

Fact Sheet: Structure of Higher Education in Ohio

Rather than a centrally controlled system for higher education, Ohio offers a varied network of institutional types, missions, and students served. State policy in higher education is now coordinated by the chancellor of the Ohio Department of Higher Education.

Public Colleges and Universities

Ohio has 37 state-owned institutions of higher education. As structured under Ohio law, each public college and university — regardless of the level it teaches — has its own separate board of trustees, and thus is structurally independent of the other public institutions and of the chancellor. A 2007 executive order and a brief section of the 2009 state budget act named all state-owned campuses, taken as a group, as a “University System of Ohio”. However, neither action changed governance at any of the state’s public institutions; each remains structurally independent of the Department of Higher Education.

A total of 14 four-year public campuses teach courses at all levels, with 24 branches offering courses toward degrees awarded at the main campuses. The Ohio State University in Columbus, one of the largest universities in the nation, is the flagship land-grant institution; Central State University in Wilberforce was recently designated by Congress as another land-grant college. Ohio University in Athens (1804) is the oldest institution, public or private, in the state.

Two-year public campuses come in three types. Six community colleges offer courses of study from workforce training up to the associate degree and receive public support from local taxes as well as the state; nine state community colleges have no local tax base but are otherwise identical to the other community colleges; and eight technical colleges offer applied degrees and other job training services. In 2017, two-year colleges received authority by statute to award “applied bachelor’s degrees” under certain limited conditions.

In fall 2016, Ohio’s public colleges and universities enrolled 501,125 students. The state spent \$2.03 billion on public campuses and their students in FY2017, not including capital, mostly for direct institutional subsidies (89% of total).

Ohio’s public colleges and universities are represented by the Inter-University Council of Ohio and the Ohio Association of Community Colleges.

Independent Colleges and Universities

Ohio is home to 77 private nonprofit degree-awarding institutions of higher education, with 70 offering bachelor’s degrees or higher and seven offering the associate degree as their highest award.

The oldest independent college in Ohio is Kenyon College (1824) in Gambier. The largest are the University of Dayton and Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, each with more than 10,000 students; they are also the principal independent research universities. Religious groups, including churches and religious orders, founded many independent colleges; a number are freestanding seminaries for training in ministry.

In fall 2016, Ohio’s independent colleges and universities enrolled 139,694 students. The state spent \$48.0 million in FY17 on independent colleges and their students, mostly for

financial aid (94% of total). Independent colleges in Ohio are generally ineligible for capital funds from the state.

Ohio's private nonprofit institutions are represented by the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Ohio, which has 50 member institutions accounting for 95% of the students in the nonprofit sector.

For-Profit Colleges and Career Schools

In 2017, Ohio's for-profit higher education sector had 235 institutions with programs extending from short-term certificates to the associate degree, regulated by the State Board of Career Colleges and Schools. Several also have authority from the chancellor of the Ohio Department of Higher Education to grant bachelor's and graduate degrees, subject to the same rules as independents. They enrolled 37,764 students in fall 2017, and in FY17 the state of Ohio spent \$5.1 million in financial aid on them.

The Chancellor, the Ohio Department of Higher Education, and the Board of Regents

From 1963 to 2007, the Ohio Board of Regents — a nine-member panel appointed by the governor to nonrenewable nine-year terms, also including two *ex officio* legislative committee chairs — had responsibility for administering state higher education funds, approving new degree programs, authorizing nonpublic and out-of-state campuses to operate within Ohio, and short- and long-term planning. The board appointed a chancellor to hire and direct the staff and its daily work.

The board still exists but with nearly no responsibility: a legislative reform enacted in early 2007 placed regulatory and administrative authority directly in the hands of the chancellor, whom the governor now appoints (subject to Senate confirmation) as a member of the cabinet. Today, the board's sole responsibility is to conduct an annual study of the condition of higher education in Ohio, including an evaluation of the chancellor. The agency managed by the chancellor was renamed the Ohio Department of Higher Education in 2015.

Today, the chancellor has wide-ranging authority to evaluate and authorize the operation of private colleges and universities. A nonpublic institution, unless it issues degrees only in Bible studies, may not even call itself a college or university or issue a degree without the chancellor's authorization, which in practice must be renewed every 10 years. Also, the chancellor approves new degree programs at all Ohio campuses, public and private, and oversees the expenditure of funds on student financial aid and a handful of other designated state funding programs for which independent colleges are eligible.

The chancellor's authority over public campuses under current Ohio law is much less than over private. Campuses and their previously approved academic programs may continue to operate in perpetuity; the chancellor only approves new academic programs and administers the state appropriations to the institutions.

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