

The System of Higher Education in Ohio and Bowling Green State University

Definition and goals

The state defines the University System of Ohio as a network of all Ohio public colleges and universities: 13 universities with 24 regional campuses, 23 two-year technical and community colleges, and a standalone medical school. Collectively, the institutions have an enrollment of some 470,000 students.

Governor Strickland has said the system will not be modeled after the public university systems of other states, but rather serve as a model for how to approach public higher education in the 21st century. On Aug. 2, the governor directed Ohio Board of Regents Chancellor Eric Fingerhut to "manage the state's investments in higher education to build the University System of Ohio so that it ensures affordable, high-quality, higher-education opportunities for all Ohioans."

A master plan for the system is due to the Ohio General Assembly by March 31, 2008; Chancellor Fingerhut has said he wants to have a draft of the plan completed by the end of the calendar year.

Strickland and Fingerhut say a primary goal of the University System of Ohio will be to reduce competition and increase collaboration among the state's colleges and universities. The governor also wants to see an additional 230,000 Ohioans enrolled in college within the next decade as well as improved graduation rates.

"We're going to ask institutions to differentiate themselves and develop centers of excellence, so collectively across the state we will have everything our citizens need," Fingerhut told *The Columbus Dispatch* this summer. "Not everyone is going to grow an equal amount or specialize in the same things. The cornerstone of this is we can't achieve these goals if we're competing with each other."

Financial, research and scholarship opportunities

Formation of the state system came on the heels of a state commitment to higher education unprecedented in recent history. The state increased funding to universities by more than \$340 million for the biennium that began July 1. That amounts to a 5.7 percent boost in fiscal 2008 and a 9.8 percent hike in fiscal 2009. In contrast, between 2001 and 2007, state funding for higher education fell 2.5 percent in Ohio. However, the increased funding comes with the requirement that institutions freeze tuition during fiscal 2008 and 2009 and produce efficiency savings of 1 percent in the first year and 3 percent in the second year to reinvest in high-priority areas.

"I have said very clearly to the universities and our colleges, the resources that have been provided to us ... should not be viewed as a thank-you note for past performance," Fingerhut told *The Dispatch*. "It should be viewed as an investment in a brand-new, world-class system of higher education."

Of the new funding, \$150 million will be distributed through the Ohio Innovation Partnership. The initiative has two components: the Ohio Research Scholars Program (\$50 million) and the Choose Ohio First Scholarships Program (\$100 million).

Awards under the two programs -- aimed at recruiting students to Ohio's science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medical programs -- will be made to institutions on a competitive basis under guidelines developed by Fingerhut. The Request for Proposals for the Choose Ohio First Scholarship will be sent out by Sept. 17. The Ohio Research Scholars RFP is to be sent out by Oct. 17. A state university or college may apply for awards under one or both programs and suggest initiatives to be carried out solely by that school or in collaboration with other public or private institutions of higher education or other public or nonpublic Ohio entities.

Carrying out the initiative

Fingerhut has been charged by Strickland to lead the University System of Ohio. Unlike the previous six chancellors, he is -- as a result of legislative action earlier this year -- the first to be appointed by the governor and serve as a member of the governor's cabinet.

Previously, Fingerhut served in the Ohio Senate (1991-93 and 1999-2006) and in the U.S. House of Representatives (1993-94) as well as on the business faculty at Baldwin-Wallace College and as an adjunct faculty member in political science, law and management at Case Western Reserve University.

Fingerhut met Aug. 2 with college and university presidents to stress the need for their involvement. The outcome of the coming months' work, he said, will not be "a plan to plan."

"We will put the tough issues on the table, and we will make decisions. As Gov. Strickland has directed, the master plan we will develop will cover a 10-year period. A university system -- and a state -- can be transformed in that period of time. We will establish clear benchmarks to measure our progress and describe in specific terms what Ohioans will have a right to expect from us at the end of a decade of growth and change."

Fingerhut said the plan will address both affordability and quality, offering recommendations on the role of state support, tuition, financial aid, scholarships and more. He stressed that the diversity of institutions across the state will be considered as officials seek to differentiate the missions of universities and build on centers of excellence.

Financial Realities at BGSU

BGSU is currently addressing a financial resource shortfall due to several variables at this time. Those include a loss of enrollment due to a change in our recruitment scholarship plan as we experience increased costs in some areas of the university. We are addressing future planning as we simultaneously develop a financial model aligned with our current resource base.

The next steps

1. We will strategically develop a plan to identify Centers of Excellence and Signature programs. Each will be grounded in a strong academic base. (Use

- Academic Plan and Compacts (currently in development) from Colleges and Academic Areas.
2. We will redesign the BGSU Student Experience program(s) [includes alignment of first year programs with expansion to capstone at graduation] in collaboration with Student Affairs
 3. We will develop an enrollment management plan based in academic capacity and excellence
 4. We will develop a process for development of business plans in Academic Affairs to link the work of academic services to priorities of broad academic agenda
 5. We will begin the draft of a master plan for BGSU
 6. We will develop a process of work force planning to enhance efficiencies
 7. We will contribute our work to the long term strategic planning work of the University
 8. We will, as a result of our planning for priorities, identify short term and long term permanent contributions to the budget shortfall.