

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

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OPENING

Chairman Webster, Ranking Member Ujvagi, and members of the Ohio House Subcommittee on Higher Education, we believe that the programs I will outline today are exactly what the state needs to reach its goal of getting more students into higher education.

We know that helping Ohio achieve its goal of increasing college graduates over the next decade requires reaching out to students where they live and work – and this requires program flexibility and creativity in working with non-traditional students. Regional campuses serve as key portals to higher education for non-traditional students, strongly connected to the fullest array of academic resources of our respective main campuses.

We know that reaching and serving non-traditional students where they live and work will not be achieved by traditional course and program delivery methods. Acting on that knowledge, we are developing and piloting several initiatives to offer non-traditional students non-intimidating entrees to college.

GREENTREE PROJECT

Responding to the growing critical need for health care workers in our region, Miami University Middletown joined with Middletown Regional Hospital, Butler Technology and Career Development School, and Warren County Career Center in the Greentree Health Sciences Academy.

Greentree is a model public/private collaboration designed to align secondary, adult workforce, and post-secondary education to meet the workforce challenges faced by one of the region's major employers in health care, and the growing number of hospitals and other health care providers along the I-75 corridor.

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This educational collaboration is designed to serve traditional and non-traditional students, developing clear educational and career pathways directly linked to employment opportunities, and opportunities for career advancement in the health care field.

Within the collaborative there are two key principles.

First and foremost, Greentree is student-centered, not institution-centered. The needs of the student and employer will be met in the most cost-effective, non-competitive manner. Miami is serving as a post-secondary provider and as a “broker” for post-secondary education, working to develop articulations with existing degree programs to avoid cost duplication.

Second, the educational partners in Greentree work from the position that the lowest cost alternative that meets student and employer needs will always be the approach taken.

Through Miami’s role as a “broker,” the Greentree Program is working on developing strategic collaborations with other post-secondary institutions for associate degree programs in high-need areas as identified by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Ohio Department of Development, and Greater Cincinnati Health Council in their annual surveys of hospitals and health care employers. We are in discussion with Cincinnati State in the areas of respiratory therapy and sonography, to articulate Miami science and general education courses with their health care curriculum.

The growing need for workers in the health care workforce is well documented - regionally, on the state level, and nationally. In addition to Middletown Regional Hospital, both Children’s Hospital and the Health Alliance of Cincinnati are currently constructing new hospital and medical campus facilities in the immediate vicinity. Hiring qualified employees is but the first hurdle these and other health care employers must overcome.

Greentree is designed not only to help educate future employees, but also to help employers in the longer-term strategic investment of retaining employees by providing opportunities for educational and career advancement.

Greentree opens new portals for employees working in these hospitals who may not be employed in providing direct health care support to patients. By working with the hospitals to outline career and educational paths leading to advancement, Greentree will help employees see the opportunities for internal career advancement through courses and programs available where they work, and at times that fit their schedules.

Greentree is a new delivery model, designed to bring new people into post-secondary education. Greentree does not require students to go to a specific college, university, or adult education program, but provides a full array of cost-effective, non-duplicative courses and programs to enable students to attain educational and career goals, and to help employers hire, retain, and develop their workforce.

DUAL CREDIT

For many years the Post Secondary Education Options program has afforded qualified high school students the opportunity to begin college coursework.

But not all qualified students have been able to take advantage of the opportunities of PSEO – some are hindered by distance from post-secondary institutions, others by demands on their schedule due to extracurricular activities, and yet others by work, family, or other life circumstances that make travel to a postsecondary institution impossible.

Miami Middletown is working with the Miami Valley Career and Technical Center, under a grant received by MVCTC through the Ohio Department of Education, to pilot a dual-credit program. Through this collaboration qualified students are placed in specific course sections – we are beginning with algebra and physics courses –and MVCTC faculty serve as the instructors. MVCTC faculty work with Miami Middletown faculty in all phases of the course, including curriculum development and student assessment.

Students will receive Miami credit for these courses while simultaneously fulfilling their high school graduation requirements – but will do so without having to leave MVCTC, thus enabling them to remain fully engaged in their other courses of study and extracurricular activities at MVCTC.

In the past there has been a public perception that joint vocational students have not been considered college-bound. This past perception flies in the face of current reality and the needs of employers and employees to have opportunities for ongoing, lifelong learning in order for Ohio to remain economically competitive. Our piloting this program with MVCTC is a strong, positive step toward opening yet another portal.

GATEWAY PROGRAM

Many non-traditional students must first complete their high school diploma in order to advance in post-secondary education. Their challenge is greater the longer they are away from high school.

Miami Middletown is working with Warren County Career Center to develop a Gateway Program for students who have not earned their high school diploma, and who have been out of school for two years or more.

Through the Gateway Program, Miami Middletown will provide space on its campus, and Warren County Career Center the curriculum and instructors. Students participating in Gateway will be going to a university campus, in an adult, post-secondary educational setting, to complete the coursework for their diploma.

Students in Gateway will have the opportunity to take beginning level college courses concurrent with the remainder of their high school curriculum, and have access to the library research facilities as well as developmental educational and career support services of Miami Middletown.

Having the opportunity to become familiar with and comfortable in a university setting as non-traditional students will ease the transition to post-secondary education. Gateway will encourage students to make a direct connection with post-secondary education while completing their high school coursework, making college or university the logical “next step” after they earn their diploma.

COLLEGE PREPAREDNESS

According to data from the Ohio Board of Regents 2006 Performance Report, Ohio’s post-secondary institutions have a significant number of students requiring remedial coursework. The percentage of first year students requiring remedial coursework in math or English during the 2004-2005 academic year ranged between 45% to 52% at Ohio’s regional campuses, state community colleges, technical colleges, and community colleges.

Remedial coursework accounted for 5% of all undergraduate FTE at Ohio’s public institutions that year, at a cost of \$31.9 million in SII.

To begin to address the challenge of college preparedness, Miami Middletown is piloting a program with Middletown City Schools where Miami will do college placement testing early in the junior year of Middletown High students, helping students to identify areas of any gaps or deficiencies that need to be addressed.

Once those areas are known, Miami will assist students in accessing Butler Tech on-line high school courses they can do while still in high school so that they are prepared for college-level courses when they graduate from Middletown High School.

We believe this is another model collaborative program, and one which leverages existing resources at Miami Middletown, Middletown City Schools, and Butler Tech, to help students prepare for college. Reducing, or eliminating, the need for remedial coursework at the post-secondary level will help students avoid having to use their financial aid resources for remedial purposes, and help to reduce the State costs for remedial coursework at the post-secondary level – a better use of limited individual financial aid and state tax dollar resources.

CONNECTING TEACHERS AND EMPLOYERS

Seeking to develop stronger and clearer connections between high school curriculum and employer workforce expectations, Miami Middletown was approached by the business community to develop a course for high school teachers to better acquaint them with the workforce needs of area employers.

Teachers too often are faced with student questions such as “why do I need to know _____” – and here you can fill in that blank with any number of subjects such as math, writing, communication, physics, chemistry, etc.

Miami’s Community Resources Workshop, which is being offered this summer in conjunction with the Middletown Chamber of Commerce, is designed to provide high school teachers first-hand knowledge of the workforce needs of regional employers for hiring, employee retention, and employee career advancement.

Through research, in-class discussion, and most importantly through on-site visits, teachers will be better prepared to communicate to their students the need not only for specific subject knowledge, but more importantly the need for higher skills in the workplace –

particularly in an ever-changing economy that requires ongoing learning from all in the workforce.

CONCLUSION

Miami's regional campuses, and the other regional campuses in the state, are particularly situated to fill the educational needs of the State. We truly can be a significant part of the solution. We have the powerful combination of open access plus the full resources of a four-year university and its faculty.

The programs to reach and serve non-traditional students that Dr. Hall and I have outlined today are the result of our reallocating existing resources, not adding new resources. Reallocating resources, while maintaining existing programming, has enabled us to pilot several key initiatives and projects to serve non-traditional students.

However, if these pilot endeavors are to fully develop and ramp up to a level necessary to serve the growing number of non-traditional students that we, and all of Ohio, wish to bring into higher education, additional resources will be required.

We serve many different purposes for many different constituencies and we do it well. Rely on us to help educate Ohio.