



# The 2023 Efficiency Advisory Committee Report

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Department of  
Higher Education

# Introduction

Ohio Revised Code section 3333.95 requires the Chancellor of the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) to maintain an “Efficiency Advisory Committee” that includes an “efficiency officer” from each state institution of higher education (IHE). Each IHE must then provide an “**efficiency report**” updated annually to ODHE, which is compiled by the Chancellor into a statewide report shared at year end with the Governor and General Assembly.

ODHE provides a template to the IHEs that they use to report their annual accomplishments.

The template is reviewed each year and updated to request new information on priorities of the administration. For instance, requests for more quantifiable data on the institutions’ efforts to reduce the costs of textbooks through the utilization of Open Educational Resources (OER) and the implementation of Inclusive Access policies were first added to last year’s template. Questions were added this year related to the use of the Higher Education Information System (HEI) for benchmarking purposes. Facilities Planning was another new topic added in response to the Auditor of State’s performance audit on this same topic last year. Finally, questions regarding the criteria and process for assigning special purpose fees were added to the FY23 template.

In addition to the identified areas of interest to the DeWine-Husted administration, there are several questions that are mandated in the Ohio Revised Code that the IHEs must cover in their Efficiency Reports. These include updates on regional compacts, co-located campuses, and textbook costs.

# Benchmarking

The state colleges and universities are required to complete and submit several reports each year through HEI. These reports provide data on academic programs, enrollment, faculty and staff, finance, and facilities. The institutions were asked whether they utilize the data within HEI to evaluate or benchmark their operations relative to other Ohio institutions. In response, concerns were raised regarding delays in getting complete data for multiple institutions and the fact that the data are not presented by ODHE in a comparative format. Nonetheless, several institutions referenced using the data to track enrollment trends and successful completions.

**The University of Toledo (UT)** has used HEI data to evaluate the efficacy of certain areas of operation. For example, it has used the Course Inventory report in the HEI Portal to benchmark the assignment of course CIP codes for equivalent courses at other Ohio public universities. The university uses the Preliminary Headcount report to assess enrollment performance each year and requests a summary of headcount by institution for recent high school graduates annually so that it can calculate direct from high school market share.

In addition, UT partnered with Huron Consulting to conduct a labor market and academic program demand analysis using EMSI and IPEDS data to inform program prioritization and organizational restructuring. Within the last year, the university used this analysis to inactivate 10 undergraduate degrees, seven graduate degrees, and 13 certificates, and to start 11 new undergraduate degrees, three graduate degrees, and 22 certificate programs.

**Stark State College** benchmarks its cost per FTE against the cost per FTE by functional expense category for the other two-year colleges in Ohio using the Resource Analysis reports and the HEI system reports as the data become publicly available. The assessments are geared toward delivering the best-quality education at the lowest cost in order to meet the college's stewardship obligation. The goal is to be among the five lowest cost-per-FTE two-year institutions in Ohio. The college also closely monitors average class size and the number and modality of sections offered to both control instructional costs and to preserve access to coursework needed to complete credentials in a timely manner.

**Washington State Community College**, now formally known as Washington State College of Ohio, uses HEI data to assess enrollment patterns and benchmark

student performance outcomes against Ohio’s 23 community colleges, and the college’s strategies are adjusted accordingly. Institutional operational efficiencies are analyzed annually during the budget process by the administration and Board of Trustees. An ROI is used to analyze academic programs on an annual basis. Programs that do not meet enrollment and completion standards are placed on “academic watch” and given a year to improve the trajectory. If not improved, the programs are redesigned and/or inactivated.

## Facilities Planning

In April 2022, the Auditor of State’s Office (AOS) completed a Performance Audit of the facility inventory data maintained by ODHE. ODHE included questions in this year’s template that complement the AOS findings. The questions asked about efforts to reduce the costs of space, how enrollment trends are impacting space demands and utilization, and whether HEI data is used in developing capital plans. There were a wide range of answers regarding the data used to evaluate space needs. However, several institutions have recently completed facilities master plans and have made efforts to reduce or better utilize existing space.

**Bowling Green State University (BGSU)** utilizes Evolve FM for space management purposes, including recording and tracking all data about university space, which includes occupancy, space use, and department assignments. Utilizing this space database has allowed BGSU to better identify vacant and underutilized spaces and to better utilize or decommission these spaces. The Space Management system follows the standards in the Postsecondary Education Facilities Inventory and Classifications Manual with the adaptations for the State of Ohio HEI System Reporting.

BGSU’s planning served as the basis for determining which buildings were candidates for full renovation and redeployment, partial renovations or remediations, or candidates for permanent demolition when the cost to renovate and repurpose exceeded the cost/value of replacement. Understanding current and projected space

uses and needs ultimately allowed BGSU to permanently demolish more than 20 structures (more than 1 million square feet) and dramatically reduce the footprint of aging facilities and deferred maintenance. This work also saves more than \$3 million per year in operational costs.

**Ohio University (OU)** has reviewed all facilities by condition, utilization, location, and adaptability. Between 2015 and today, Ohio University has divested 346,000 gross square feet even while adding new space to meet programmatic needs. The university has identified several additional facilities for further divestment by 2030.

OU is pioneering a space utilization model that is a forward-thinking, comprehensive reimagining of space function, ownership, and budget allocation across the campus community. The centerpiece of this new model involves a shift in how spaces are defined, introducing a taxonomy based on activities and room attributes, rather than rigidly predefined room types and access. The model creates an open and transparent understanding of the available portfolio. An example of the impact of planning to reduce costs and optimize space is the College of Fine Arts renewal projects. The college plans to reduce the overall footprint through use of the space model, removing duplications of space and also reducing their footprint by vacating three facilities, two of which Ohio University is divesting from.

**Miami University's (MU)** Department of Planning Architecture and Engineering uses HEI data along with other institutional data to determine priority of capital projects. These data are also regularly used to compare the university's usage to peer

institutions as a factor in prioritizing the capital plan.

Several years ago, Miami developed a long-range housing master plan (LRHMP), which intended to renovate, replace, and remove aging housing and dining building stock in a manner that is most efficient for the university. This was a major initiative, which has been executed over a decade of time. Planning has been a crucial part of optimizing a capital spend and minimizing operational costs as part of this effort. This planning effort has dramatically reduced energy spend, labor spend, and supplies and materials spend.

Miami has also developed a utility master plan (UMP). The plan's overall goal is to develop a strategy to reduce energy consumption through reduction in waste and to minimize the risk of major capital investments supporting infrastructure facing greater environmental regulation and cost. The strategy has been to convert the campus from an inefficient high-pressure steam production and distribution system to low-temperature-heating hot water and simultaneous heating and cooling. This type of transition was possible only with integrated planning between the long-range housing master plan, other major capital renovations, and navigating end-of-life schedules of complicated infrastructure. While each project is difficult to uniquely identify, the planning work over the past decade has reduced MU's energy consumption on the entire campus by more than 50% per gross square foot of building space.

**Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C)** has several projects in process that address the efficient use of space and capital resources. Tri-C invests heavily to keep its deferred maintenance low – in the \$16 million to \$25 million range – by investing in new HVAC systems and roofs, maintaining and replacing exterior facades, and converting lighting to LED systems, all of which help

to enhance efficiency and lengthen the life of college facilities. Additionally, Tri-C is currently undertaking an Integrated Facilities Planning (IFP) process, inclusive of spatial analysis, building condition analysis, and energy analysis. This IFP process is linked to a new academic plan that will help to better align facilities use with programmatic needs. Finally, the college has a Sustainability and Energy Plan that involves the review and design of a set of House Bill 7 Energy projects for 2024 with the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission that is anticipated to reduce electricity costs by 20%.

**Lorain County Community College (LCCC)** is starting the process to refresh and redesign its Campus Master Plan (CMP) from 2010. The CMP will serve as the guiding framework for facilities that provide for these strategic priorities:

- Accelerated workforce training needs of the region;
- An adaptive learning environment to accommodate shifting student demographics and advances in teaching modalities; and
- Student success and opportunities for the community.

The college will be executing the CMP in two distinct phases. LCCC will first conduct a facilities assessment and campus utilization study that will provide an appropriate baseline of data. The data from Phase 1 will be used to develop the master plan that will align with a redeveloped strategic plan. The strategic plan will occur in between phase 1 and 2 of the CMP.

The CMP will provide a more comprehensive and detailed breakdown of facility usage by room and building, as well as common areas. LCCC will have a better understanding of facility utilization at the end of Phase 1 and will be able to make decisions on repurposing facilities as needed to align with our refreshed strategic plan.

**Owens Community College** has been working off of its Space Plan and Facility Index since it was presented to the Board of Trustees in February 2020.

These items were incorporated into the Space Plan, which recommended the following:

- Repurposing a building to dedicate it to advanced manufacturing and skilled trades. This resulted in increasing lab spaces for these programs. This building opened in spring 2021.
- Repurposing two connected buildings to dedicate them to nursing and health professions. Construction began in fall 2023. This repurposed building will result in increased lab spaces for these programs and creating interprofessional education in the health programs.
- Once the nursing and health professions building is complete, the relocation of programs will result in the college vacating two buildings. These buildings will be taken offline, repurposed for additional needs, or leased.
- Owens has implemented HyFlex classrooms, allowing it to run courses that students may attend in-person or online.

# Regional Compacts

Ohio Revised Code Section 3345.59 requires the creation of regional compacts among Ohio's public institutions, requiring them to collaborate more fully on shared operations and programs within their region. ODHE defined the regions in 2017 and assigned each IHE to a specific region.

Each region was required to have an executed agreement in place by June 30, 2018. All IHEs participated and executed the required agreements by the end of FY 2018. Per O.R.C. §3345.59 {E}, colleges and universities must report within their annual efficiency reports the efficiencies gained as a result of the compact.

While many efficiencies were reported this year as a result of the regional compacts, the following represent some of the more significant developments:

**Kent State University** is leading a 16-institution partnership (that includes four of the regional compact members) funded via Intel to provide micro credentials and degrees focused on training technicians in the semiconductor industry. This collaboration will lead to the development of micro credentials that can stack toward associate degrees as well as full analysis of associate-to-bachelor's and bachelor's-to-master's pathways within and across institutions to ensure clear pathways toward jobs associated with semiconductor manufacturing and related industries. Both physical resources and teaching expertise will be shared.

**Northeast Ohio Medical University's** Wasson Center leads Interprofessional Education (IPE) team leadership training and collaborates with six regional universities/programs to avoid duplication, enhance efficiency, and apply Simulation Enhanced-IPE via distance learning technology. IPE is the process by which individuals from two or more health professions learn with, from, and about each other across the spectrum of their education to improve collaboration, practice, and the quality of healthcare. The Wasson Center also recently overhauled its operating model and cost structure to better align costs with production and benchmark both staffing and costs to other simulation centers.

**Wright State University's (WSU)** approach to reducing duplication of academic programming has been twofold: seamless transfer pathways and adjustments to academic programs. WSU continues to support numerous statewide transfer guarantee programs, such as Ohio Transfer 36, Transfer

Assurance Guides, Advanced Placement, College-Level Examination Program, and Ohio Guaranteed Transfer Pathways.

To reduce duplication of academic programming, and due to the increase in the number of two-year institutions offering RN-BSN completion programs, Wright State has eliminated its RN-BSN program effective fall 2023. The university has also implemented an accelerated three-year Bachelor of Nursing program at its Dayton Campus.

**Columbus State Community College** is the anchor institution for the Columbus Workforce Hub, one of five such U.S. hubs identified by the White House to expand equitable economic opportunity in high-growth industries. Columbus State has convened a steering committee that includes employers, labor organizations, K-12 and higher education partners, government leaders, non-profits, and others to formalize a workforce development strategy that will build on the region's strengths and articulate the commitments needed to expand economic mobility amid the area's growth.

**Lorain County Community College** was awarded the U.S. DOL Strengthening Community Colleges Training Grant. LCCC serves as lead of a consortium of four community colleges – Tri-C, Lakeland, and Stark State are the others – to identify equity gaps in specific in-demand IT occupations. In addition, these same institutions participate in the Northeast Ohio Nursing Postsecondary Completion Initiative focused on nursing degree pathways.

**Sinclair Community College** worked with Cincinnati State Technical and Community College on Ohio-To-98+Work, a workforce initiative funded by JobsOhio to help more people get the training they need to get jobs in the manufacturing, healthcare, and technology fields. Sinclair and Cincinnati State are also both working on the 5G/Broadband initiative funded by the Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation to increase the number of skilled workers in infrastructure fields.



# Academic Practices

This section has traditionally covered areas more directly related to instruction, such as the cost of textbooks, alternative delivery methods, and academic course and program reviews. Textbook affordability, including the utilization of open education resources and inclusive access, is emphasized in the current efficiency reports. Progress in these areas can significantly reduce student costs and student loan debt.

One of the most significant expenses that students incur beyond the cost of tuition is the cost of textbooks and learning materials. Ohio Revised Code Section 3333.951(D) requires Ohio’s public colleges and universities to annually conduct a study to determine the current cost of textbooks for students enrolled in the institution and submit the study to the Chancellor. The FY22 efficiency reports mark the fourth year that IHEs have submitted this data to ODHE. Although some progress has been made in reducing textbook costs, the likely more impactful solution to the cost of textbooks is increased utilization of alternative resources and methods to provide learning materials to students.

In addition to requesting the cost data referenced above, institutions were also asked to report on their use of alternative methods of providing learning materials to students. Specifically, they were asked about their utilization of inclusive access and open educational resources (OER). Inclusive access refers to the practice of making texts, often as digital materials, available to the entire class for a fee. Since all or most students purchase the content, the cost is generally lower. Another advantage is that the material is normally available by the first day of class. OER are freely accessible, openly licensed text, media, and other digital materials that can be utilized within course instruction in place of a traditional textbook. Faculty are increasingly developing and incorporating such methodology into their courses.

Nearly every institution is utilizing OER in some areas of their curriculum. This year’s template asked for quantifiable data on the use of OER and inclusive access. Most institutions are better tracking their use on their campuses and are able to quantify the impact. **Institutions reported the utilization of OERs in over 2,750 courses. Inclusive access was utilized in more than 4,100 courses.**

**Terra State Community College** has implemented the Follett Access program, selecting their “lowest cost” model for course materials, which is a flat rate of \$32 per credit hour. This rate

encompasses textbooks, courseware materials, and the majority of non-book supplies. As a result of this program, the annual cost of textbooks for a full-time student has been reduced by more than \$600. Through the adoption of OER and the commitment to low-cost options, the college has succeeded in keeping these costs steady, ensuring that the \$32-per-credit-hour rate remains unchanged for students this academic year, even amidst inflationary pressures.

**Central State University (CSU)** is committed to increasing the number of courses, certificates, and online degrees that utilize OER. The university's degree in interdisciplinary studies is 100% OER; the cybersecurity certificate is also 100% OER. CSU's semiconductor certificate is over 90% OER. In addition, 98% of CSU's general education core courses, both online and on-campus, use OER. Central State Global has secured over \$220,000 in funding to assist faculty in developing traditional and online courses using OER. Central State Global also offers OER training to faculty using their distance learning platform.

## Policy Reforms

**In recent years, this section has covered state IHE responses to suggested policy reforms originating in gubernatorial task force efforts, legislative joint committee reports, and student loan debt advisory group reports. The emphasis in this section for FY 23 revolved around the use of special purpose fees. These fees support services or benefits provided to individual students or specific categories of students and are not applied uniformly to all enrolled students. They must support a service or benefit to those students being charged and the revenue is used only for providing those services/benefits to students paying the fee.**

This year's template specifically asked the institutions to describe the criteria used to create such a fee, the internal process for approving new fees or fee increases, and the controls in place to assure the fee revenue is utilized appropriately. The responses among IHEs were consistent. The most common types of special fees are course or lab fees. They are normally created to support the unique costs of offering courses in specific programs. Requests for such fees are initiated by academic departments, which are responsible for quantifying the costs that the fee will support. New fees or fee increases are generally requested through the institutions' budget development processes. The revenue generated by specific fees is then budgeted to the department that will provide the course or service and incur the costs that the fee is intended to support.

# Other Initiatives

Within the Efficiency Report template, institutions often highlight notable initiatives that may not align with a specific topic already emphasized within the template. The following are examples of programs that fit this description:

**The University of Akron's (UA)** Extended Campus (UAX) is committed to bridging the gap between academia and industry by harnessing the university's resources and collaborating with industry experts. UA has forged a unique strategic partnership with Coursera, a renowned U.S.-based, open online course provider. The new UAX Unlimited on Coursera program, in combination with the Ohio TechCred funding, brings affordable, high-quality learning experiences to employees. UAX harnesses the resources of the university and taps into the knowledge of industry experts to craft educational solutions that provide the skills needed for success in today's dynamic economy.

In 2022, **Youngstown State University (YSU)** established the Division of Workforce Education & Innovation (DWEI) to prepare the current and future workforce with industry 4.0 skills through alternative learning pathways focused on advanced manufacturing, electric vehicles, energy storage, information technology, business, and professional skills.

The DWEI's workforce and education programs serve YSU students, K-12, companies and community members looking to upskill, reskill, or enter into new career pathways. Learners are engaged through the online YSU Skills Accelerator and through classroom, hybrid, and experiential learning at any one of YSU's training centers, leveraging its integrated Workforce, Education, Research and Commercial Projects (WERC@YSU) approach to developing in-demand industry skills.

**Cleveland State University (CSU)** is a recipient of the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Inclusive Excellence grant. CSU partners with 15 colleges and universities across the nation in a six-year project to teach faculty inclusive instructional practices and promote equity for minoritized students in STEM fields. This funding will shape faculty career advancement while at the same time incentivizing inclusive classroom and lab experiences to increase student achievement and to foster a sense of belonging and purpose in STEM.

**Shawnee State University** expanded its undergraduate free-tuition program this year to make college possible for more students in underrepresented Appalachian Ohio. Under the program, Pell-eligible students from Scioto, Lawrence, Adams, Pike, Jackson, Ross, Gallia, Brown, and Highland counties in Ohio; and Greenup, Boyd, and Lewis counties in Kentucky qualify, as long as they enroll full-time, have a high school GPA of at least 3.0, and an ACT score of at least 18. In its second year, the program is making a college education more affordable for hundreds of students in the region who would not pursue higher education otherwise.

**Ohio State University's (OSU) Scarlet & Gray Advantage (S&GA)** pilot included 125 first-year undergraduate students representing each Ohio State campus and more than half of Ohio's 88 counties. Through the pilot program, students have access to university resources, financial aid, financial literacy education, and work opportunities. The insights from the program and infrastructure improvements will optimize financial aid for all Ohio State students.

OSU's Buckeye Opportunity Program, which supports students from Ohio who qualify for a Pell grant and covers their tuition and mandatory fees, expanded its eligibility to include new students enrolled on Ohio State's regional campuses for the fall semester. Previously, this program was available only to new regional campus students in the spring semester.

**The University of Cincinnati (UC)** is seeing a higher demand for flexible, active learning environments to support collaborative and team-based classroom interactions. The addition of remote, virtual, and high-flex classroom capabilities, including pre-recording class content and the ability for remote attendees to interact with an in-person classroom, as well as digital collaboration for team projects and electronic submission of assignments, continues to drive demand for increased access to high-performing, integrated digital technology for faculty as well as students. A major investment was made recently to build out UC Online's departmental suite at Edwards Center to support faculty in developing or transitioning academic content to a distance-learning platform. UC Online programs are ranked among the best in nation by U.S. News and World Report.

**Southern State Community College (SSCC)** strategically closed its campuses in Clinton and Fayette counties over the last couple of years due to declining enrollment and financial challenges. These campuses were sold in the fall of 2021 and 2022, leaving two remaining physical campuses in Highland County and Brown County, as well as online course offerings that assist in providing higher education to a five-county service area. The impacts of the closure of SSCC's North Campus were mitigated by maintaining programming in Clinton County through partnerships with Wilmington College and Laurel Oaks Career Center. The closure of SSCC's Fayette Campus was mitigated by maintaining programming online and at the Central Campus.

# Conclusion

The emergence of COVID-19 led to a necessary spike in online learning delivery. Although many students are once again attending traditional in-person classes, the demand for online offerings is higher than before the pandemic and will likely remain that way. Several institutions reference their efforts to expand their online portfolio within their reports. In addition, many are acknowledging the changes in space demand and instructional delivery are a significant consideration in updating facilities master plans.

Access to higher education remains a high priority for the state of Ohio. One of the most effective ways to increase access is to control costs. Efficiency reports received this year from public colleges and universities indicate that institutions are continuing their efforts to generate savings for students with the expansion of OER materials, enhanced program delivery, and targeted offerings such as certificate programs. The IHEs are increasingly proactive in expanding these options and tracking their progress.

The template continues to provide institutions with an opportunity to share any positive practices they have implemented that benefit student affordability, efficiency, and institutional effectiveness. The colleges and universities are to be commended not only for the work necessary to complete the annual reports, but also for all their efforts to be responsive to the need to reduce costs and better serve their students.



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