MEMORANDUM

To: Presidents and Provosts of Ohio's Public and Private Nonprofit Institutions of Higher Education
From: Chancellor Mike Duffey, Ohio Department of Higher Education
Subject: Establishment of Biennial Statewide Research Agenda – Higher Education Public Policy Research Consortium
Date: Friday, January 9, 2026

Pursuant to Ohio Revised Code Section 3333.952, the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) in collaboration with the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, the Inter-University Council, the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, and other relevant entities hereby establishes the biennial statewide research agenda to guide competitive research grants awarded through the Higher Education Public Policy Research Consortium. This agenda is designed to provide policymakers and practitioners with timely, relevant, and rigorous research findings on issues critical to Ohio's social, economic, and civic well-being.

The following topics are included in the FY 26-27 biennium. <u>*Please note*</u>: The topics that are bolded have been identified by ODHE as particularly relevant to ongoing policy efforts and will be given priority points in scoring research proposals.

- **A 50-state comparative analysis, identifying which states currently fund public institutions of higher education on the basis of data regarding employment outcomes, how each state distribution formula works, and the relative investment of each state.**
- **A 50-state comparative analysis, identifying which states currently have post-secondary programs similar to Choose Ohio First, Ohio's signature STEM scholarship, or an alternative means of supporting STEM talent pipeline growth, such as a state appropriation or funding distribution formula, and the relative investment of each state.**
- **Benchmarking peer states' competitive investments in talent and workforce.**
- **Measurement of positive outcomes for students receiving the Governor's Merit Scholarship related to retention, persistence, completion, employment, student debt and other generally accepted desired student outcomes.**
- **Measurement of positive outcomes for students receiving the Ohio College Opportunity Grant related to retention, persistence, completion, employment, student debt and other generally accepted desired student outcomes.**
- **Declining college-going rates in Ohio, reasons for rate changes over time, and estimated impacts on Ohio's production of college graduates to meet Ohio's workforce needs.**

- **Analysis of market trends and the impact of online education, identifying net import/export enrollment effects, market share growth, the number of Ohio students participating in online education over time, revenue impacts for institutions, key attributes of these programs, relative student outcomes and related information as to whether Ohio institutions are positioned to compete in this fast-growth modality.**
- **Analysis of physical facilities on Ohio campuses, service levels to maintain those facilities, deferred maintenance totals statewide/institutionally, and analysis of opportunities for strategic square footage reduction benefiting institutions and students.**
- Workforce Pell implementation including data systems, strategies and opportunities
- Measuring employment outcomes for non-credit workforce programs
- Topics specifically related to Amended Substitute House Bill 96 of the 136th General Assembly, including new attainment goals, work-based learning, direct admission, general education review and reviews of institutional risk
- Research to support performance-based outcomes in higher education
- Review of institutional academic program offerings and relative alignment with enrollment and/or labor market trends
- Re-engaging adult learners to achieve credentials of value
- Three-year bachelor's degrees and dual enrollment pathways
- Dual enrollment (i.e. College Credit Plus) more broadly, including cost modeling and outcomes
- Analysis of the market impact of online education and opportunities
- Financial aid programs broadly, as well as student barriers to completion
- Civic education knowledge base and outcomes
- Analyses on the usage and impact of various early postsecondary credit options for matriculating and non-matriculating students
- High school career-technical education (CTE) connections with higher education institutions —joint programs, advanced credit, pathways into post-secondary
- Impact of AI on higher education enrollment, program types, and connections to K-12 systems to prepare students for those changes
- Determining barriers to employers' engagement with Ohio colleges and universities on workforce development initiatives and identifying solutions to overcome them
- Long-term learning impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Analyze current and emerging uses and impacts of AI and generative AI across the P–16 education continuum, including higher education enrollment, program types, instructional practices, student learning, assessment, academic integrity, and workforce preparation
- Assess how colleges can move from a reactionary model to a forward-looking workforce strategy by aligning curricula, credentials, and program capacity with the state's most in-demand and fastest-growing industries
- Student outcomes for non-credit courses and programs at state institutions of higher education and Ohio technical centers
- Analysis of 2+2 programs in the state and ways the model could be replicated
- Development of Statewide Centralized Data Consortium and Institutional Access
- Analysis of Workforce Outcomes with Regional Context and Programmatic Equity

This list is not exhaustive. Institutions may propose additional topics via the request for proposals process provided the following criteria are met:

1) Provide policymakers and practitioners with timely, relevant, and rigorous research findings on problems of significant importance to the state's citizens, enabling informed decision-making and effective policies;

2) Increase the active engagement of the state's higher education institutions in addressing real-world issues of direct relevance to the state's social, economic, and civic well-being, fostering a stronger connection between academia and public service;

3) Cultivate the next generation of policy-focused researchers and practitioners by providing valuable research opportunities to faculty and post-graduate students.

If ODHE approves a proposed topic in the request for proposals process, the topic will be added to the statewide research agenda for the biennium.