

Governor supports community colleges as Ohio's key to affordable education

In Governor Kasich's 2016 Mid-Biennium Review (MBR) unveiled Monday, making college more affordable remained a top priority.

"This initiative recognizes, at the highest level, that community colleges do hold the key to making college affordable for any student," said Dr. Kevin Boys, President of Southern State Community College. "The governor continues to take the bold actions necessary to help train Ohio's workforce while at the same time reining in the rising cost of higher education."

Gov. Kasich instituted the MBR process in part to propose significant changes that reform outdated policies. Among this year's reforms, Kasich proposed four initiatives that support the state's community colleges as key to a debt-free degree:

- Expanding Opportunities for Three Years of Study at a Community College – This measure establishes more 3+1 pathways to allow students to complete three years of their coursework at a community college and finish the last year of their bachelor's degree at a four-year university.
- Allowing Community Colleges to Offer Bachelor's Degrees – Up to 10 bachelor's degree programs may be offered through Ohio's community colleges. Curriculum will be determined in part by workforce needs in the region.
- Ensuring High School Students Are College Ready – A pilot program allows high school students to receive remediation in conjunction with a college-credit course, providing just-in-time support to ensure these students succeed in college courses.
- Awarding Degrees Based on Competency Instead of Just Class Time – Ohio will partner with Western Governors University, an online institution that awards degrees in four career fields. Success is based on a student's demonstrated competencies instead of just time spent in class.

"At their core, these proposed reforms build upon initiatives already in place for Ohio's community college students," said Dr. Boys. "Those interested in pursuing higher education don't have to wait; they can take advantage of cost savings already in place, such as College Credit Plus, seamless transfer, and low tuition rates."

Recent reforms are helping a record number of high school students earn college credit through the state's College Credit Plus program which offers free tuition and books. Forty-one percent of Southern State's enrollment is comprised of students enrolled in the CCP program.

Similar reforms are expanding the number of agreements which allow community college

students to transfer seamlessly to four-year universities. In addition to the Transfer Module option for all of Ohio's colleges and universities, Southern State also has specific agreements with 19 institutions including 3+1 pathways with Franklin University, Ohio Christian University, and Lindsey Wilson College.

And finally, average tuition at the state's community colleges is slightly more than \$4,000 per year, compared to the average tuition for the state's public universities of \$9,537. The rates at private institutions are even higher.

"These reforms shine the light on a pathway that has emerged under Gov. Kasich," said Jack Hershey, President and CEO of the Ohio Association of Community Colleges. "It allows students to obtain a degree from their favorite university, while saving up to 80 percent off the traditional cost of attendance by completing as much of their coursework as possible at a community college.

"The ability for middle class families, single parents, and working adults to obtain a debt-free college degree is once again a reality in Ohio."

Sponsor testimony takes place in the spring, and the state legislature will vote to either adopt or reject the proposals by June 30.

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