The FY20 Budget: Ohio’s Path to High-Quality Higher Education for All
From The Ohio Higher Education Coalition (OHEC)

OHEC sees opportunities to expand access to higher education for millions through the FY20 budget:

1. Make OCOG funds available to students at community colleges and regional campuses
   - **Why:** Community colleges are the backbone of Ohio’s career pathways, but students at these campuses are locked out from state financial aid like the Ohio College Opportunities Grant. 92,000 community college and 22,500 regional campus students would be eligible for financial aid under expanded OCOG, and communities would receive an expanded base of talented post-secondary graduates.
   - **State Investment:** $105 million to open up OCOG grants to those students
   - **How to Do It:** Increase the financial “at-risk” definition to match the Pell Grant definition and allow all students to apply OCOG grants toward room, board, and other educational expenses, the primary cost drivers for students at these institutions.

2. Peg the State’s Share of Instruction to an automatic Cost-of-Living Adjustment
   - **Why:** Long-term investment in higher education keeps Ohio competitive and attracts jobs. The 440,000 people who attend Ohio’s higher education institutions and millions of future graduates could bring $1.5 trillion in economic activity to the state over their lifetime if we return to 2008 levels of investment.
   - **How to Do It:** An non-discretionary, automatic annual SSI increase would ensure that Ohio’s education funding keeps pace with the rest of the country.
   - **State Investment:** $51 million in FY20 from a 2.8% increase based on the Consumer Price Index.

3. Remove unnecessary financial barriers for the most at-risk students with targeted funds
   - **Why:** Extra costs like housing, food, transportation, books, and healthcare push thousands of students to leave school every year. Expanding existing funds like the Ohio CARES program will assist students who are at risk of dropping out due to short-term financial emergencies.
   - **Who’s Impacted:** Students with the highest financial need and the institutions that receive additional funding for helping them reach graduation, especially the 36% of students facing food insecurity.
   - **How to Do It:** Expanding the per-student cap of the Ohio CARES program from $250 to $500 would require a relatively small amount of funding, but go a long way if targeted well.
   - **State Investment:** $125,000 in FY20 and $200,000 in FY21 to increase Ohio CARES.

Ohio can become an educational and economic powerhouse again with significant investment in the institutions that mold the next generation of doers and innovators. State support for higher education has stagnated, barely keeping pace with the rising cost of living, but that can change with amendments to this budget. Disinvestment dropped Ohio to the rank of 24th in the country for higher education return-on-investment while our neighboring states (especially Michigan) have climbed higher every year. In an age where 64 percent of Ohio jobs will require a post-secondary degree or credential by 2020 but only 42 percent of Ohioans meet that requirement, will we be able to keep up? Are we content with staying in the middle of the pack? This budget cycle gives us a chance to make Ohio an education leader.

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OHIO HIGHER EDUCATION COALITION
**Figure 1**

Public funding for colleges since 2008 adjusted for inflation

Source: Policy Matters Ohio based on Legislative Service Commission Table 2 - State - Source GRF, LPEF, and LGF Expenditure History

**Figure 2**

State support for need-based financial aid by year.

Source: 2018-19 state budget, as enacted. FY 2017 actual OCGG spending. 2006-2016 are spending actuals reported in the Catalogue of Budget Line Items. OIG actuals higher than appropriated amounts because of phase-out spending. OIG-Part was need-based aid for part-time students in degree-seeking programs. OCGG-Prop is casino licensing fee revenue used on need-based aid for proprietary schools. Only included as a separate funding line in 2012-13 biennium budget, this added $10.6 million to total need-based aid funding that year. All unadjusted dollars, considering inflation would make this worse. Excludes additional need-based aid support from federal sources.