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Ohio College Presidents Conference: Education and Economic Security

Education is, as President Lincoln said, "the most important subject which we as a people can be engaged in." Simply put, it is the pathway to stable jobs and a stronger economy.

Last week in Washington, that's the message more than 50 Ohio college presidents discussed as they convened in Washington, D.C. for the third annual Ohio College Presidents Conference. Presidents from across Ohio ([click here](#) to view the list of participants) participated in this one-of-a-kind conference. It represents a strategic effort to connect Ohio's small and large, two- and four-year universities with each other – and to ensure our talented students have the resources to succeed.

This year's conference continued the progress we've made since the first one I launched three years ago to identify common goals, needs, and opportunities in Ohio's higher education system. We discussed recommendations to expand higher education access and affordability, support opportunities for research and innovation, and connect higher education with high schools and workforce needs.

Over the last three years, Ohio college presidents have been collaborating with each other to connect their students to careers and their communities.

Together, we are working with business and community leaders to expand workforce training and maximize our world-class research institutions. We are finding ways to reach into middle and high schools to show young students that higher education is not only an option but a ticket to new opportunities.

Since 2007, Congress has passed historic investments in higher education. The new GI Bill is providing critical education resources for returning veterans. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 is making unprecedented investments in our education system – from Head Start, to modernizing school technologies, to improving workforce training for displaced workers.

The Health Care and Education Affordability Reconciliation Act of 2010 – signed by the president just last month – marks the single largest expansion of federal student aid in our nation's history. By expanding the Pell Grant and reducing the income-based repayment cap, more talented students can sign up for college without signing away their financial

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future.

Despite these historic investments, we know there is more work to do. Even during these very tough times in the job market, employers are struggling to find workers with the skills that are needed to expand their businesses. Many of the jobs are in emerging industries, such as high-tech, health care, and clean energy research and manufacturing. We need to connect our college students to the opportunities in these sectors before they graduate. It will keep more of our young people in Ohio and will help attract jobs by showing employers we have a talented workforce.



As U.S. Secretary of Energy Steven Chu said during his keynote speech at the conference, "the innovation and research from Ohio's colleges and universities will help create tens of thousands of new jobs and help Ohio and the nation remain competitive in the global market place."

But we also need to ensure that Ohio's college graduates see a future for themselves and their families here in Ohio. Last year, the Thomas Fordham Institute commissioned a survey of Ohio college students on their post graduation plans. Fifty-eight percent responded that they planned to leave the state. Their perceptions were that Ohio fell short on offering job opportunities, career advancement, and social and cultural activities.

President Obama has set a national goal for the United States to lead the world in college graduates by the year 2020. That goal reflects the recognition that it's not enough for our economy to recover; we need to lead the world into the 21st Century global economy.

Two weeks ago, April 15th, marked the 145th anniversary of President Lincoln's death. In signing the Morrill Act of 1862 that created our nation's land-grant universities, including The Ohio State University, President Lincoln acted on the belief that education could strengthen our nation's economy by providing an educated workforce.

Today, Ohio's colleges and universities – and world-class network of community colleges – are part of our nation's commitment to that belief. But it wasn't an overnight success story; it was part of a strategic public-private partnership between governments, education systems, and private industries that form the backbone of our industrial and economic strength.

If we are to create jobs and rebuild our economy, the future of our state depends on us engaging on the most important subject of education.

Sincerely,

Sherrod Brown

Participants in the 2010 Ohio College Presidents Conference

*Antioch College
Matthew Derr*

Antioch College University McGregor

Michael Fishbein

*Ashland University
Frederick Finks*

*Baldwin-Wallace College
Richard Durst*

*Belmont Technical College
Joseph Bukowski*

*Bowling Green State University
Carol Cartwright*

*Case Western Reserve University
Barbara Snyder*

*Central State University
John Garland*

*Cincinnati State Technical & Community College
John L. Henderson*

*Cleveland State University
Ronald Berkman*

*Columbus College of Art and Design
Denny Griffith*

*Columbus State Community College
Valeriana Moeller*

*Denison University
Dale Knobel*

*Edison Community College
Kenneth Yowell*

*Franklin University
David Decker*

*Hiram College
Thomas Chema*

*Hocking College
Ronald Erickson*

*James A. Rhodes State College
Debra McCurdy*

*Kent State University
Lester A. Lefton*

*Lakeland Community College
Morris Beverage*

*Lorain County Community College
Roy Church*

Miami University

David Hodge

*North Central State College
Donald Plotts*

*Northeastern Ohio Universities Colleges of Medicine and Pharmacy
Jay Gershen*

*Notre Dame College
Andrew Roth*

*Oberlin College
Marvin Krislov*

*Ohio Christian University
Mark A. Smith*

*The Ohio State University
Gordon Gee*

*Ohio University
Roderick McDavis*

*Otterbein College
Kathy Krendl*

*Shawnee State University
Rita Rice Morris*

*Southern State Community College
Kevin Boys*

*Terra Community College
Marsha Bordner*

*The Cleveland Institute of Art
David L. Deming*

*The College of Wooster
Grant Cornwell*

*Union Institute & University
Roger Sublett*

*University of Cincinnati
Gregory Williams*

*University of Dayton
Daniel Curran*

*University of Rio Grande
Barbara Gellman Danley*

*University of Toledo
Lloyd Jacobs*

*Washington State Community College
Charlotte Hatfield*

Wilberforce University

Patricia Hardaway

*Wilmington College
Daniel DiBiasio*

*Wittenberg University
Mark Erickson*

*Wright State University
David Hopkins*

*Youngstown State University
Cynthia Anderson
David Sweet*

*Zane State College
Paul Brown*



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Senator Brown's Offices

Cleveland

1301 East Ninth Street
Suite 1710
Cleveland, Ohio 44114
p (216) 522-7272
f (216) 522-2239
Toll Free

1-888-896-OHIO (6446)

Columbus

200 N High St.
Room 614
Columbus, OH 43215
p (614) 469-2083
f (614) 469-2171
Toll Free

1-888-896-OHIO (6446)

Washington, D.C.

713 Hart Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510
p (202) 224-2315
f (202) 228-6321

Cincinnati

425 Walnut Street
Suite 2310
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202
p (513) 684-1021
f (513) 684-1029
Toll Free

1-888-896-OHIO (6446)

Lorain

205 West 20th St.
Suite M280
Lorain, OH 44052
p (440) 242-4100
f (440) 242-4108
Toll Free

1-888-896-OHIO (6446)

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