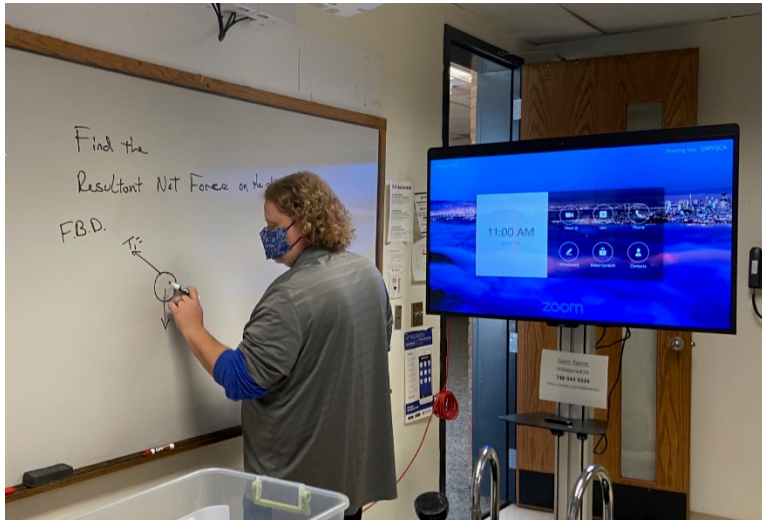


# Press Release

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*Photo caption:*

*Pictured is Russel Clark, Assistant Professor at Southern State Community College.*

## **Academy Is First In Nation to Immerse Mid-Level Leaders in Success Models**

**Participants Include Southern State Community College Faculty Member and Division Coordinator, Russel Clark**

Hillsboro, Ohio – Russel Clark, Assistant Professor at Southern State Community College, has graduated as a fellow of the first Ohio Leadership Academy for Student Success.

He was among more than 40 leaders representing all of Ohio’s community colleges that graduated Oct. 2, 2020, as part of the academy, organized by the Ohio Association of Community Colleges (OACC). It is the first of its kind in the nation to gather mid-level administrators, faculty and staff for a year of training, exchanging ideas and immersion in how to promote student success.

“The fellows learned how to more effectively lead the many changes underway at our colleges – transformational changes – to improve student success,” said Laura Rittner, executive director of the OACC’s Success Center for Ohio Community Colleges. “We brought together people who have different roles at colleges so they could have a deeper understanding of how college leaders can work together to usher in these student success models.”

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The president of each of the state's community colleges could nominate prospective fellows. They met six times throughout the year for two-day meetings, first in person and then online as the pandemic took hold. Sessions were relevant to Ohio specifically and included aspects of the Aspen Institute's presidential leadership curriculum. Fellows also worked on projects in small groups between sessions.

About Clark's participation in the Academy, Kevin Boys, president of Southern State, remarked "I am so pleased that the OACC put together this kind of opportunity for tomorrow's community college leaders. In speaking with Mr. Clark, it is obvious that he has walked away with a commitment to our students' success and an appreciation for a research-based approach to solving the challenges at Southern State and across our sector."

According to Clark, "I've come to understand that as a community college, a two-year institution, we are uniquely situated at a convergent point between high schools, job opportunities, 4-year universities and continuing education opportunities. In this position, our customers are places of employment and four-year institutions. The product that we 'sell' is our graduating students. Our job is to, in the most efficient and most economical way, provide four-year institutions and employers with high quality, properly trained individuals."

The academy was funded by several national organizations, so colleges had minimal expenses to participate. Next year's academy will begin early in 2021, Rittner said, in the hopes that some sessions can be held in person.

The OACC represents the presidents and trustees of the state's 23 public two-year institutions that work to advance community colleges through policy advocacy and professional development.

For more information, please visit [www.OhioCommunityColleges.org](http://www.OhioCommunityColleges.org).