

# Promoting High-Value Education Beyond High School in Ohio: Recommendation Overview

Increasingly, learners and their families are concerned with the return on investment of education and training after high school. Scale Strategic Solutions and Education Strategy Group produced a brief to explore the value of education and training beyond high school in Ohio, including issues pertaining to affordability, post-school earnings, and income mobility. What follows is an overview of recommendations that institutions and policymakers can implement to improve access to high-value postsecondary education and training in Ohio, especially for learners from low-income backgrounds. These policy and practice recommendations include:

## Policy Recommendations

1

**Expand need-based aid available to students at all public institutions.** While Ohio recently made new investments in need-based aid, Ohio should examine need-based aid policies to ensure they effectively reach underserved populations and maximize postsecondary affordability. This examination could include benchmarking against need-based aid policies in other states, reviewing implications of moving away from Pell first methodology, and considering the potential to leverage public benefits.

2

**Maintain caps on tuition and fees and institutional efficiency requirements.** The Ohio General Assembly should maintain caps on tuition and fees and mandated institutional efficiency reports to help to keep students' and families' costs under control. These caps — combined with tuition guarantee policies — support students in keeping the cost of higher education predictable for learners.

3

**Create an additional targeted statewide effort to increase FAFSA completion among underrepresented populations.** In implementing the FAFSA support team system identified in HB 33, the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) should work to ensure that student subpopulation needs are addressed to increase FAFSA completion. This would require analyzing FAFSA completion data to identify population gaps that need to be addressed, such as FAFSA filing rates among adult learners.

4

**Incentivize students to earn additional degrees and credentials in high-demand fields.** Ohio could expand their skilled workforce by offering targeted scholarships or other incentives for workers with only a high school diploma or certificate to pursue additional degrees and certificates, particularly in high-demand fields.

5

**Convene a multi-stakeholder working group to explore parity of pay in relation to education level in high-demand, low-wage fields.** Two in-demand jobs (preschool teachers and nurse aides) in the top fifteen do not pay family-sustaining wages. A working group should review the complex market for professionals performing these services for opportunities to avoid skills gaps by thoughtfully examining wage concerns.

6

**Connect median earnings data by institution to completion data.** The State should publicly and consistently present completion and earnings data by institution and field of study to help increase transparency and help students and families make informed decisions. The data could inform institutional completion plans and education policymaking.

# Institutional Recommendations

1

**Create a cross-institutional working group to maximize approaches to packaging and communicating student aid that addresses the full cost of attendance and accounts for recent changes in federal policy.** A cross-institutional financial aid working group would ideally have two charges: 1) developing a template for a common award letter so that learners can effectively compare financial aid packages; and 2) develop innovative approaches to packaging student financial aid.

2

**Form a working group of Ohio Technical Centers' (OTCs) financial aid administrators and directors to develop common and comparable approaches to calculate data on tuition and cost of attendance.** There is tremendous variance in the ways OTCs report their tuition and cost-of-attendance data to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). The Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) should collaborate with OTCs and the Ohio Association of Career-Technical Superintendents to establish a working group of OTC superintendents, directors, and financial aid administrators to develop a voluntary standard by which they will all report costs to IPEDS.

3

**Target completion efforts for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to reach underrepresented populations at the institutional level.** While Ohio has had several long-standing statewide efforts to improve FAFSA completion, there are gaps in reaching important populations. Colleges should analyze their FAFSA data to better understand who is not applying for federal and state financial aid and target outreach campaigns to these underserved populations.

4

**Strengthen capacity to adequately advise learners on borrowing.** Many students and their families are confused about student loans and often take on more debt than is necessary. Higher education institutions should consider extensive communication, outreach, and advising to help students make well-informed decisions about levels of debt for their educations.

5

**Raise awareness of high-value programs among learners and their families.** Workforce readiness is a top priority for many when enrolling in higher education. While many factors go into selecting a major, informing students on an annual basis about wages and labor market demand in relevant career fields is imperative to help students make informed choices on majors.

6

**Evaluate academic support and career placement services to increase earnings and other post-school outcomes.** As institutions review data by academic or career-technical program, review outcomes of students based on academic experience and career placement services to help identify opportunities for students to get better-paying jobs. Disaggregating all data by race, gender, and Pell Grant eligibility will also be key to effective analyses.

## Full Report

This report aims to be a practical resource and catalyst for conversation among Ohio stakeholders as policymakers consider issues to ensure Ohioans understand the value of the investment in education and training beyond high school and leads to career success. A full copy of the report is available at:  
<https://www.scalestrategicsolutions.com/resources>

