



Choose Ohio First

2022-2023 Annual Report



History and Overview

The General Assembly created the Choose Ohio First scholarship program in 2007 to increase the number of Ohio residents completing postsecondary studies in the fields of science (including health professions), technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), as well as teaching degrees or certificates that focus on STEM disciplines. The goal of the program is to strengthen Ohio's competitiveness within STEM disciplines by developing STEM scholars and connecting them with Ohio employers.

Under the Chancellor's leadership, the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) manages a competitive process for Ohio's public and independent colleges and universities seeking a Choose Ohio First (COF) designation and funding. Choose Ohio First colleges and universities use COF funds to provide scholarships to Choose Ohio First Scholars. Each institution is responsible for recruiting, selecting, and supporting its Choose Ohio First Scholars. Scholars are provided scholarships and work-based learning experiences that lead to success in their STEM or STEM teacher education program. Since its inception, ODHE has conducted multiple, consecutive COF funding rounds, resulting in Ohio educational institutions recruiting new COF Scholars since 2007. In AY23, the average scholarship at a four-year institution was \$4,271 and the average scholarship at a two-year college was \$2,317.

In FY23, the Chancellor awarded a Choose Ohio First designation and \$28 million to 45 Ohio institutions through a competitive request for proposal process. The funding will be allocated to each institution over the course of five fiscal years, FY24 through FY28.

As required by Ohio Revised Code 3333.041 (3), this report summarizes the Chancellor's strategy in assigning Choose Ohio First scholarships and describes how the awards are consistent with that strategy.

Chancellor's Strategy in Assigning Choose Ohio First Designations

In FY23, the Chancellor conducted a competitive proposal process to designate Choose Ohio First institutions and award funding to those institutions for student scholarships. A review panel reviewed and scored 45 proposals from 12 public universities, 10 community colleges, and 23 independent institutions. Scoring of the proposals included evaluation of the extent to which a proposal recruits underrepresented populations in STEM fields and STEM education, along with one or more of the following criteria in ORC 3333.62:

- The quality of the program and the extent to which additional resources will enhance its quality;
- The extent to which the proposal is integrated with the strengths of the regional economy;
- The extent to which the proposal is integrated with the institution's mission and does not replace existing resources;
- The extent to which the institution has committed to an increase in the total graduates in STEM and STEM education, consistent with the workforce needs;
- The extent to which the proposal meets a statewide educational need;
- The extent to which the proposal facilitates the completion of an associate or baccalaureate degree in a cost-effective manner; and
- The extent to which the proposal encourages students to complete a certificate program.



Students present at the Choose Ohio First Symposium on April 11, 2023 in Columbus Ohio.

The Chancellor awarded a Choose Ohio First designation and \$28 million to 45 Ohio institutions, which began offering scholarships from the FY23 funding round in AY24. Grantees will receive funding on a reimbursement basis as Choose Ohio First Scholars successfully progress through their academic program.

Expanding STEM Talent in Ohio

Since its inception, the Choose Ohio First Program has complemented the Chancellor's strategy to strengthen Ohio's workforce by recruiting and supporting students pursuing STEM degrees and certificates. The number of STEM degrees awarded at Ohio's public colleges and universities has increased from 26,644 total students in AY08 to more than 39,650 total students in AY23.

Choose Ohio First Scholarships can be used to support students pursuing graduate, baccalaureate, or associate degrees, as well as for-credit certificates in designated STEM fields or STEM teaching programs. Participating colleges and universities provided scholarships to 4,361 STEM students in AY23. This includes 1,988 students who were first-time Choose Ohio First scholarship recipients; 47.4% of those first-time COF scholarship recipients were students who had previously participated in the College Credit Plus program.

In AY23, 3,643 COF Scholars were enrolled at a public or independent four-year institution and 718 were enrolled at a public two-year institution. Several institutions that received Choose Ohio First awards participated in an articulation agreement that allowed students to move from a two-year degree to a four-year degree with a seamless transfer.

Institutions select the specific areas of study to include in their COF program based on the regional and statewide economic and educational needs in Ohio. In AY23, students received Choose Ohio First scholarships to support their studies in more than 209 unique STEM academic programs. Engineering, healthcare, and information technology-related fields were the three most popular academic program areas. Ohio's Career Resource Navigator (formerly the Workforce Success Measures) website reported that 78% of Choose Ohio First's public college and university completers from AY19 were working in Ohio and/or enrolled in a U.S. higher education institution one year after graduation.

Connecting COF Scholars with co-ops, internships, research experience in a university, college, or private laboratory setting, and other work-based learning experiences has been a central principle of the COF program. In AY23, work-based learning experiences were hosted by employers in a variety of industries. Those included research opportunities with many Ohio health systems and private companies, along with university-supported projects.

Supporting STEM Students' Success

Institutions with the Choose Ohio First designation provide support to their Choose Ohio First Scholars that will help students complete their academic program and connect with employers. The forms of support vary among institutions. Some examples of support provided by Choose Ohio First colleges and universities include:

- summer bridge programs designed to affirm first-year student commitment and promote academic preparedness;
- mentoring from faculty, peers, and/or alumni;
- STEM-specific events, cohort team building;
- STEM success coaching and tutoring;
- referrals to food banks, clothing banks, and mental health and social services;
- connections through networking platforms and advisory boards;
- designated internships and co-op experiences; and
- cohort-based research projects and publications of STEM research.

These support systems are designed to increase retention and graduation rates for Choose Ohio First Scholars. Many colleges and universities also offer career and post-graduation advising, helping to connect Choose Ohio First graduates with Ohio employers.



Choose Ohio First students participate in a panel discussion.

Leveraging Other Resources

The Choose Ohio First Scholarship Program requires designated institutions to match all COF funds dollar for dollar. In AY23, \$17.2 million was awarded and disbursed to 4,361 Choose Ohio First Scholars attending an Ohio college or university. Participating institutions reported matching contributions totaling \$50.9 million to support Choose Ohio First Scholars.

Matching funds can be used for a variety of things within the institution's COF program. Approximately \$41 million, or 82% of the total institutional matching dollars, was reported in the form of scholarship dollars. Institutions have also used matching funds to revise and develop new curricula in the STEM disciplines, offer students opportunities to participate in conferences and research symposia, and leverage the involvement of businesses in the professional development of COF Scholars.

Choose Ohio First Funding Cycles

Since 2007, ODHE has issued multiple COF funding rounds, resulting in institutions being able to recruit new COF Scholars. In AY23, the 4,361 students receiving a Choose Ohio First scholarship were funded through one of four funding cycles: the FY21 grant cycle, the FY19 grant cycle, the FY22 grant cycle, or the FY16 grant cycle.

FY23 grant cycle

In this cycle, the Chancellor awarded a Choose Ohio First designation and \$28.0 million to 45 institutions through a competitive request for proposal process. The funding supports institutions recruiting new COF Scholars every year for five years, AY24 through AY28.

FY22 grant cycle

In this cycle, the Chancellor awarded Choose Ohio First designation and \$42.9 million to 45 institutions through a competitive request for proposal process. The funding supports institutions recruiting new COF Scholars every year for five years, AY23 through AY27.



A group of Choose Ohio First Scholars from Marion Technical College

FY21 grant cycle

In this cycle, the Chancellor awarded Choose Ohio First designation and \$42.8 million to 57 institutions through a competitive request for proposal process. The funding supports institutions recruiting new COF Scholars every year for five years, AY22 through AY26.

FY19 computer science grant cycle

In this cycle, the Chancellor awarded Choose Ohio First designation and \$20.6 million to 35 institutions through a competitive request for proposal process. The funding supports institutions recruiting new COF Scholars every year for five years, AY21 through AY25.

FY16 completion grant cycle

The Chancellor has committed \$27.1 million to 32 institutions to support COF Scholars who began their COF experience during a previous funding cycle that began in FY16. These funds will help COF Scholars who started their COF educational program during AY17 through AY21 complete their degree or certificate no later than AY25.

Conclusion

Under the Chancellor's leadership and with support from the DeWine-Husted administration and the General Assembly, the Ohio Department of Higher Education continues to offer and administer competitive funding opportunities to Ohio's public and independent colleges and universities to provide scholarships in STEM and STEM teaching fields.

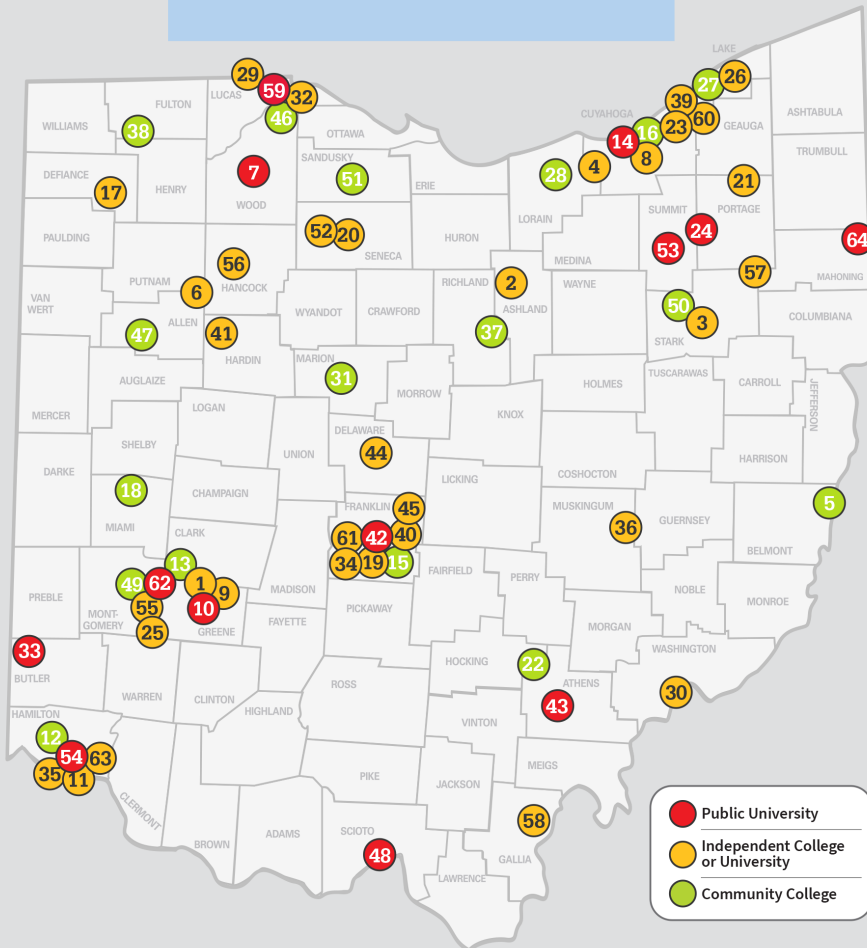
The Choose Ohio First program is a scholarship program providing financial support to STEM students in Ohio. Through the program guidelines and objectives, COF partners with institutions that provide a wide range of academic, social, emotional, and career supports resulting in successful completion of STEM degrees and certificates. Retention and graduation rates are high as a result of targeted recruitment, strong wrap-around student support services, and matching scholarship dollars to complement the Choose Ohio First award. Employer involvement through internships, co-ops, research, and other work-based learning experiences are connecting COF Scholars to employment opportunities in Ohio.



Participating Institutions

In AY23, a total of 64 public and nonpublic colleges and universities had a Choose Ohio First designation, with enrolled scholars receiving scholarship funds through one of the active funding rounds.

Participating Institutions



1. Antioch College
2. Ashland University
3. Aultman College of Nursing and Health Sciences
4. Baldwin Wallace University
5. Belmont College
6. Bluffton University
7. Bowling Green State University
8. Case Western Reserve University
9. Cedarville University
10. Central State University
11. Christ College of Nursing and Health Sciences
12. Cincinnati State Technical & Community College
13. Clark State College
14. Cleveland State University
15. Columbus State Community College
16. Cuyahoga Community College
17. Defiance College
18. Edison State Community College
19. Franklin University
20. Heidelberg University
21. Hiram College
22. Hocking College
23. John Carroll University
24. Kent State University
25. Kettering College
26. Lake Erie College
27. Lakeland Community College
28. Lorain County Community College
29. Lourdes University
30. Marietta College
31. Marion Technical College
32. Mercy College of Ohio
33. Miami University
34. Mount Carmel College of Nursing
35. Mount St. Joseph University
36. Muskingum University
37. North Central State College
38. Northwest State Community College
39. Notre Dame College
40. Ohio Dominican University
41. Ohio Northern University
42. The Ohio State University
43. Ohio University
44. Ohio Wesleyan University
45. Otterbein University
46. Owens Community College
47. Rhodes State College
48. Shawnee State University
49. Sinclair Community College
50. Stark State College
51. Terra State Community College
52. Tiffin University
53. The University of Akron
54. University of Cincinnati
55. University of Dayton
56. University of Findlay
57. University of Mount Union
58. University of Rio Grande
59. The University of Toledo
60. Ursuline College
61. Western Governor's University
62. Wright State University
63. Xavier University
64. Youngstown State University



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