

Testimony before the Ohio House Subcommittee on Higher Education, Columbus, Ohio

Dr. Daniel E. Hall, Miami University Hamilton Campus Dean

April 10, 2007

Chairman Webster, Ranking Member Ujvagi and members of the Finance Higher Education Subcommittee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to talk to you today.

For 40 years Miami University has been serving non-traditional students at its regional campuses in Hamilton and Middletown. By nontraditional student, I am referring to adult students, students who must work while attending college, students with children, minority students, low income students, and students who have college aspirations but who may not have been high performers in high school. Miami's two regional campuses join the other University regional campuses in the state in providing these populations access to higher education, with the opportunity to transform their lives and the lives of their families.

This population is different in their educational needs, attitudes, and ambitions. First on their minds is obtaining an education that will lead to a job, a promotion, or to a better job. Therefore, to serve this population, we do workforce development. And by workforce development I mean everything from nondegree certificate business training classes to baccalaureate programming. We know that nontraditional students, particularly students over the age of 25, are juggling jobs and family. As such, they are not interested in traveling too far for classes, they have special needs, such as daycare, they like taking classes with their peers, they are sometimes intimidated by the prospect of attending classes on "traditional" campuses, and they have serious scheduling limitations.

Miami University serves these Ohioans in many ways. For example, we have offered classes at night and at job sites - and both campuses have provided childcare. And in recent months, we have significantly ramped up our service to nontraditional students in several ways.

Daniel Hall Testimony
April 10, 2007
Ohio House Subcommittee on Higher Education
Page 2

First, we expanded our scheduling to include weekends and second, we have increased our use of online education. Last fall, we rolled out *SaturdaySelect* on the Hamilton campus. *SaturdaySelect* is a hybrid learning program in which students can earn an Associate in Arts degree in as little as two years without enrolling in weekday classes. It combines in-class seat time with an online component that students can complete at home, on their own time. It is perfect for people who are too busy balancing a family and a job to attend college during the traditional Monday-Friday daytime format.

SaturdaySelect was launched in the Fall with 40 enrollments in six classes. Only one semester later, Spring Semester 2007, the program grew to 130 students in 13 classes! Students who have completed the initial course offerings have provided us with this feedback -- they want more! *SaturdaySelect* continues to gain momentum on the Hamilton campus and will be rolled out this fall on the Middletown campus as well.

Additionally, both of Miami's regional campuses offer the new Degree Power Schedule program. Through Degree Power Schedule, part-time students are assured that they will be able to complete all the requirements of one of several associate's degrees by attending classes two nights a week. Degree Power Schedule is designed to give adult learners the power to speed up, slow down, or even take a break in their studies if they need to, with the confidence that they will be able to rejoin the program without a loss of credits and without encountering course sequencing problems. I note how impressed with the response of our faculty to this program. In the past year, we have had over 30 faculty volunteer to join our hybrid learning community and to teach on Saturdays.

Another significant project in the works that will significantly contribute to the improvement of the area workforce is Miami University's Voice of America Learning Center (VOALC), located in West Chester. Details of this exciting new venture were publicly unveiled just a few days ago in an event involving West Chester Township, Butler County MetroParks, and Miami University. This learning center will offer

Daniel Hall Testimony
April 10, 2007
Ohio House Subcommittee on Higher Education
Page 3

graduate and undergraduate courses and programs, together with noncredit workforce development and customized training opportunities for business, industry, school districts, and government agencies. The criteria for the selection of the programs to be offered at the VOALC has been, and will continue to be, area workforce needs. After studying the needs of the area, we developed a plan to offer the professional MBA through Miami's nationally ranked Farmer School of Business, undergraduate coursework in nursing, , the Ohio transfer module - capitalizing on the good articulation and transfer work of Representative Webster and others -, we will also offer noncredit business and industry training, and several graduate degrees in education. As you may know, Miami has a new scholarship program – entitled TEAM (an acronym for Teacher Education Access at Miami) – where Ohio teachers receive a 50% reduction in tuition on any graduate level courses that they take at Miami. TEAM is available to teachers at all of Miami's sites where we offer graduate teacher training, including the VOALC.

Miami University has another new financial program that is intended to attract more low income students to our Oxford Campus. Shortly after his arrival, our new President, David Hodge, announced the creation of the Miami Access Initiative. Through Access Initiative, all students attending the Oxford Campus who come from a household with a family income of \$35,000 pay no tuition or fees whatsoever. For students of this income level who begin their careers at either of Miami's regional campuses, the price tag to earn a bachelor's degree at Miami University is less than \$1,000 for all four years!

I sincerely believe that Miami University is creating an excellent atmosphere for non-traditional students. We don't expect them to conform to the traditional academic schedule; instead, we are meeting their needs through evening classes, including Friday night, Saturday classes, and through an emerging online presence. We are firmly committed to accommodating non-traditional students *where they are and in a manner that makes sense for them.* It is important to remember, that unlike most traditional students who will find a place to attend, even if they are not admitted to their preferred

Daniel Hall Testimony
April 10, 2007
Ohio House Subcommittee on Higher Education
Page 4

university, many nontraditional students will not attend a college unless their unique needs are met.

As you can glean from what I have shared with you and from what you will hear from my colleague at Miami Middletown, we have heard the call from Governors Taft and Stickland. We have read and taken seriously the CHEE report, the Higher Education Funding Study Council Report, and the other legislative reports calling for a better trained workforce and for more associate and bachelor's credentialed Ohioans.

I appeal to you today, Chairman Webster, Ranking Member Ujvagi and members of the Ohio House Subcommittee on Higher Education, indeed the entire State Legislature, to allocate state monies at appropriate levels so we can not only sustain but continue to build on the momentum that Miami University's regional campuses are realizing today. We want to help the State realize its goal of producing 230,000 new Ohio college graduates in 10 years. But additional resources will be necessary to accomplish this.

I note that we strive in every way to be efficient and efficacious in our use of state funds. In addition, we are aggressively seeking external monies to support our efforts. A case in point is the support we have received from the federal government to improve teacher education in several local school districts. Miami Hamilton has received \$3.5 million from the U.S. Department of Education to support three separate Teaching American History grants over the past four years. Through these grants, teachers in several local school districts are receiving both history and pedagogy instruction that is improving the education of our elementary school children.

It has been my pleasure to be here with you today and I appreciate you giving me the time to speak to you. I introduce to you, Dr. Kelly Cowan, Dean, Miami Middletown.

Daniel Hall Testimony
April 10, 2007
Ohio House Subcommittee on Higher Education
Page 5