continuing through high school, has many benefits. Assessments given in the freshman or sophomore year (e.g., ACT-PLAN, PSAT and/or the upcoming PARCC assessments and Ohio assessments in social studies and science) can be used to create recommended pathways for students to follow during the remainder of their high school years. Students who are college ready can be directed into AP or dual enrollment courses, accelerating their transition to college-level work and providing them with lower-cost college credits to accelerate their college completion. For students who demonstrate deficiencies, early assessments can pinpoint specific areas where students need to improve. These students can be directed into appropriate courses and educational pathways that will allow them to become college ready and reduce the need for remediation.

Use of a statewide, nationally recognized standardized test given during the junior or senior year of high school (e.g., ACT, SAT or upcoming PARCC assessments) provides impartial, reliable information about the college readiness of Ohio's high school students. The universal use of such an assessment, together with a broad understanding and acceptance of benchmarks for college readiness, will provide the P-12 system, students and their families with a clear target for college readiness. Achievement of benchmark scores also could exempt students from institutional placement testing for the purposes of remediation.

Universal testing of high school students using the ACT or SAT also has been shown to increase college applications and admissions, because students who had not considered college before (low-income, first-generation or minority students) find that they are college ready and have completed a required part of the application process.

The new high school assessment system should include the following components:

- **A nationally standardized readiness assessment** to be given in 10th grade to facilitate educational planning for the remainder of high school. Options include the ACT PLAN and the PSAT, or their equivalents, to be implemented no later than the 2014-15 school year.
- **End-of-course and end-of-year exams in grades 9, 10 and 11 that measure student learning in specific content areas** to demonstrate that students do not need remediation courses or services and to assist in determining first-year college and career course placements. Options include ACT end-of-course exams, Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate program exams, the upcoming PARCC assessments (expected to be ready for states to administer during the 2014-15 school year) and the Ohio assessments in social studies and science.
- **A nationally standardized college readiness assessment in the junior or senior year of high school** to demonstrate that students do not need remediation courses or services and to encourage college applications. Options include assessments that are commonly used for admission into Ohio's colleges and universities, such as the ACT and SAT.

While responsibility for developing high school assessments is clearly the responsibility of the Ohio Department of Education, given the critical need for tight alignment of high school completion requirements with college readiness standards, continued collaboration with the Ohio Board of Regents on a new set of statewide assessments is highly desirable and strongly urged.

## CONNECTING WITH COLLEGE & PREPARING FOR SUCCESS

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Ensuring that students are prepared to succeed in college and careers begins with understanding (a) the imperative for postsecondary learning; (b) postsecondary educational opportunities and expectations; (c) the ways to enhance readiness and the likelihood of success; and (d) the resources available to help when help is needed. The following six recommendations acknowledge the value of connecting with college and starting preparation for college and careers early.

### RECOMMENDATION 6

#### **Intensify engagement of students and families prior to students' enrollment in college.**

*Foster and enhance early family and student engagement with colleges and universities to build awareness of academic programs and career paths, institutional processes and expectations, and college/university resources and activities.*

Low levels of student and parent awareness of academic requirements and career paths, institutional processes and expectations, and college resources and activities are major obstacles to completion. Early academic engagement and systemic encouragements aimed at enhancing student personal responsibility are especially important for helping high-risk student populations such as students of color, students raised in generational poverty, students with disabilities and first-generation college students make informed decisions about college, leading to higher completion rates for these traditionally underprepared populations.

Suggested tactics include the following:

- **Promote the availability and value of community-based college access programs, federal TRIO programs and volunteer programs** to get vital information to students and parents.
- **Promote the use of the Ohio Means Success college access portal** to connect students and their families to comprehensive college planning information and tools.
- **Expand marketing and information from the Ohio Tuition Trust Authority** on the importance of saving.

## RECOMMENDATION 7

### **Broaden awareness of connections between college completion and career opportunities.**

*Strengthen linkages between college coursework, earned credentials and job placement, and increase support for Ohioans transitioning from college to career. Engagement of business and industry, in career-focused courses and through internship and co-op opportunities, will be critical to this strategy.*

Providing students with current and projected job market information will enable them to make more informed choices about the postsecondary education options available to them while heightening their motivation to persist to completion and earn the credential they need to take full advantage of available career opportunities. Additionally, it is important to highlight the increasing importance of acquiring education or training after high school because more and more jobs – an estimated 60 percent of all jobs in Ohio by 2020<sup>8</sup> – will require some level of postsecondary credential.

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8 Complete College America, Ohio 2011 data

Recommended tactical options for activating this strategy include the following:

- **Provide students with both statewide and regional information about available careers and workforce needs.** Providing information about careers for given majors and sharing projections of labor market needs can help students understand the possibilities that might be available to them after graduation. Ideally, this kind of information will help students decide on the educational path that is best for them.
- **Improve and expand mechanisms for making linkages between credentials and employment while students are still in school** through career fairs, major fairs, targeted web resources and other available resources. Content should include information about jobs available to graduates with given majors and opportunities to understand how to get the jobs, as well as Degree ROI (return on investment) data that compares cost of credential to expected earnings.
- **Help college students develop individual plans for their graduation and job search.** This will require (a) the advising focus to expand beyond course planning to degree completion and job placement, and (b) stronger systems of advising that more affirmatively link completion and students' next steps into the job market or additional education or training.
- **Increase opportunities for work-based experiential learning such as co-ops and internships** that enable college students to explore work in careers related to their major, and/or embed experiential education that incorporates real-situation and job-like actions and thinking early in every academic program.
- **Establish clear guidelines for both paid and unpaid credit-bearing internships.** There are many instances where students can earn internship credit, but the criteria for establishing credit vary widely within and across colleges and universities. The goal here should be to ensure all students have high-quality experiential learning experiences where learning is documented by a portfolio, published paper, presentation, performance or other appropriate measure. The Ohio Board of Regents also should work with college and

universities to explore possibilities that may exist for enabling internship credits to be transferrable within the University System of Ohio.

- **Develop statewide standards for all credit-bearing internships and co-op learning opportunities.** Establish shared language, standards, expectations and evaluation measurements to create a shared “unit of currency” linked, ideally, to learning outcomes. Use the National Society for Experiential Education (NSEE) Standards as a benchmark.

## RECOMMENDATION 8

### **Enhance financial literacy and planning for students and families.**

*Enhance the clarity, comprehensiveness and accessibility of information available to students and their families about the true and full cost of a college education; options and resources for planning for and paying for a college education; and simplified fee structures and flexible payment plans designed to overcome common financial obstacles to earning a college degree.*

A working assumption of the Task Force is that understanding the actual cost of a college education will help students and families with planning to pay for college, which in turn will help with planning to attend and completing. In many cases, the plan to pay for college may be as important as the plan to complete college. For many students and their families, low levels of awareness of available financial resources and payment options can be a significant obstacle to completion.

As student loan debt and defaults are skyrocketing and on the verge of becoming a national crisis, the importance of financial literacy programs is imperative. An Institute of Higher Education Policy study finds that institutional practices and programs such as financial literacy can be instrumental in mitigating default and improving borrower behavior. Other studies show that financial literacy improves college retention and completion.

Recommended tactical options for this strategy include the following:

- **Ensure that financial literacy programming is available to students and their families throughout the student’s postsecondary career.** Whenever possible, integrate financial literacy into first-year orientation programs or student success courses.
- **Provide fully transparent information to students and parents about the total actual costs of attending college.** Some innovative approaches may include:
  - » **Share fully transparent data about the total cost of attendance** (broken out by tuition, fees, room and board, etc.) with students and their families.
  - » **Provide some form of tuition guarantee (not-to-exceed cost)** for students who develop a degree plan, then stick to it and complete their degree within a specified period of time.
- **Ensure that students and their families understand how Pell Grants work,** including what happens when a student is on academic probation. Under the new Pell Grant rules, students who end up on probation could lose their financial aid early in their academic career and find they are unable to complete college. It is essential, therefore, for students and families to understand the full consequences of poor academic progress.
- **Provide degree Return on Investment (ROI) data** that compares a student’s cost to complete a certificate or degree to his or her expected starting salary and lifetime earnings, to inform decision-making associated with eventual indebtedness.

## RECOMMENDATION 9

### **Expand opportunities for earning college credits that count toward a degree or certificate before graduating from high school.**

*Expand eligibility and opportunities for more students to earn more college credits before enrolling in college through broadened availability of college credit, heightened academic rigor in middle school and high school curricula, develop standard funding approaches and more aggressive promotion of Dual Enrollment, Advanced Placement, Post Secondary Enrollment Options, Early College High School, Tech Prep and International Baccalaureate programs. The recommended expansion should include changing dual enrollment to enable participation from additional students.*

One way to increase college completion is to shorten the path to a college credential by broadening availability of, and eligibility for, programs that allow students to earn college credits before enrolling in college. Common examples of such programs include Dual Enrollment, Advanced Placement, Post Secondary Enrollment Options, Early College High School, Tech Prep and International Baccalaureate programs. Earning meaningful packages of college credit while still in high school will help more students achieve completion by giving them a running start and building their confidence in doing college-level work.

Dual enrollment facilitates the high school-to-college transition by motivating students to take a more rigorous high school curriculum, shifting the focus of education to postsecondary institutions, and acclimating high school students to a college environment by promoting both connections with college culture and content-rigorous academic outcomes. Opportunities like this should be available to all students capable doing college-level work.

The Task Force has identified a number of tactical options for expanding participation in Dual Enrollment, Tech Prep, Advanced Placement (with limits) and Early College High School programs.

## Dual Enrollment

Dual Enrollment offers courses with the same level of academic content and learning outcomes as those offered to regularly enrolled college students. Dual Enrollment courses are based upon specific agreements between high schools and colleges (both community colleges and baccalaureate-granting institutions). High school students can enroll in college courses on the college campus, at the high school or through online education. This distinguishes Dual Enrollment from other models of “credit-based transition programs” (U.S. Department of Education 2003; Hoffman and Voloch, 2012) such as Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate programs, which modify college-level curricula for use in high schools, and from Tech Prep, which has extensive agreements to articulate credit. Moreover, studies from the Community College Research Center at Columbia University<sup>9</sup> show that participation in Dual Enrollment courses increases college-going and student success even among less-advantaged students.

Tactical options for expanding Dual Enrollment options and eligibility include the following:

- **Develop standard funding approaches for Dual Enrollment** to replace the current wide variations among funding models and negotiated agreements that often deter dual enrollment growth. Funding mechanisms that are equitable for both secondary and postsecondary partners, as well as for students and their families, will encourage growth of Dual Enrollment across the state.
- **Broaden student eligibility and course opportunities.** Dual Enrollment should be changed to enable participation from additional students.
- **Ensure that Dual Enrollment course-delivery experiences mirror the expectations of college-level learning.** Colleges and universities should ensure that Dual Enrollment course-delivery experiences closely mirror the norm and expectations of those on a college campus, including rigor and pace, textbooks, assessment and syllabus provided.

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<sup>9</sup> <<http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/Publication.asp?uid=1128>>

- **Ensure that Dual Enrollment credits are part of programs or pathways to programs so credits gained through Dual Enrollment count toward required credits in postsecondary degrees and certificates.** High schools and colleges should work together to ensure that the dual enrollment courses are those that can be applied directly to degrees and certificates at public institutions in the state through statewide articulation and transfer guarantees.
- **Provide professional development to Dual Enrollment instructors.** Colleges and universities should (a) support high school teachers with training and mentoring to assist them in providing college-level rigor in their Dual Enrollment courses, and (b) support college faculty with pedagogical strategies to support high school students seeking to complete rigorous, college-level coursework in their Dual Enrollment classes. High school faculty teaching Dual Enrollment courses should meet college/university standards for employment as an instructor.
- **Create a mechanism to track students enrolled in Dual Enrollment** as they progress from course to course and through college. Measures of student progress will provide the data needed to assess the success of the program and to plan for future improvements.

### Tech Prep

CollegeTech Prep programs allow students to complete a prescribed curriculum in a high school career-technical program that is aligned to degree and certificate programs in college. Upon completion of the high school career-technical program, students have the opportunity to gain college credit upon matriculation into a college technical degree or certificate program. It is recommended that the Ohio Department of Education and the Ohio Board of Regents continue the alignment projects that are expanding the number of fields in which students can earn guaranteed college credit.

## Advanced Placement

Advanced Placement (AP) programs allow students who complete an AP course and achieve a pre-determined score on a standardized third-party assessment (the AP exam) to gain college credit upon matriculation in college. It should be noted, however, that because individual colleges and universities have different test-score requirements, participation in AP does not always result in students earning college credit.

There is general agreement that student success in AP programs results from strong preparation beginning in middle school and increasing through high school. Early identification of students and support for their academic growth prior to and during AP coursework also has been shown to be important. Identifying students with AP potential early occurs best in schools that have content-rigorous programs and early assessments of college readiness.

Tactical options for expanding Advanced Placement options and eligibility include the following:

- **Actively promote AP to all students.** The goal should be to increase the number of students taking and passing AP exams. Options could include online AP courses, available through the Chancellor’s designated digital learning platform, [iLearnOhio.org](https://www.ilearnohio.org). Ohio should examine other states’ policies – such as Texas’s APIP program – for including financial incentives that increase participation in AP programs in low-income urban settings.
- **Create a mechanism to track and publicly report student participation in AP courses and AP exams and success at earning related college credits.** Measures of student progress will provide the data needed to assess the success of students taking AP courses and exams and to plan for future improvements.

## Additional Tactical Options for Bridging High School and College

- **Conduct an analysis of Ohio’s Early College High Schools** – autonomous high schools in which students can earn up to two years of college credit while in high school – to determine if bridging concepts across a wider range of educational settings could be effective.
- **Develop clear marketing messages targeting at-risk students** with information about how programs in which students earn college credits while still in high school or in adult career technical centers can enhance college access and success. Each institution should make clear the opportunities and benefits of learning programs that bridge high school and college such as Dual Enrollment, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, Tech Prep and Concurrent Enrollment.

One emerging educational resource that should be mentioned is the “massive open online course” (MOOC), a type of online course designed for large-scale participation and open access via the web. MOOCs typically do not result in college credits for students who enroll in colleges and universities. Student expectations for earning college credit for their MOOC experiences are likely to increase as MOOCs grow in popularity.

## RECOMMENDATION 10

### **Increase opportunities for adults to earn college credits for meaningful knowledge and skills documented through Prior Learning Assessments.**

*Assist more adults returning to school with earning postsecondary education credentials by maximizing opportunities for these individuals to earn college credit for meaningful college-level knowledge, skills and experiences they can demonstrate through Prior Learning Assessments.*

Another strategy for shortening the path to college completion is to award credits for college-level learning that has been acquired prior to enrolling in

college through work experience, employee training programs, independent study, non-credit courses, military service or non-college courses or seminars. Prior Learning Assessments (PLAs) measure what a student has learned outside of the college classroom, evaluate whether that learning is college-level and then determine the equivalent number of college credits. PLAs take many different forms, including portfolio assessments, evaluations of corporate and military training, program evaluation customized exams and standardized exams. Credits earned through PLAs are closely tied to learning outcomes rather than measures of seat time.

For these reasons, it is critical that the Ohio Board of Regents work collaboratively with Ohio's public institutions to create state policy that will significantly expand prior learning assessment at all state institutions of higher education. Such a policy would need to consider issues such as institutional autonomy, transparency, assessment processes/methods, fees, transfer and articulation of PLA credit, and veterans. Work also should include advancing a statewide College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) policy to allow for consistent standards in the acceptance of CLEP exam scores for academic credit.

Tactical recommendations for this work include the following:

- **Develop a document describing promising practices for the assessment and purposeful connection of prior learning to degree and certificate programs.** Use a state summit and working groups to develop and vet the document with colleges, universities and adult career centers.
- **Facilitate local and regional discussions of exemplary practices** for the purpose of developing more uniform approaches to PLAs and expansion of those practices across the state.
- **Identify faculty professional development opportunities** to support the assessment of prior learning and look for ways to align training across institutions.
- **Launch a statewide campaign to communicate and promote the benefits of PLAs** as a pathway to postsecondary degrees and certificates. Using the

Ohio Board of Regents web portal, Ohio Means Success, as a base, create a resource for adults to learn about Prior Learning Assessments and their use as a way to save money and enhance completion opportunities.

- **Create a mechanism to track PLAs awarded by institutions and students who have used PLAs as they progress from course to course and through completion.** Such measures will provide the data needed to analyze the success of prior learning assessment practices and to plan for future improvements.

### **Credit for Military Training and Experience**

While many postsecondary institutions have taken steps to make their campuses more military- and veteran-friendly, receiving college credit for military service often is a barrier these students face upon enrolling in higher education. Establishing standards for Prior Learning Assessments should include specific strategies targeted toward people with military training and experience.

In March 2011, a State-level directive was issued requiring all public institutions of higher education in Ohio to adopt a statewide policy for awarding college credit for military training, experience and coursework. Campuses are responding accordingly, but Task Force members believe more can and should be done to improve services to military and veteran students in the University System of Ohio. Two suggested promising practices include the following:

- **Include military credit transfer information in Ohio’s existing databases.** Create fields in Ohio’s data systems to better enable track of transfer and acceptance of credits for people who have completed military training.
- **Assist with efforts to align military experiences to academic coursework, industrial licenses or other credentials** to advance veterans’ progress to completing degree and credential requirements when their experience should already have been assessed.

## ENSURING & SUPPORTING FIRST-YEAR SUCCESS

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Ensuring that students get off to a good start in college is a key to successful retention and completion. While being prepared to succeed is important, we know intuitively – and research reinforces – that what happens the first year in college is a high-stakes experience that can have a huge impact on students’ persistence to complete their degree. The following three recommendations that deal with placement test policies and practices, remedial education reforms and comprehensive first-year experiences can help students successfully launch their journey to college and career.

### RECOMMENDATION 11

#### **Adopt more holistic college placement assessments and policies.**

*Improve campus placement and assessment policies for incoming students to ensure the most appropriate path is available for students to reach better outcomes. Use multiple valid measures of both academic and non-academic competencies and risk factors to (a) assess and place incoming students for optimal success; (b) reduce the number of students who are misplaced in remedial education courses; and (c) develop appropriate coursework to prepare students for college work and careers. In addition to using multiple measures of assessment, colleges and universities also should consider adopting uniform placement policies and implementing mandatory preparation experiences for placement testing.*

College placement assessments have become high-stakes tests, with students who fare poorly on the assessments being placed into remedial courses. Once placed in these remedial courses, students are much less likely to persist to degree completion than their peers who are identified as college ready. As a result, it is imperative that colleges and universities use multiple measures to assess and place students for optimal success, as well as develop appropriate

coursework to prepare students for college work. Assessments for the purposes of placement should evaluate not only students' mastery of content knowledge, but also their mastery of cognitive learning strategies and non-academic skills, behaviors and attributes such as responsibility for one's learning, time management, study skills and habits and critical thinking abilities.

Tactical recommendations include the following:

- **Develop statewide standards for postsecondary placement.** The complexity of college and university placement practices requires intentional, focused attention on developing and sustaining effective practices that optimize student success, support student persistence and accelerate time to degree and certificate completion. It is strongly recommended that the Chancellor of the Ohio Board of Regents and the leaders of Ohio's colleges and universities urgently pursue further work to establish consistency in the employment of effective placement practices at public universities and colleges throughout Ohio.
- **Use multiple-measure assessments to evaluate academic and non-academic readiness.** College and work readiness in math, reading and writing should be determined through the use of multiple-measure assessment approaches that include evaluation of key academic and non-academic risk factors. Effective placement procedures are those that consider high school performance (in particular, high school GPA), ACT/SAT scores, PARCC assessment scores, previous college experience, workplace experience and non-cognitive assessments of non-academic skills, behaviors and attributes before assigning students to remedial education courses. Moreover, colleges also should consider using authentic assessment approaches that are designed to more accurately assess how students respond to the kinds of problems they will encounter as college students and subsequently as professionals and engaged citizens. Taken as a whole, developing comprehensive multi-faceted approaches to assessing students will help improve the placement process and the individualized support services provided to students in colleges and universities.

- **Consider implementing mandatory preparation experiences for placement testing.** Too often placement is based on one “cold” assessment score alone. While many postsecondary institutions offer study materials or voluntary bridge or brush-up sessions, research shows that the majority of students do not take advantage of these services. Cuyahoga Community College instituted mandatory preparation sessions consisting of orientation-to-the-test information and a brief review of basic math and English concepts and saw a 6 percent decrease in lower-level remedial education math and English placements.
- **Encourage aggressive placement of students into credit-bearing courses with supports.** Recent studies from the Community College Research Center demonstrate that students placed into gatekeeper mathematics and English courses with supports do just as well as students placed into the highest levels of remedial education.

## RECOMMENDATION 12

### **Redesign and personalize remedial education course content and policies, especially for adults returning to school.**

*Redesign remedial education course content and policies in ways that (a) compress remedial coursework into a much more limited timeframe; (b) offer students multiple pathways for completing remedial coursework; and (c) accelerate completion of remedial coursework and initial college-level gatekeeper courses. Emphasis should be on placing students in college-level gatekeeper courses with co-requisite supports for success and linked to their program of study goals.*

The objective is to eliminate remediation for students entering college directly from high school, while still recognizing that some returning adults will require remediation as they re-engage in formal education. Across the nation, successful completion of remedial education continues to be an elusive prospect for many students. Repeated failures impede persistence, undermine student confidence and have a devastating impact on student financial aid.

Adelman’s work (2006) emphasized the importance of accumulating at least 20 college-level credit hours during the first academic year. Establishing critical success markers helps ensure that student pathways do not meander, but move the student toward the ultimate goal of completion. Institutional processes that promote acceleration of successful credit hour completion, early completion of remedial work, along with first college-level gatekeeper courses, not only helps the student but also rewards each institution based on Ohio’s current performance funding success points. Institutions also must seek to deal with what Adelman calls the negative effect of “no penalty” withdrawals and repeats.

Implementation strategies supporting this recommendation must consider the often-quoted Achieving the Dream mantra: “Students don’t do optional.” In other words, provide structured choices for students so that they don’t have the option to choose courses that may inhibit their outcomes.

- **Restructure college/university remedial education placement processes and curricula** to implement multiple pathways to success for remedial students, rather than the traditional “one size fits all” pipeline for all students. Each student should take the shortest and most appropriate path to college-level coursework based on his or her needs, abilities and previous educational experience. The Task Force recommends that this institutional restructuring be shaped by the following guiding principles:
  - » **High-level remedial students should be accelerated** either by placing them into bridge programs or by enrolling them directly in college-level classes with required supports, such as supplemental instruction/tutoring or embedded remediation through paired classes. These students should be able to skip the remedial pipeline all together.
  - » **Mid-level remedial students should be able to limit their remedial coursework to no more than one semester.** They should be surrounded with multiple supports and should be the target of multiple interventions to help them achieve this goal. Institutions are utilizing a number of programs to accelerate mid-level students through the remedial pipeline. Most colleges are exploring computer-based, self-directed remedial models, pre-enrollment bridge programs or compressed/accelerated

courses. Cuyahoga Community College and Sinclair Community College offer Quant Way programs; Sinclair allows students to take intense instruction in remedial areas, then register for “mini-mesters” during the second half of each semester; and Sinclair and Hocking College are exploring some promising practices that utilize contextualized learning for specific programs.

- » **Lowest-level remedial students may be better served by receiving initial remediation through ABLE**, which offers an individualized instructional approach and is tuition-free. Traditionally, the vast majority of students who are judged to need the most remediation to become college ready do not persist and, therefore, do not succeed in traditional postsecondary coursework. College-ABLE partnerships are one way to enable students who need considerable remediation in one or more subjects to receive it through ABLE classes housed at the college. Some colleges allow students to enroll in college classes in computer use, study skills or other academic areas while attending ABLE. Such collaborative approaches between colleges and ABLE programs that incorporate principles identified in *Working Together for Student Success: Lessons from Ohio’s College-ABLE Partnership Project—Summary Findings* may provide a postsecondary environment that enables more of these students to ultimately complete a certificate and/or degree. The Task Force also recommends that low-level remedial students be encouraged to enroll in certificate programs where the bar for remedial education is lower and where embedded, workplace-based remediation can be delivered.
- **Restructure remedial education to function as an “on ramp” to college** by enabling students to explore options for college and career, choose an initial program path, develop an academic plan and learn foundational skills for the chosen program of study.
- **Require immediate enrollment in remedial education courses upon placement, and immediate enrollment in gateway courses as soon as remedial courses are completed.** Too often, students who have been placed into remedial coursework defer entry into remedial classes, especially if they have opportunities to pursue courses in their major area of study. Students

placed into remedial coursework should be required to begin taking these classes immediately and should be required to continuously enroll in such coursework without interruption until completion of credit-bearing classes. College-level mathematics, for example, should be completed as soon as any remedial work is finished because this will increase the likelihood of completing the sequence.

- » This recommendation does not in any way preclude the use of acceleration techniques. The Task Force encourages colleges to use various means of accelerating students through remedial education, such as allowing them to have their placement re-assessed after completing a remedial course.
- **Develop three mathematics pathways** that will generally align a student's course of study in mathematics with the type of mathematics that will be needed in his or her major program of study and future career. Specifically, we recommend that colleges and universities in Ohio follow the models currently being developed by the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas (New Mathways Project) and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (Carnegie Statway™ and Quantway™ Networked Improvement Communities Project). Ultimately, these projects will produce a quantitative reasoning pathway, a statistics pathway and a STEM mathematics pathway.
- **Require students who need to repeat remedial classes to participate in some sort of intervention during or prior to successive attempts.** These interventions could come in the form of an inter-semester bridge course, mandated supplemental instruction or lab time while the course is repeated, or some other intervention determined by the institution.
- **Limit remedial course repeats.** Each college and university should create and implement a policy that limits the number of times a student can repeat a remedial class, but also provide solutions for that student to strengthen his/her academic foundations such as partnerships with ABL.

## RECOMMENDATION 13

### **Develop comprehensive, mandatory orientation and first-year experiences, as well as robust support and interventions for all students.**

*Develop comprehensive, mandatory first-year experiences that should include a first-year experience course, robust support services, proactive advising and targeted intervention strategies to help keep students – in particular, high-risk students – moving forward along the college completion continuum. The goal of the first-year experience should be to help students choose a program of study, or broad program area, and develop an academic plan with all required courses laid out in the recommended sequence.*

It is often noted that higher education, especially at open admissions institutions such as Ohio’s adult career technical centers, two-year colleges and regional campuses, provide the greatest opportunity for upward mobility to those in the lowest socioeconomic status quartile (SES). And yet, we know that these populations often have the lowest completion rates. While some of these students have parents with college degrees and/or experience, the vast majority of students from the lower SES quartiles are first-generation college students. Payne (1995) and more recently Becker, Krodell and Tucher (2009) have written extensively about the challenges faced by both students and faculty as first-generation college students and students from generational poverty.

Engaging students in the campus community consistently has been shown to help improve completion for all students. This is especially true for low-income and first-generation populations. Colleges and universities must develop orientation and professional development programs designed to help faculty and staff connect with students and their families to communicate key aspects of postsecondary education and provide support as they navigate the system. The Community College Research Center at Columbia University notes that student support services such as tutoring and writing centers, as well as available financial support, often go unused by those students most in need of these services due to a lack of knowledge regarding availability on the part of students

and parents alike. That problem is compounded by the fact that these services usually are offered on an optional or voluntary basis. Orientations linked to structured first-year experiences will help students understand how to use available support services and reinforce key information related to student success throughout the year.

Possible tactical options include the following:

- **Consider requiring new students at open access institutions to apply for admission at least six weeks prior to the start of their first academic term** to allow adequate time for testing, placement preparation, orientation, etc.
- **Create summer bridge opportunities** for incoming freshmen who need more assistance.
- **Implement Welcome Week activities for all first-year students.** In addition to orientation, develop activities during Welcome Week that engage new students with the campus community.
- **Strengthen awareness of services available for students with learning disabilities** by including information in new student orientation and Welcome Week activities that helps students who received special education services in high school and had an Individual Education Plan understand the supports available to them in postsecondary education.
- **Institute mandatory first-year student orientation** for first-time freshmen, transfer students and returning adults.
- **Offer targeted activities and events for affinity groups** (e.g., veterans, African Americans, first-generation students, commuter students).
- **Emphasize that students must be self-advocates.** While greater awareness of resources available on campus can help students succeed, efforts should also be made to help students understand that their proactive efforts are critical to their own success.
- **Offer a first-year course that provides students with information regarding the college's resources,** as well as study skills, career exploration, writing skills, information about technology, and financial literacy.

- **Create learning communities that enroll cohorts of students into the same classes** (and that sometimes also have an additional residential component) to provide a supportive network for students that often also combines support from faculty and student affairs initiatives at an institution. The University of Akron has embraced a myriad of discipline-specific and interest-based learning communities since 1995 that have not required a residential component; research on retention of these learning community students indicates that their first-year to second-year retention rate (excluding both Honors and remedial learning communities) averages 5 percentage points above the retention rate for all students. Zane State College has created learning communities for students completing remedial coursework, called the Counseling-Enhanced Remedial Learning Communities, and has realized participant pass rates that are 7 percent higher than those of students enrolled in traditional courses.

## STAYING ON TRACK & ACCELERATING PROGRESS

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Keeping students on track and helping them persist until completion are no small undertaking. The reasons students drift or fall behind or stop out of college without having earned a credential are myriad. The following four recommendations outline a set of strategies and tactics designed to connect students to clear pathways to success, support students through all phases of their academic journey, accommodate students' individual circumstances and needs, and intervene and redirect when needed. Together, these recommendations will help move students along the path to completion as timely, efficiently and cost-effectively as possible.

### RECOMMENDATION 14

**Develop institutional systems that accelerate students' connection to clear and concise degree pathways, track progress toward academic goals and intervene when help is needed.**

*Develop institutional systems, resources and policies that accelerate students' connection to clear and concise programs of study, including both standardized academic pathways and highly individualized academic pathways, to provide the kind of academic focus and direction that are proven to increase completion rates.*

A recent study by Jenkins and Cho (2011) found that one of the biggest predictors of community college completion was connection to a program of study – i.e., the sooner students connect to a program of study, the more likely they are to complete a degree. Among the authors' recommendations – geared toward students enrolled at community colleges but applicable also to first- and second-year students at university main and regional campuses – are the following:

- Consolidate program offerings into a small number of program streams

(such as liberal arts/transfer, business, allied health and nursing, engineering technology, education, consumer services, etc.), each with a limited set of clearly specified programs leading to credentials.

- Require all degree-seeking, first-time college students to develop a program completion plan. Strongly recommend that all students declare a program of study within the first year and require them to keep an up-to-date program completion plan.
- Ensure that the courses required to complete each program are offered regularly and on a schedule convenient to students.
- Clearly map out for each program a prescribed sequence of first-year courses, limiting the number of elective courses.
- Assign students to advisors who will regularly meet with them to ensure that they are progressing according to their program plans. When possible, advisors should be faculty from the student’s chosen major.

The Task Force therefore strongly urges colleges and universities to institutionalize mechanisms such as “student success roadmaps” that serve the functions of connecting people to programs of study, as outlined by Jenkins and Cho.

Specific tactical suggestions include the following:

- **Develop clear academic pathways for all college majors.** Programs of study need to be organized into clear, sequential, term-by-term outlines of what a typical student’s course load should be, including both required courses and electives – but with fewer options for students to deviate from their academic pathway in their freshman and sophomore years of study. Arizona State, Florida State, Austin Peay University and others at the forefront of developing eAdvising systems that track students’ progress and provide frequent feedback report that the key is to get faculty to develop recommended course sequences for each program and to group programs together in streams. Florida State requires students who haven’t decided on a major to choose one of four exploratory majors, each in a broad field, which includes a recommended set of courses and required advising.

- **Implement tools that clearly outline degree requirements for students** and help them (with assistance from faculty and staff) assess their progress and develop an efficient and effective personal academic plan that will result in degree attainment. For example, Wright State University currently requires every major to have a clear program of study that is monitored by students and their advisors. If a student fails to take a course required to stay on track for a timely graduation, an alert message is sent to the advisor, who then follows up with the student.

Other campuses have individualized approaches to academic pathways as well. One such example is the use of My Academic Plan (MAP) at Sinclair Community College. MAP takes a student's individual needs and tailors a clear academic path for him or her, term by term. For example, if a student can go to school only part-time, the MAP will be created for that timeline. It informs students of recommended courses agreed upon by faculty in that program. It also indicates to advisors if a student is in danger of losing his or her financial aid due to completion and success mandates.

In addition to advisors, the faculty and chairs at Sinclair have the opportunity to view a student's MAP through classroom rosters. This promotes an environment where everyone who works with students can remind them of their path. It also provides the institution with data that helps ensure it has appropriate course offerings for a given term. Experience indicates that MAP and similar systems work most effectively when college/university faculty first lay out curriculum maps with recommended courses and course sequences.

## RECOMMENDATION 15

### **Implement “intrusive” advising supported by robust academic support systems and services.**

*Develop and implement systems, policies and mechanisms that support “intrusive” advising and other complementary student supports that closely monitor student progress toward achieving academic goals, provide regular outreach at all stages of students’ postsecondary education experiences, and identify and deploy intervention strategies, as needed, to keep students on track toward completion.*

The research of Upcraft and Kramer (1995) and Hisserer and Parette (2002) shows that colleges that adopt an “intrusive” advising model – in which assistance is provided to students whether they seek it out or not – can help students through intentional contact with key advisors.<sup>10</sup> This in turn (a) fosters an effective and caring relationship with the student that will lead to academic progress; (b) builds a sense of belonging to the college/university community; and (c) encourages student participation in student activities, clubs and initiatives – all of which enhance retention and completion.

According to Habley and Croquette (1988), effective intrusive advising efforts utilize careful recruitment and selection of advisors, prepare advisors well, recognize and reward advising efforts and assess advisors and advising programs. To aid in relationship building, it is recommended that advisors:

- Are assigned to a specified group of students and that advisor assignments are clearly known to students and staff;
- Are able to identify students and understand their academic goals;

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<sup>10</sup> The term “intrusive advising” – to mean providing assistance to students even when they do not seek out assistance – is well established in current literature and on college and university campuses across the nation. For these reasons and to avoid confusion, this report uses the term even though some members of the Task Force expressed concerns about the tone and possible negative connotations of the word “intrusive.” There was a general consensus among Task Force members that an alternative term such as “proactive advising” might better convey the spirit, tone and intent of the student advising dynamic the group endorses.

- Reach out to students in a multitude of ways as students enter the institution;
- Track student progress and provide outreach at all stages of the student’s academic career;
- Serve as primary point of contact for academic resource referrals; and
- Have access to early warning/alert information.

The Ohio State University’s unit for undecided students incorporates many of these concepts. Undecided students are assigned an advisor at orientation, receive survey class instruction from their assigned advisor and are frequently contacted through email to check progress and offer assistance. Students who struggle to declare a major within the allotted timeframe are locked from registration and required to see an advisor to discuss academic goals.

Recommended tactical options for supporting the intrusive advising strategy include the following:

- **Implement an intrusive advising model for all students.** Intrusive advising is particularly valuable for freshmen; where resources are available, however, it should be expanded to as many students as possible.
- **Assign students to a specific advisor.** Colleges and universities should track students through advising relationships where the advisor is able to identify students and understand their academic goals, monitor students’ progress and provide outreach at all stages of their academic career.
- **Provide training for all advisors** so advising is consistent throughout the institution. Additionally, all types of advisors should be trained on basic financial aid rules. Financial aid counseling traditionally has been the responsibility of financial aid counselors, but everything a student does can impact his or her financial aid, so all advisors need clear and specific information about financial aid rules.
- **Provide targeted, intensive intervention strategies for groups of students that tend to be less likely to complete** – e.g., low-income and first-generation students.

- **Offer seminars or survey classes on the institution and its resources.** Colleges and universities should use courses to acclimate students to the institution and connect students to an institutional resource person.
- **Offer a first-year course that provides students with information about the college’s resources,** as well as study skills, career exploration, writing skills, information about technology and financial literacy.
- **Institute an early/academic alert system.** Colleges and universities should implement systems that monitor progress and identify at-risk students to help staff intervene and assist students in overcoming obstacles and interrupting behaviors that hinder academic success. Effective, interactive online “Edplans” – such as Degreeworks, Degree Audit Reporting System (DARS) or even homegrown ones such as those used at Belmont College, Clark State Community College, Marion Technical College and Sinclair Community College’s MAP – add an important dimension to intrusive advising.
- **Foster student connections.** To aid in retention and degree completion, colleges and universities should create meaningful connections between students and peers, faculty and staff. These connections can be developed through formal and informal mentoring programs, as well as through structured learning opportunities that encourage cohort approaches such as learning communities, programmatic scheduling and paired coursework.
- **Provide a mechanism for offering lower-cost options for assessment of student learning or physical disabilities** to ensure that students with disabilities receive the extra support they need to be successful.
- **Provide training to faculty to provide auxiliary advising support.** Given their interaction with students in the classroom, faculty often can spot risk factors and help point students in the direction to receive the support they need to be successful.
- **Expand innovative academic supports such as e-tutoring.** In addition to the traditional academic supports, learning labs and faculty office hours, explore expansion of new models such as e-tutoring.

## RECOMMENDATION 16

### **Devise more flexible, innovative scheduling, registration and degree-granting policies and practices.**

*Devise more flexible, innovative policies and practices for scheduling, registration, credit hour and course requirements, course delivery and course load to remove common obstacles that hinder students' progress toward completion.*

Colleges and universities are encouraged to explore opportunities for restructuring the delivery of degree and certificate programs in ways that speed completion, reduce uncertainty in scheduling and improve retention and completion. Following are a number of specific tactical options for consideration:

- **Restructure delivery of degree programs to remove uncertainty in scheduling.** Frame degree plans in major fields of study with a goal of block scheduling to facilitate accelerated program completion, particularly in two-year degree programs. This will allow working students to attend classes during an established time block at the same times during the week, with an acknowledged and specific completion date.
- **Reorganize the traditional college schedule to allow for more paired courses that satisfy programmatic course sequences.** Align course schedules in ways that make it easier for students to take a series of courses for their chosen program at contiguous times. At two-year colleges, this may require matching up general education courses that best fit with the required technical courses. At four-year institutions, this might mean identifying a limited number of programs to package in this manner and would require greater collaboration among departments within institutions to fully integrate the schedule. This approach also has the benefit of creating de facto cohorts of students and informal learning communities.
- **Develop a system that allows students to register for an entire year.** Allowing students to register for courses for the entire year would enhance their ability to plan for work, childcare and other contingencies far enough in

advance to reduce potential last-minute obstacles to completion. This also would allow students to complete their programs in the shortest time possible. Cleveland State University, for example, began year-round scheduling for the 2012-13 school year. Six months into the new process, more than 50 percent of the university's undergraduates have taken advantage of the new policy.

- **Increase the availability of one- or two-night-per-week programs that can be completed in a two-year timeframe for associate degrees.** Several institutions have already developed these programs.
- **Ensure students are aware of existing three-year college degree programs** at University System of Ohio institutions.
- **Review institutions' course load and registration policies and procedures to ensure they support student success.** Colleges and universities should aid in student success by supporting manageable course loads and course registration in a timely fashion (no late registration).
- **Collect and analyze data system-wide to determine the impact of college and university "overload fees"** (assessed against students who take more credit hours than the standard full-time student load) on timely completion.
- **Place limits on the number of courses from which students are permitted to withdraw.** Emphasis should be placed on completing courses and limiting course withdrawals, as withdrawals often hinder progress and extend time to degree.
- **Develop more collaborative pathways that build upon credentials.** Expand articulated programs between University System of Ohio partners that enable credentials and coursework earned at one institution to serve as building blocks to additional credentials. These practices include 1 + 1 programs between adult career technical centers and community colleges, using approaches such as concurrent enrollment, as well as 2 + 2 programs between community colleges and universities. The use of university centers on community college campuses is another innovative approach to getting more people access to additional degree programs. These current statewide collaborative programs should be considered as strategies for enhancing completion.

## RECOMMENDATION 17

### **Strategically enhance Ohio’s articulation and credit transfer programs.**

*Reduce unnecessary and costly duplication of coursework, which inhibits completion, by building the capacity of Ohio’s exemplary articulation and credit transfer programs and services to ensure (a) expanded alignment of academic coursework with career-technical, military and experiential learning; (b) enhanced transfer student support services; (c) enhanced data collection and tracking of progress; and (d) more aggressive promotion of articulation and credit transfer programs and services. This strategic enhancement should include a reexamination of the curriculum and prerequisites in the Ohio Transfer Module and ways to increase the transfer of workforce credentials and associate degrees to additional postsecondary education credentials of value.*

In 2010-11, 42,998 students transferred among the University System of Ohio campuses. The ability to transfer credits allows students to get on a low-cost pathway to degree completion. Recent research by the Ohio Board of Regents indicates that the number of credit hours accepted by a receiving institution influences completion; in short, the greater number of credits transferred that count toward a degree, the greater the likelihood of completion.

As a matter of state policy, we want increased numbers of Ohioans to earn postsecondary education credentials. Aligning credential programs to ensure they effectively prepare students for further education and careers is essential to achieving that objective. State and institutional policies should facilitate students’ springboarding from one credential to additional credentials and/or career entry and advancement.

The Task Force offers the following recommendations, based on best practices, for consideration by the state and by individual institutions:

- **Continue and enhance the following statewide programs:** the Ohio Transfer Module, Transfer Assurance Guides and Career-Technical Credit Transfer.

- **Develop a comprehensive communications plan to raise awareness of credit-transfer options.** Ohio should convey clear, direct messages to a variety of constituent groups (institutional administrators and advisors, students and parents, and high school guidance personnel) about current and expanding statewide transfer initiatives.
- **Align more career-technical learning for transfer into certificates/degrees.** Ohio should expand alignment initiatives for career-technical learning to transfer directly into academic certificate and degree programs, especially in high school career-technical education, Adult Workforce Education programs and industrial apprenticeships.
- **Explore the creation of an Ohio Technical Transfer Module.** Examine the creation of an Ohio Technical Transfer Module for a foundation to expand technical associate degrees linking to one-year workforce certificates. These pathways would enable students to apply the skills acquired with a one-year workforce certificate to a technical associate degree statewide. Consideration also should be given to how to develop better pathways from technical associate degrees to technical baccalaureate degrees.
- **Enhance data collection and technical efforts designed to track student progress.** Create a statewide platform for tracking degree progress at the student level and facilitating degree choices based on credits already communicated, awarding retroactive degrees, and evaluating the effectiveness of current transfer programs at shortening a student's path toward a degree. Expand data collection to include private colleges and universities.
- **Create a more robust statewide network of transfer counselors** featuring a more formalized structure and communications to help students understand statewide transfer policies. Institutions should focus on expanding and enhancing services in support of transfer students, including advising contacts and communication tools that are readily available to help students decipher the transferability of their credits.
- **Reexamine the curriculum and prerequisites in the Ohio Transfer Module** and explore ways to increase the transfer of workforce credentials and associate degrees to additional postsecondary education credentials of value.

- **Encourage completion of certificates and degrees before transfer while providing for maximum applicability of credits at the next level.** In particular, improve the transfer of adult workforce education certificates into associate degree programs and help leverage one credential into another. Expanding incentives to complete degrees at community colleges will allow more students to take full advantage of low-cost pathways.

## REWARDING SUCCESS & INCENTIVIZING COMPLETION

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Incentivizing students to persist to earn a postsecondary education credential and achieve their academic and career goals can take many forms. Incentives can be designed to acknowledge and reward past progress, stimulate and reward continued progress, and facilitate and reward accelerated progress. The following two recommendations identify a wide range of options for identifying, assisting and rewarding students who have achieved notable academic success points along the college continuum, as well as for providing both financial and non-financial incentives to drive persistence to completion.

### RECOMMENDATION 18

**Expand programs for rewarding and leveraging meaningful “packages” of academic program work that have been completed, or nearly completed, but not formally credentialed.**

*Scale up existing programs in Ohio that (a) award degrees for work completed and satisfying degree requirements but not formally credentialed, and (b) assist individuals who have left school with substantial college credits, but not quite enough for a formal credential, to complete the work required to earn a degree. Create new mechanisms for systematically rewarding interim levels of progress toward a degree or other academic goal as they are completed.*

Ohio has a significant number of students who have attended college for a number of years and have not earned any credential. Reaching out to students who have stopped out of postsecondary education before earning a degree, and who have either accumulated enough credit to earn a credential or are close to completion, should be a priority. Efforts should be made to remove institutional or financial barriers for these students or to encourage them to return and finish their degree program.

Additionally, systematically recognizing and rewarding student progress with interim credentials for achieving milestone levels of academic work as it is completed will motivate students to continue making progress toward achieving their academic goals and boost persistence, retention and, ultimately, completion rates.

Additional tactical recommendations include the following:

- **Grant an industry-recognized workforce certificate as an interim credential** when a student has completed certification requirements after 30 or more semester hours of college-level coursework, in meaningful combinations, at any one University System of Ohio institution or combination of institutions. **Grant an associate degree as an interim credential** when a student has satisfied degree requirements after 60 or more semester hours of meaningful college-level coursework, in meaningful combinations, at any one University System of Ohio institution or combination of institutions.
- **Conduct routine degree audits for all students** to track and monitor their progress toward completion of their degree/certificate. The degree audit, based on Ohio Board of Regents-approved curriculum, is used to provide feedback on academic progress, transfer credit and placement scores.
- **Implement a statewide system of “reverse transfer”** that enables the granting of an associate degree for credits earned from the community college where a student initially began his or her academic career before transferring to a baccalaureate institution where the student is progressing toward a baccalaureate degree. Requirements would include (a) easy access to system-wide mobility and tracking reports; (b) residency requirements expanded to be USO residency rather than specific to an institution; and (c) statewide marketing/promotion. It also would be necessary to determine what part momentum funding would play as a benefit to partnering institutions, and to build the capacity of the Ohio Board of Regents to collect cross-institutional data reports. This would include modifying reports for the Higher Education Information system and connecting to the National Student Data Clearinghouse.

- **Expand the Win-Win approach to all Ohio community colleges.** Currently, Win-Win reaches out to students who have completed 60 hours of instruction and stopped out of college no more than nine hours shy of a degree – and provides those individuals with an opportunity to complete their degree.
  - » **Expand the Win-Win data parameters.** Expanding the pool of students from those who are no more than nine credits shy of completion to those who are no more than 15 credits shy of completion would increase the pool of those who could potentially earn a degree.
  - » **Include universities by using the Win-Win model modified to university specifications.**

## RECOMMENDATION 19

### **Expand and diversify financial opportunities and incentives for achieving critical benchmarks and timely completion.**

*Expand and diversify financial rewards for students and colleges/universities to incentivize attainment of critical milestones on the pathway to completion and timely attainment of credentials of value in the marketplace.*

Tactical options for providing financial incentives for timely progress and completion include the following:

- **Restructure the State Share of Instruction (SSI)** to incentivize completion even more strongly.
- **Explore innovations in cost and aid structures** that facilitate completion and can be individualized to each institution’s completion improvement strategy. Institutions should be creative in establishing processes that stabilize tuition over a standardized term encompassing the entire degree process and reward timely completion.

- **Provide a formal tuition guarantee that locks in tuition as an incentive for timely completion.** For example, provide each entering student, within the first semester of his or her academic program, with a clear and concise degree pathway that will become, in effect, a contract between the student and the college/university, or the student and the University System of Ohio, guaranteeing that the degree can be completed within a specified time frame if the student follows the listed parameters (e.g., number of credit hours per term, GPA requirements, progression requirements). If the student strays from the established parameters, no liability would exist for the college/university or the system.
- **Co-incentivize completion** by increasing tuition to out-of-state rates and concurrently decreasing the State Share of Instruction to colleges/universities for students exceeding a significant threshold number of credit hours well beyond degree requirements. Students pursuing double majors, re-returning for a new degree in a different discipline or with other extenuating circumstances would require special consideration.
- **Package financial aid to promote completion**, such as holding back some portions of aid or increasing it as a student nears completion.
- **Distribute financial aid as a paycheck.** Spreading financial aid packages over a semester would help students avoid receiving and spending their aid in lump sums, thereby encouraging students to work less and take more credit hours per term.
- **Offer performance-based scholarships/aid** in which distribution or continued support is paid contingent on attaining specified academic benchmarks. A recent study by MDRC found that performance-based scholarships have a positive impact on persistence and credit accumulation, both of which can lead to increased timely completions.
- **Offer “stepping stone” grants and scholarships** for students who complete a credential or degree at one University System of Ohio institution and immediately transfer to another University System of Ohio institution. Grants would be awarded and applied to the next level of degree or certificate

attainment or when the bachelor's or associate degree can be awarded directly to the graduate, or it could be applied to any loan repayment.

- » **Community College Completion & Transfer Scholarship** to incentivize completion at the community college level and recognize the importance of the associate degree. The scholarship would be awarded to community college students completing their associate degree and transferring to a four-year public university in Ohio. The amount of the scholarship should be significant enough to reward and incentivize completion of the associate degree and immediate transfer to the bachelor's degree program.
- » **Adult Career Technical Center Completion & Transfer Scholarship** to incentivize completion at the adult career technical center level and recognize the importance of certificates. The scholarship would be awarded to students completing a certificate at a career center and then transferring to a community college. The amount of the scholarship should be significant enough to reward and incentivize completion of the certificate and immediate transfer to the associate degree program.
- **Significantly increase the employment of students by colleges and universities.** Campus employment of students has been shown to have a positive effect on retention, credit-accumulation and completion (as long as it is no more than 20 hours per week).
- **Develop a state or college/university finance program to provide financial assistance to students who enroll in summer term courses,** thereby incentivizing students to pursue accelerated pathways to completion. It will be important to ensure that aid received in the summer does not reduce the overall aid a student may receive.
- **Develop and implement a campus-level mechanism for obtaining student and family feedback on the various financial incentive options outlined in this document** (as well as any additional tactical options individual institutions may propose).

## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

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Communication will be a key to enabling many of the recommendations outlined in this report to have their desired impact – i.e., driving college completion in Ohio to significantly higher levels. Students and their families need to be made much more aware of the continued value of postsecondary education; the link between education and careers; the need for early and thoughtful preparation; and the extensive postsecondary opportunities, resources and supports that are available to them. Adult students returning to school have similar needs. The Task Force’s final recommendation addresses the need for significant state-level commitment to promote and support college completion through an aggressive statewide communication effort.

### RECOMMENDATION 20

#### **Mount a comprehensive statewide communications strategy about college completion.**

*Mount a comprehensive statewide communications and marketing campaign, targeting prospective students and their families, for the purpose of raising awareness among students of all ages throughout Ohio of (a) the importance of attaining postsecondary education credentials; and (b) the expanded opportunities, resources and supports for degree completion in Ohio, including information about resources available to assist students and their families in planning for and paying for a college education.*

In addition to messages about the value of postsecondary education and the opportunities and supports that are available to students and their families, communications should include other important messages such as the need for assuming personal responsibility for successful completion of a postsecondary credential and the importance of developing a solid plan and sticking to it.

Ohio should build a single portal for information about college opportunities. This web-based system would help any Ohioan get information about how to go to college. In addition to disseminating information, such a tool would require partnerships with Ohio’s robust network of community-based college access programs and TRIO programs. Combined, these efforts not only would get the information about how to go to college into students’ hands, but also would provide assistance with the application and financial aid processes.

Additionally, targeted communications efforts to raise awareness of “credit-based transition programs” (such as Dual Enrollment, Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate) and statewide articulation and credit-transfer programs should be coordinated with the comprehensive statewide communications effort.





# NEXT STEPS

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This report offers a wide range of proven and promising ideas for how to improve college completion in Ohio. Some are strategic; others are more tactical. Many represent policies, programs and practices that already are making a difference on college and university campuses across Ohio. While most of the ideas presented here are campus-level suggestions, some require state-level attention and action.

Additionally, the three Task Force Working Groups did an incredible amount of work that included compiling research, data and information about best, promising and emerging practices in Ohio and across the nation. The detailed findings generated by the Working Groups provide a richness of detail and analysis that will be of interest and value to individuals tasked with leading completion improvement efforts. The information can be accessed at [www.ohiohighered.org/completion](http://www.ohiohighered.org/completion).

So, what are the critical next steps? What actions will most effectively catalyze change and drive an aggressive scaling up of innovative, effective campus-level initiatives to improve college completion throughout the University System of Ohio?

The Task Force suggests the following steps for getting started:

1. The Chancellor shall **determine a dissemination strategy** for sharing this report with campus leaders and frontline higher education professionals throughout the University System of Ohio.
2. The Chancellor shall work with state policy leaders to **determine specific state-level commitments and actions** required to advance the recommendations in this report.

3. The Chancellor shall engage higher education leadership, with input from P-12 educators and leaders, to **reach consensus on uniform statewide definitions of “college and career readiness” and “college completion”** as called for in Recommendations 2 and 3.
4. The Chancellor, with input from college and university leadership, shall **develop a framework and timeline for development and submission of campus-level Campus Completion Plans** called for in Recommendation 1. These plans should align with the state biennial budget legislation process.
5. The Chancellor shall **initiate work on developing a comprehensive statewide communications strategy** to drive and support efforts to increase completion in Ohio.

The Task Force believes these priority actions will set into motion necessary and appropriate levels of attention and action needed to drive significant progress on improving Ohio’s college completion record. The report includes proven ideas and promising ideas that many colleges and universities in Ohio have implemented or are about to implement. Other ideas may require resources that universities may not have. As a more formal and intentional system-wide effort to improve completion gets under way, collecting data on the effectiveness of various tactics deployed across the state may be another useful “next step.”

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