

# **STATE OF COLLEGE OPPORTUNITY IN OHIO 2005**

The Ohio Association of  
Educational Opportunity Personnel

*and*

The Ohio College Access Network

*Prepared by*  
The Pell Institute for the Study of  
Opportunity in Higher Education

**Fall 2005**

## **GE FOUNDATION**

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Established in 1981, the Council for Opportunity in Education is a non-profit organization dedicated to furthering the expansion of educational opportunities throughout the United States. Through its numerous membership services, the Council works in conjunction with colleges, universities, and agencies that host federally-funded TRIO Programs to specifically help low-income, first-generation, and disabled Americans enter college and graduate.

The *mission* of the Council is to advance and defend the ideal of equal educational opportunity in postsecondary education. As such, the focus of the Council is assuring that the least advantaged segments of the American population have a realistic chance to enter and graduate from a postsecondary institution. A secondary purpose of the Council is to provide a voice for administrators, counselors and teachers who are employed in institutionally-, state- and federally-funded opportunity programs, especially those professionals within TRIO programs.

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In addition, Tina Milano, NCAN, Tom Mortenson, Postsecondary OPPORTUNITY and Pell Institute Senior Scholar, as well as Shaun Yoder and Darrell Glenn, reviewed drafts of the report and offered feedback. We are grateful for their assistance in ensuring that this report accurately reflects the current situation facing low-income students in Ohio.

We heartily acknowledge the efforts of these individuals in the process of writing this report. We also recognize that responsibility for the content of this report, including any errors or omissions, lies solely with the authors.

## FOREWORD

*The State of College Opportunity in Ohio 2005* was prepared by the Council and the Pell Institute—with support from the GE Foundation—as part of the Council’s broader State Initiative. The structure of this report mirrors *Indicators of Opportunity in Higher Education*, which is produced annually by the Pell Institute. The *Indicators* report tracks the progress of our nation’s commitment to making postsecondary opportunity a reality for low-income students. In this report, we have posed several key questions about the ability of low-income students to access and succeed in postsecondary education in Ohio. In seeking answers to these questions, we tried to identify any gaps that exist for low-income students at crucial transition points from high school to college and beyond. The recommendations offered in this report are intended to bolster ongoing efforts in the state to close these gaps, while recognizing that more attention and resources are needed to address this important issue in Ohio.

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## INTRODUCTION

With its strong agricultural and manufacturing history, the state of Ohio faces many challenges in addressing the postsecondary educational needs of its citizens in the new knowledge economy. Part of the challenge lies in changing attitudes about the need for and benefit of higher education in a state where residents could previously obtain high paying jobs without college degrees. Postsecondary education is virtually a requirement in this changing labor market, yet Ohioans lag behind the rest of the nation in degree attainment at all levels of higher education (OBR, 2004b).

The impact on the state’s economy is significant. Recent growth in Ohio’s real gross state product trails the national average, ranking only 44<sup>th</sup> among the states. Ohio’s per capita income, which was well above the national average in the 1960s, is below the national average today. In fact, Ohio’s per capita income has declined in recent decades relative to the national average at the same rate as the relative decline in the percentage of Ohioans with bachelor’s degrees (OBR, 2004c). Only 23 percent of Ohioans hold bachelor’s degrees, compared to 27 percent nationwide (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005). This has been described as a “quiet crisis” threatening the future of the state, its economy, and its residents (The Plain Dealer, 2005).

In order to meet the need for more educated workers in the state, the Governor’s Commission on Higher Education and the Economy (CHEE) has set an ambitious goal of increasing college and university enrollment in Ohio by 30 percent or 180,000 students over the next decade (CHEE, 2004). This goal can arguably only be met if the state takes measures to expand postsecondary

opportunity to populations who have previously lacked college access, namely Ohio's low-income and first-generation college students.

This report, prepared by the Council for Opportunity in Education, examines the current status of opportunity for postsecondary education in Ohio, focusing particularly on young people and adults from low-income families. The Council has produced this report through funding from the GE Foundation. The report reviews the educational pipeline that brings students to college, and addresses key questions about higher education opportunity in the state including:

- Are low-income students ready for college?
- Do they go to college at rates comparable to their peers?
- Where do low-income students go to college?
- What do low-income students pay for college? and
- Do low-income students graduate from college at rates similar to their peers?

Finally, the report concludes by recommending actions to improve college access and opportunity for low-income and other educationally at-risk students in Ohio. The information used in this report was compiled from published reports and data requested from national and state-level organizations and agencies, such as the Ohio Board of Regents (OBR), the U.S. Census Bureau, and the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (NCPPE). The data presented in this report are for the most recent year available. In some cases, the sources for state and national level data are different due to availability. As a result, the data may represent different years and/or slight variations in the definitions of groups/populations. Direct comparisons of these data should be made with care.

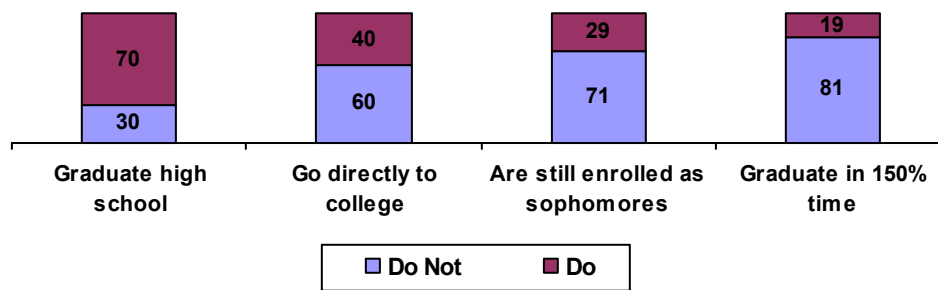
## **WHY COLLEGE OPPORTUNITY MATTERS IN OHIO**

The value of a high school diploma has declined dramatically over the last 30 years (Mortenson, 2002), reflecting the changing workforce needs and requirements of the new knowledge-based economy (CHEE, 2004). In years past, Ohioans could get jobs with high wages with only high school diplomas—or less—in the state's formerly robust agricultural and manufacturing sectors. Steady declines in these industries, however, have precipitated a need for more highly educated workers, which are in short supply in Ohio (CHEE, 2004; OBR, 2004c).

The rate of return on a college education could be substantial for Ohioans. Higher levels of educational attainment are related to higher incomes and lower rates of unemployment, and the earnings gap between a high school graduate and a college graduate only widens over time (College Board, 2004a; Institute for Higher Education Policy, 2005). The payoffs could be particularly significant for low-income and first-generation college students - students whose parents have not completed any education beyond high school (Tinto, 2004). The intergenerational benefits of college education could break the cycle of poverty for the more than 500,000 or nearly 20 percent of Ohio's children currently living below the federal poverty level (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005).

Ohio’s transition toward a knowledge economy will be most difficult for the young people living in the state’s economically impoverished communities - concentrated in the rural, southern counties and the larger, metropolitan cities - where getting a “good job” used to mean working on the family farm or getting hired at the local factory after high school graduation. They may lack preparation for, information about, or the resources to go to college. They may even lack the aspiration to attend college because they do not yet realize they need a degree to earn a decent living given previous market conditions in the state (OBR, 2004c). Thus, it will take a considerable and concentrated effort by the state to change attitudes about going to college and improve access to postsecondary training and education for its low-income and other educationally disadvantaged populations.

**SNAPSHOT OF OHIO’S EDUCATIONAL PIPELINE**  
**Out of 100 Ninth Graders in Ohio, How Many...**



Source: NCPPHE, April 2004

**ARE OHIO’S LOW-INCOME STUDENTS READY FOR COLLEGE?**

An important indicator of whether students will go to college is whether they have graduated from high school. In Ohio and nationwide, low-income students graduate from high school at lower rates, and those who do are generally less prepared for college than their peers.

In 2002, Ohio’s high school graduation rate was 71 percent. Although this rate is slightly higher than the national average of 67 percent, there has been a steep decline in recent years. The state’s overall high school graduation rate fell from 81 percent in 1984 to 71 percent in 2002 (Mortenson, 2003, 2004a). However, graduation rates differ greatly by the affluence of the school district. For example, in school districts with low percentages of economically-disadvantaged students, the graduation rate was relatively high in 2001 at 79 percent. In comparison, the graduation rate lagged far behind in districts with high percentages of low-income students at 46 percent (Swanson, 2004). Statewide, 32 percent of students are eligible for free and reduced price lunch (Mortenson, 2005a) and 11 percent of districts are considered high-poverty (Swanson, 2004).<sup>1</sup>

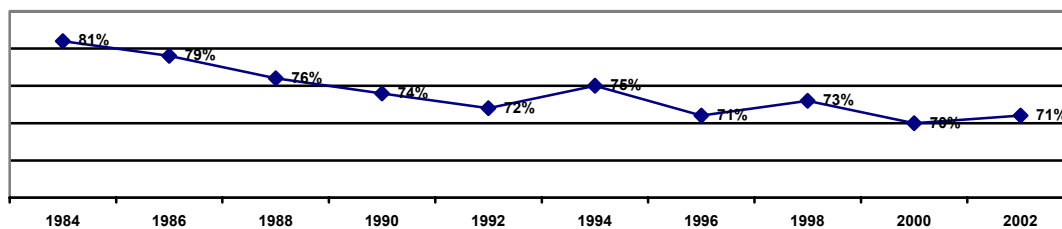
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<sup>1</sup> Swanson (2004) defines high-poverty districts as those in which more than 38 percent —the national average— of the students are eligible to receive free or reduced price lunch.

These problems may have not received enough attention in Ohio yet due to the method the state uses to report its own graduation rate data. According to the most recent state report card, the overall high school graduation rate was 84 percent and the graduation rate among economically disadvantaged students was close at 81 percent (ODE, 2004). Like many states, Ohio uses a “leaver rate” that relies on drop-out data to calculate the high school graduation rate. However, drop-out data are notoriously unreliable due to underreporting, which often leads to inflated graduation rates (Swanson, 2004).<sup>2</sup> More accurate data, like Mortenson’s (2003, 2004a) reported here, are based on a basic completion ratio in which the number of graduates in a given year is divided by the number of ninth graders four year earlier (Swanson, 2004). Recently, 47 states including Ohio signed a compact to use a standard four-year cohort graduation rate based on the recommendations of several high-profile reports by the National Governors’ Association (2005) and the Education Trust (2005).

### ***Ohio Public High School Graduation Rates 1984-2002***

(Source: Mortenson, 2003, 2004a)



Another problem facing Ohio’s secondary schools is the fact that less than one-third of the students who do graduate are adequately prepared for college, based on their high school course-taking patterns and scores on basic skills tests (Greene and Forster, 2003). Consider these indicators of the lack of college readiness in the state, especially among low-income students:

- Only 45 percent of low-income students obtained proficient scores on the mathematics section of the Ohio Graduation Test<sup>3</sup> compared to 74 percent of their more advantaged peers (ODE, 2004).
- Students from suburban, affluent districts are more than twice as likely (27 percent) to take an AP exam as students from urban, high-poverty districts (11 percent) and more than 10 times as likely as students from rural, high-poverty districts (2 percent) (OBR, 2004a).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Most states currently use a modified version of the “leaver rate” which approximates the high school graduation rate by dividing the number of diploma graduates in a given year divided by the number of diploma graduates plus the number of drop-outs reported for the previous four years. However, drop-out data are often underreported because it is difficult to collect accurate information on this population. Using a leaver rate, schools or school districts must determine whether students who leave the system are drop-outs, transfers, etc. If a student’s status is unknown, the student is not classified as a drop-out and is excluded from the school’s calculations of its high school graduation rate (Swanson, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> The Ohio Graduation Tests (OGT) will completely replace the mandatory Ninth Grade Proficiency Tests starting with the class of 2007. Students will be required to pass the OGT in mathematics, reading, writing, social studies, and science as well as meet curriculum requirements in order to receive a diploma.

<sup>4</sup> These data come from a special report conducted by the Ohio Board of Regents entitled *Making the Transition from High School to College in Ohio 2004: A Statewide Perspective*. The socioeconomic data in this report were



- Only 21 percent of high-income college freshmen have to take remedial courses in their first year of college, compared to 38 percent of low-income college freshmen (OBR, 2005c).

Clearly, there are major gaps in preparation for college among Ohio’s low-income students, which, in turn, limit their postsecondary opportunities.

### **ARE OHIO’S LOW-INCOME STUDENTS GOING TO COLLEGE?**

The rate at which Ohio high school graduates continue on to college has risen steadily from 29 percent in 1986 to 58 percent for the class of 2002 (Mortenson, 2004a). However, the college participation rate among Ohio’s entire 18 to 24 year-old population has remained stagnant at about 34 percent for the last decade (NCPPE, 2004), which likely reflects the decline in the state’s high school graduation rate during the same period. In other words, more high school graduates are continuing onto college, but since fewer students are graduating from high school, there has been no appreciable change in the percentage of college-age students actually attending college in Ohio.

Furthermore, college participation often varies according to students’ background characteristics, particularly income level. Ohio high school graduates from affluent, suburban districts have higher college continuation rates (57 percent) than graduates from urban, high-poverty (33 percent) and rural, high-poverty districts (37 percent) (OBR, 2004a).<sup>5</sup> In 2002, the state’s overall “chance for college” rate – the percentage of ninth graders who enroll in college four years later – was 41 percent for all Ohio high school students, but only 27 percent for low-income students, (Mortenson, 2004a, 2004b).<sup>6</sup>

Students from low-income communities who do go on to college are more likely to be the first in their family to do so. The majority of college freshmen from rural and urban high-poverty areas in Ohio are first-generation college students. Fifty-nine percent of high school graduates from rural, high-poverty districts and 56 percent from urban, high-poverty districts are first-generation, compared to 21 percent from suburban, affluent districts (OBR, 2004a).

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| <h3><b>PROFILES OF OHIO’S COLLEGE ACCESS PROGRAMS</b></h3> |
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|---|
| <p>College access programs are a vital link between secondary schools and postsecondary institutions, especially for economically and educationally disadvantaged youth. College access</p> |
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not presented at the individual level, but rather at the district level. The report identifies districts by geographic location and overall poverty status (i.e. suburban, high SES; small town, moderate SES; major city, extremely high poverty; rural, high poverty). The data reported here reflect the available data.

<sup>5</sup> The college continuation rate data reported at the district level only include attendance at in-state colleges and universities; however, the vast majority (over 80 percent) of Ohio high school graduates attend college in-state.

<sup>6</sup> Mortenson calculates the “chance for college” rate for low-income students as a ratio of dependent Pell Grant recipients by state of residence to 4<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> graders approved for free or reduced-price lunch in the state nine years earlier.

programs abound throughout the state of Ohio, funded by federal, state, and private sources (See Appendix for complete list).

Ohio is an active participant in the federally funded college access programs, TRIO and GEAR UP. In 2004, there were 41 TRIO pre-college programs, including 23 Upward Bound, 4 Upward Bound Math/Science, 13 Talent Search, and 1 Veterans Upward Bound programs. These programs, based at 26 colleges and community organizations, served more than 13,000 students last year (COE, 2004). Participants receive information about college admissions requirements and financial aid, and depending on the program, learn study skills and receive academic instruction in areas such as composition, mathematics, and science. There are currently two statewide and nine community-based GEAR UP programs that combined serve approximately 12,250 students (OCAN, 2005). Using a cohort approach, students in middle and junior high are provided information about what it takes to go to college, as well as tutoring and mentoring.

One of the privately-funded college access programs in Ohio is the GE Foundation's College Bound program, which has sites in Cincinnati and Cleveland. The two participating high schools serving about 1500 students are part of a 15-year, \$30 million program that partners selected schools and GE businesses. The primary goal is to double the rate of college attendance from low-income and inner-city schools in these communities. Common elements in each project include participation by GE volunteers, staff development, curriculum change and enrichment activities for the students (GE Foundation, 2005).

An entity that has played a significant role in the development and expansion of access programs is the Ohio College Access Network (OCAN). OCAN partners with the state and the private sector to create and support community-based college access programs. There are currently 35 member college access programs across the state, and they serve approximately 100,000 high school students in 230 of the state's 612 school districts. The programs provide services such as admissions and financial aid counseling, career guidance, mentoring, tutoring, test preparation, college visits, and last-dollar scholarships. Services for non-traditional students are also provided by some programs (OCAN, 2005). A notable OCAN member is the Ohio Appalachian Center for Higher Education (OACHE), a successful partnership of public higher education institutions and K-12 schools in the 29 counties in Appalachian Ohio. OACHE was established and funded by the state to promote college access and success among the impoverished residents of this region.

In an effort to promote greater communication and collaboration between college access programs in the state, the Board of Regents recently established the Student Access and Success Coordinating Council of Ohio. A major initiative of the Council is a statewide marketing campaign to educate Ohioans, particularly low-income, first-generation, and adult students, on the need for and benefits of higher education. Other initiatives include a college access information hotline and website as well as a compendium of best practices of Ohio college access programs. The Council's efforts will get a boost from additional funds earmarked for the statewide coordination of college readiness initiatives in Ohio's FY 2006-2007 operating budget (OBR, 2005b).

## WHERE DO OHIO'S LOW-INCOME STUDENTS GO TO COLLEGE?

Before examining the postsecondary destinations of low-income students in Ohio, it is helpful to have an understanding of postsecondary options in the state. Ohio's higher education system consists of 13 public university main campuses and 24 regional campuses, 23 public community and technical colleges, and 63 independent colleges and universities (OBR, 2005d). In addition, Ohio has nearly 20 private, two-year institutions and over 90 proprietary institutions (Mortenson, 2005b).

The majority of Ohio's undergraduates attend public colleges and universities. In 2001-2002, 46 percent of Ohio undergraduates were enrolled at public, four-year institutions, 31 percent at public, two-year institutions, 18 percent at private, four-year institutions, 4 percent at private, for-profit institutions, and one percent at private, two-year institutions (Mortenson, 2005b). The type of institution a student attends, however, is often influenced by characteristics such as family income.

Low-income students are less likely to enroll in Ohio's public and private four-year colleges and universities, and they are more likely to enroll in the state's public two-year and for-profit institutions than their higher-income peers. In comparison to the total undergraduate population in Ohio, 38 percent of students receiving Pell Grants – federal grants provided to the neediest students to help them pay for college - were enrolled at public four-year institutions, 35 percent were at public-two year institutions, 13 percent were at private four-year institutions, and 13 percent were at proprietary institutions (Mortenson, 2005b).

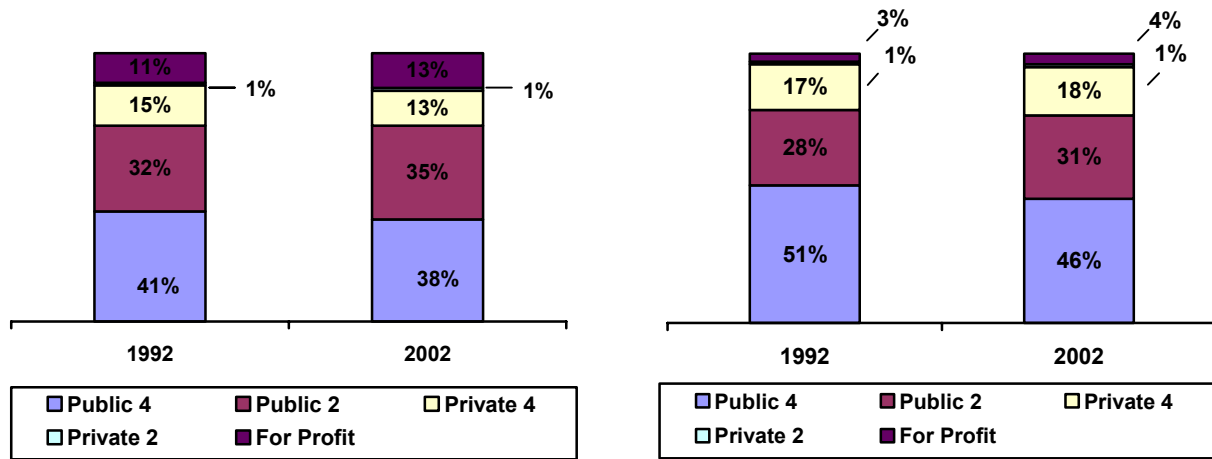
Consequently, low-income students,<sup>7</sup> who make up 35 percent of the total Ohio undergraduate population (up from 32% in 1992), are underrepresented at public and private four-year institutions, where they make up 29 and 26 percent of the population respectively, and they are overrepresented at public two-year institutions, where they make up 39 percent of the population.<sup>8</sup> Pell Grant recipients are actually less likely to enroll in Ohio's public and private four-year institutions today than they were 10 years ago (Mortenson, 2005b).

Similarly, first-generation college students are overrepresented at two-year and underrepresented at four-year institutions. In Ohio, they make up 52 percent of freshmen at community colleges and 61 percent at technical colleges, but only 37 percent at university main campuses (OBR, 2004a).

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<sup>7</sup> As indicated by Pell Grant recipient status.

<sup>8</sup> Low-income students are overrepresented at an even higher rate, 121 percent, at for-profit institutions. This rate exceeds 100 percent due to differences in attendance patterns and data sources. While the enrollment numbers for Pell Grant recipients account for the entire academic year, total undergraduate enrollment numbers are for the fall semester only. Therefore, institutions with large numbers of low-income students who enroll in the Spring semester, like proprietary schools, may have Pell Grant recipients as a share of enrollment that exceed 100 percent.



9

Source: Mortenson (2005b)

### WHAT DO OHIO'S LOW-INCOME STUDENTS PAY FOR COLLEGE?

Tuition and fees at Ohio's public colleges and universities are generally high compared to national averages and have risen sharply in recent years. In Ohio, average tuition costs:<sup>10</sup>

- \$7,508 at public, four-year institutions, 46 percent higher than the national average of \$5,132.
- \$3,175 at public, two-year institutions, 53 percent higher than the national average of \$2,076.
- \$18,010 at private four-year institutions, just slightly below the national average of \$18,950.
- \$9,490 at proprietary institutions, below the national average of \$10,600 (College Board, 2004b; NCES, 2005b; NCPPHE, 2004; OBR, 2005d).

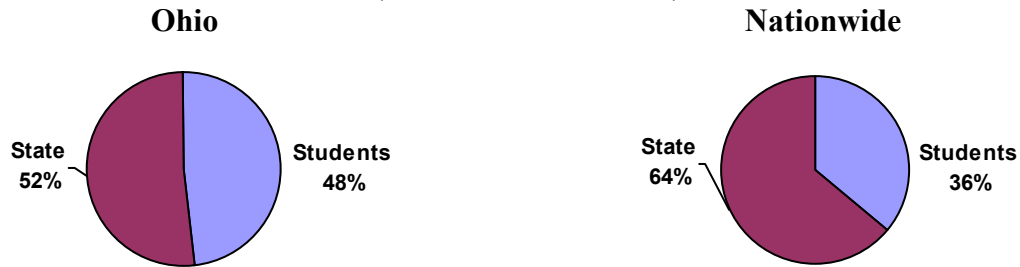
**FACT: Ohio received a grade of F for affordability in *Measuring Up 2004*, a national report card on higher education (NCPPE, 2004).**

Tuition and fees are higher than the national average at Ohio's public institutions because state funding for higher education is lower (OBR, 2004c). Ohio relies more heavily on tuition revenue to cover higher education expenses than other states. The share of state higher education expenses paid for by students and families is among the highest in the nation at 48 percent, ranking Ohio 12<sup>th</sup>. Tuition has increased in recent years to make up for decreases in state appropriations for higher education (per full-time equivalent (FTE) in constant dollars), which have fallen nearly 20 percent since 1991 (SHEEO, 2005).

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<sup>10</sup> Data on average tuition and fees by sector come from different sources and different years due to availability. There may be differences in the methods used to calculate averages (i.e. weighted vs. unweighted).

**Share of Higher Education Expenses Paid by the State vs. Students and Families**  
(Source: SHEEO, 2005)



It is important to remember that the advertised “sticker price” of tuition is not necessarily the same as the actual cost to students and families. For many students, financial aid will reduce the amount they pay. In fact, students attending Ohio’s public colleges and universities are more likely to receive some type of financial aid, including state grants, than their counterparts nationwide. However, the amount of the average state grant awarded to students attending Ohio’s four-year institutions is only one-half to two-thirds of the average award nationwide. Furthermore, Ohio undergraduate students are more likely to receive loans, particularly students attending the state’s public two-year colleges, and the amount of these loans tends to be higher than the national average (OBR, 2005d).

A positive trend, however, is that the percentage of state grants awarded based on need in Ohio has increased in recent years, from 64 percent in 1999 to 72 percent in 2004, despite a decrease in need-based grant aid nationally (NASSGAP, 2005). In addition, the state plans to phase-in changes over the next five years to its major need-based grant aid program, which will be renamed the Ohio College Opportunity Grant. These changes include a substantial increase in the maximum award, an improved calculation of a family’s ability to pay, and more consistent awards for part-time students (OBR, 2005a, 2005b).

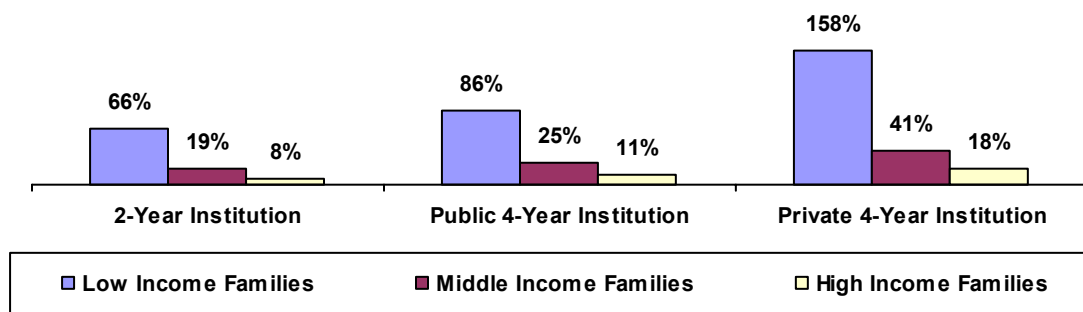
**Ohio’s Major Grant and Scholarship Programs**

| <b>Program</b>                   | <b>Requirements</b>  | <b>Award Amount</b> | <b># Awards 2004</b> | <b>Total Awarded 2004</b> |
|----------------------------------|--|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Ohio Instructional Grant</b>  | Need-based grant for Ohio students from low- and moderate-income families to attend in-state public or private institutions. | \$174 to \$5,466    | 130,277              | \$136,880,958             |
| <b>Ohio Student Choice Grant</b> | Grant for Ohio residents to attend in-state, private institutions. Not merit- or need-based.                                 | \$1,002             | 54,819               | \$50,147,798              |
| <b>Ohio Academic Scholarship</b> | Merit-based scholarship for Ohio high school graduates to use at in-state, public and private institutions.                  | \$2,205             | 3,711                | \$7,895,764               |

Source: OBR, 2005d

Despite the availability of grants and loans, the average share of family income currently needed to pay for college expenses at a public, four-year institution in Ohio is still 36 percent *after* financial aid is taken into account. The share for low-income families is a staggering 86 percent. This means the poorest students and their families have to come up with more than \$11,000 from their own resources to attend a public four-year college in Ohio. These figures even take into account the fact that low-income students tend to receive more aid than middle- and higher-income students (NCPPE, 2004).

**Percent of Family Income Needed to Pay for College AFTER Financial Aid in Ohio**  
(Source: NCPPE, 2004)



### **DO OHIO'S LOW-INCOME STUDENTS GRADUATE FROM COLLEGE AT RATES SIMILAR TO THEIR PEERS?**

While access to postsecondary opportunity is crucial, it is also vital that students are able to stay in college through the completion of a degree. There are several ways in which postsecondary success can be measured along the path to completion, including first-year retention rates, transfer rates, and graduation rates. In Ohio, all of these measures are lower among low-income college students and at the institutions that serve them, primarily two-year institutions.

First-year retention rates are higher at Ohio's four-year colleges and universities than at two-year community and technical colleges. While approximately 75 percent of freshmen at four-year colleges and universities return to the same institution for their second year, only about 55 percent of first-year students attending community and technical colleges return as sophomores. Ohio's first-year retention rates are consistent with national averages for public and private four- and two-year institutions, 74 and 55 percent respectively (NICHEPA, 2005).

Transfer rates from two-year to four-year institutions are considerably lower than the national average. A national longitudinal study of beginning postsecondary students found that about 30 percent of all community college students transfer to four-year institutions after three years (NCES, 2005a). However, only 11 percent of students attending public two-year institutions in Ohio transfer after three years (OBR, 2005d). An important factor to take into consideration about community college students is that not all of them intend to transfer and/or to obtain a

degree. However, the persistence data cited here do reflect outcomes for degree-seeking students.<sup>11</sup>

Fifty-six percent of first-time, full-time students in public and private four-year institutions complete a bachelor's degree within six years in Ohio, slightly higher than the national average of 54 percent (NICHEPA, 2005). There has been some improvement in Ohio's baccalaureate degree attainment rate. According to Census data, 23 percent of Ohioans over the age of 25 had a bachelor's degree or higher in 2003, up from 17 percent in 1990. Nationally, 27 percent of Americans had a bachelor's degree or higher in 2003 (U.S. Census Bureau, 1990, 2005). Approximately 54,000 students were awarded a bachelor's degree in Ohio in 2002-2003 (OBR, 2005d).

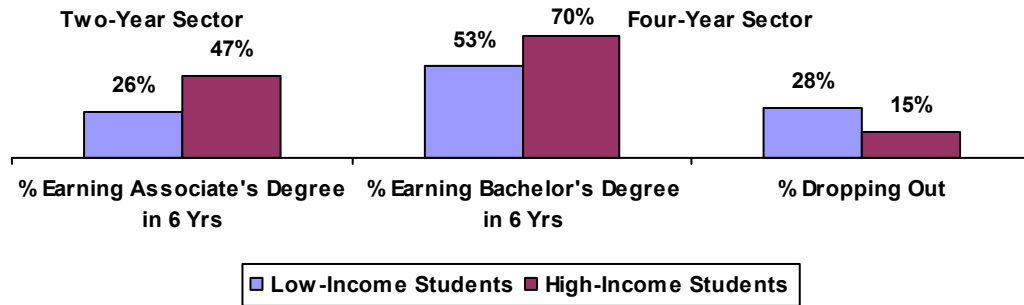
In Ohio's public and private two-year institutions, 26 percent of students earn a degree within three years. The national three-year graduation rate is 31 percent (NICHEPA, 2005). In the public two-year sector, the median time to earn an associate degree is almost four years, and only 12 percent of students earn a degree in three years. More than 60 percent of students take longer than three years to earn an associate degree, reflecting the fact that nearly 60 percent of them attend part-time (OBR, 2005d).

Postsecondary outcomes are generally worse for low-income students compared to their high-income peers at all levels of higher education in the state. Low-income students are nearly twice as likely to drop out in the four-year sector and only about half as likely to earn a degree in the two-year sector in Ohio (see graphic).

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<sup>11</sup> National and state-level data come from different sources and different years due to availability. There may be variations in definitions of student cohorts and transfer activity between sources.

### Student Outcomes by Sector and Income, 2004



**Note:** This data reflect six-year outcomes for dependent students from the Fall 1998 cohort of entering freshmen  
**Source:** Data compiled and provided upon request from Ohio Board of Regents (2005)

#### Focus on Ohio's Access and Success Challenges

The Ohio Board of Regents administers two promising programs, Access Challenge and Success Challenge, that are intended to improve postsecondary options and outcomes for students from educationally at-risk backgrounds, namely low-income students.

Access Challenge funds are provided to designated campuses to “buy down” or restrain the growth of tuition. Access campuses include the state’s community and technical colleges, university branch campuses, and Central State and Shawnee State University, all of which serve traditionally underrepresented populations like racial minority and economically disadvantaged students. Success Challenge funds are performance-based incentives used to reward main campus public universities for the timely degree completion of all students as well as the baccalaureate degree completion of economically at-risk students. Success campuses must submit plans for using the funds to develop programs to improve degree completion, particularly among at-risk students. Programs may include academic support, tutoring and mentoring, in-depth financial aid counseling, early intervention, disability services, residence life programs, and/or career planning (OBR, 2003a, 2003b).

These programs, created during the FY 1998-1999 biennium budget, have been modestly funded and subject to cuts in various years (OBR, 2003a, 2003b). Access Challenge received a budget increase for FY 2006, followed by a decrease in FY 2007. Success Challenge was flat-funded for FY 2006-2007 (OBR, 2005b). The Board of Regents is studying the use of the Success Challenge model to reward public two-year campuses for certificate or associate degree completion or transfer to a bachelor’s degree granting institution (Ohio General Assembly, 2005).



## **WHAT CAN WE DO TO IMPROVE COLLEGE OPPORTUNITY FOR LOW-INCOME STUDENTS IN OHIO?**

The imperative to improve access to higher education in Ohio is both an economic and moral one. The state's need for a more educated workforce requires that it increase postsecondary enrollment, a need that can only be met by expanding postsecondary opportunity to populations who have previously lacked college access, namely Ohio's low-income students.

**Goal #1: Increase Ohio's high school graduation rate to its historic high of at least 80 percent by 2015.**

Governor Taft has been instrumental in focusing public attention on the need for improvement in the nation's high schools. In the state of Ohio, attention must be paid to the significant decrease in the high school graduation rate. High school graduation is a critical access point in the educational pipeline to college and is a major point of attrition for the state's low-income students. Improving Ohio's high school graduation rate should be the first priority for the state's newly established P-16 initiative, the Partnership for Continued Learning (Ohio General Assembly, 2005).

**Goal #2: Increase support for and coordination between Ohio's college access programs so that the number of low-income high school students receiving college access services increases from an estimated 127,000 to 150,000 by 2010.**

In Ohio, many students lack preparation for, information about, and/or the resources to go to college. They may even lack the aspiration to attend college because they do not understand its potential benefits (OBR, 2004c). College access programs can provide a critical link between high school and college for low-income students by providing them with the information and the support they need to succeed. Coordination between college access programs can help advance their common goal statewide.

**Goal #3: Increase the enrollment of low-income students in the four-year sector to one-third, equal to their overall representation in Ohio postsecondary education.**

Low-income students make up 35 percent of the total undergraduate population, but they are underrepresented at public and private four-year institutions. In fact, Pell Grant recipients are less likely to enroll in Ohio's public and private four-year institutions today than they were 10 years ago (Mortenson, 2005b). Too often, accountability measures penalize colleges and universities with large numbers of economically disadvantaged students because the educational needs of these students—greater remediation, more financial resources, higher part-time attendance, and longer time to degree—tend to result in lower institutional graduation rates. By providing positive incentives, institutions will strengthen, not retreat from, their commitment to low-income students.

**Goal #4: Increase the state's investment in higher education in order to reduce the tuition burden on low-income students and their families.**

The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education gave the state of Ohio an F for affordability. With tuition and fees that far exceed national averages, the cost of higher education at Ohio's public colleges and universities is prohibitively high, especially for low-income families who are faced with exorbitant out-of-pocket costs even after financial aid. Ohio must increase state appropriations for higher education, which have decreased dramatically in recent years, in order to reduce the burden of higher education expenses on Ohio's students and families. By increasing the state share of instruction, institutions will not have to rely so heavily on tuition to cover their expenses. This pressing issue must be taken under careful consideration by the state's newly created Higher Education Funding Study Council (Ohio General Assembly, 2005).

**Goal # 5: Close the graduation gap for low-income undergraduate students by providing retention services in all Ohio public colleges and universities.**

Access to postsecondary education is necessary but not sufficient for providing equal educational opportunity to Ohio's low-income students. They must be able to fully realize the intended outcomes of higher education by staying enrolled in college through the completion of their degrees. Increased state support for institutional retention programs focused on the transition from freshman to sophomore year, the greatest point of attrition in higher education, will impact completion rates. Such programs would be particularly beneficial at two-year institutions, which have the lowest first-year retention rates and the highest number of low-income students. Furthermore, the state must continue its current efforts to develop a new transfer system to improve articulation between public two-year and four-year institutions so that low-income students who begin at two-year institutions have a greater chance of transferring and completing their bachelor's degrees.

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## APPENDIX: OHIO COLLEGE ACCESS PROGRAMS

ACCESS – Ashtabula County  
Accessing a College Education/Claymont High School  
A CALL TO COLLEGE/Newark High School  
Achievement Matters College Access Program/Columbus Urban League, Inc.  
Aid for College Opportunities/Clark County Educational Service Center  
Brighten Your Future  
Clermont Educational Opportunities  
Cleveland Scholarship Program  
Cincinnati Scholarship Foundation  
Cincinnati Youth Center  
College Bound/GE Foundation  
College is for Me/University of Akron, Wayne College  
Connect to Success/Marietta Community Foundation  
Crawford College Connection  
Dayton/Montgomery Scholarship Program  
Educational Opportunity Center/TRIO  
    Cincinnati State Technical & Community College  
    Cuyahoga Community College  
    Educational Partners, Inc.  
    Ohio Appalachian Center for Higher Education/Shawnee State University  
    University of Cincinnati  
Educational Talent Search CYC  
Families Forward  
GEAR UP  
Greater Cincinnati Tech Prep Program Consortium  
Greene County Higher Educational Opportunities/Xenia Area Chamber of Commerce  
Jobs for Cincinnati Graduates  
I CAN GO TO COLLEGE/Ohio State University at Marion  
I KNOW I CAN  
It Might As Well Be You  
Lake/Geauga Educational Assistance Foundation (LEAF)  
Lima/Allen County College Access Program  
Mahoning Valley College Access Program /Kent State University – Trumbull Campus  
Medina City Schools Foundation college access program (MCSFcap)  
Next Step College Access Program  
Ohio Association of Educational Opportunity Program Personnel (OAEOPP)  
Ohio College Access Network (OCAN)  
OCAN of Hancock County College Access Program  
Opening Doors of Opportunity/Holmes County Education Foundation  
Partners in Education CYC  
ProjectCARE  
Project Grad Cincinnati  
Ripley Union Lewis Huntington Schools

Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program/TRIO

Kent State University

Oberlin College

Ohio University/Athens

University of Akron

University of Cincinnati

Scholarship Central Access Program/Muskingum County Community Foundation

Springfield Higher Education Partnership/Clark State Community College

Stark County P-16 Compact/Stark Education Partnership

Student Support Services/TRIO

Bowling Green State University

Central State University

Cincinnati State Technical & Community College

Clark State Community College

Cleveland State University

Columbus State Community College

Cuyahoga Community College/ Metro

David N. Myers University

Hocking College/Main/Perry

Kent State University

Lourdes College

Oberlin College

Ohio State University/ATI/Wooster

Ohio University/Athens

Shawnee State University

Sinclair Community College

University of Cincinnati

University of Toledo

Washington State Community College

Xavier University

Talent Search/TRIO

Bowling Green State University

Case Western Reserve University

Cincinnati Youth Collaborative

Cleveland Scholarship Programs, Inc.

Cuyahoga Community College

Educational Partners, Inc.

Hocking Technical College

Ohio Dominican College

Shawnee State University

University of Akron

University of Cincinnati/ Clermont College

Washington State Community College

The Future Begins Today

Think College Now/Northwest Ohio College Access Program

University and College Access Network of Richland County (U-CAN)

Upward Bound/TRIO

Baldwin-Wallace College  
Bowling Green State University  
Case Western Reserve University  
Cleveland State University  
College of Mount Saint Joseph  
Columbus State Community College  
Cuyahoga Community College  
Kent State University  
Lourdes College  
Ohio Dominican College  
Ohio State University  
Ohio University  
Ohio Wesleyan University  
Shawnee State University  
Sinclair Community College  
University of Akron  
University of Cincinnati  
University of Cincinnati/ Clermont College  
University of Toledo  
Washington State Community College  
Wittenberg University  
Youngstown State University

Upward Bound Math and Science/TRIO

Cincinnati State Technical & Community College  
Kent State University  
Shawnee State University  
University of Akron

Veterans Upward Bound/TRIO

Cuyahoga Community College

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