

**2012 Complete College Ohio Conference - Ohio Board of Regents**  
**Remarks by Anne Neal**  
**President, American Council of Trustees and Alumni**  
**November 13, 2012**

Hello, everyone! What a pleasure it is to be with you today, and special thanks to Chancellor Jim Petro.

My organization, the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, focuses on empowering trustees on behalf of academic excellence, academic freedom and accountability, so my remarks are going to be devoted to focusing on what trustees can do.

I want to start with this quote from Benno Schmidt, successful board chairman of the City University of New York and former president of Yale:

Change in institutional strategy can only come from trustees. . . . Reviewing an institution's academic strategy and deciding whether change is called for is a trustee's most important responsibility.

The importance of this sentence cannot be overemphasized. Yes, higher education operates on a shared governance model; but, at the end of the day, you the trustees are legally responsible for the financial and academic health of your institutions. Reviewing an institution's academic strategy and deciding whether change is called for is a trustee's most important responsibility. As trustees, you are supporters of your school. Let there be no question. But you are not there just to be boosters; your job is not just an honorific; it is one that carries a solemn responsibility to the taxpayers, students and families who are paying for this education. Your obligation is to the public interest—something, dare I say, that the trustees of Penn State forgot. And you should be centrally involved as your institutions develop your specific completion plans.

So how do Ohio schools do when it comes to graduation rates? We've already been talking a lot about this but this chart (*Figure 1*) surely underscores why we are here today. **Of the public institutions in this state, there is only one that even graduates more than half of its students in four years: Miami University.** Both Ohio State and Ohio University come close with 49 and 46%, but frankly those stats are appalling. What ever happened to a four-year college education?

Remember that these are not part-time students. They are students who are classified as first-time full-time students and yet they are not graduating on time.

When it comes to six-year graduation rates, again, the performance of Ohio public schools is distressingly low. **Even here, only five of the 13 schools have grad rates at or above the national average, 56%, which is itself unacceptably low.**

Against this backdrop, how can you advance the completion agenda? First, focus on cost.

Cost is one of the major barriers to higher education. And take a look at this chart (*Figure 2*) which is frankly quite mind-boggling. We all concede that there has been an explosion in health

care costs. But health care looks like a piker when compared to the growth in expenditure of higher education. 439% growth over the last 25 years, (1982-2007), as compared to a mere 251% growth in health care. Meanwhile, the growth in both these fields far surpasses the growth in median family income and the consumer price index.

Here is another look at these trends, from 1993-2007: Enrollment is up by about 15% while tuition has increased 79% and administrative expenditures have risen by over a third. In fact, a study shows that the number of administrators now surpasses the number of academic personnel on our college campuses. This is what is properly called administrative bloat.

With higher costs, many students will have to drop out. Indeed, while Ohio ranks low on completion, it ranks very high on debt. Currently, Ohio ranks 9<sup>th</sup> in the nation when it comes to 68% of students graduating with student debt; and it ranks 7<sup>th</sup> nationally since students are carrying on average \$28,683 debt. This is not a recipe for student success. Compare this to Randolph-Macon College in Virginia, which last year announced a “tuition guarantee” for students who comply with school policy, waiving tuition after the fourth year for those who do not complete college after four years.

And let’s dispel quickly that the solution is more money. Yes, it’s true; colleges and universities are seeing their appropriations cut in state after state because of competing demands on state tax dollars. But this needs to be put against a historic backdrop of high spending. As this chart shows, US is spending more than twice the per student average of any developed nation and seeing much poorer graduation results.

Another concern for trustees should be college readiness. And just last month, the ACT issued some other depressing news: three out of four students who took the ACT tests were not college ready in at least one of the four subject areas of English, Reading, Math and Science.

The City University of New York (CUNY) trustees found themselves faced with this problem and took action—requiring that all students who needed remedial work to do so in the community colleges and to be admitted into the four-year colleges only when they were prepared for college level work. Opponents of this action by trustees reacted violently saying that this would diminish the diversity of students in the four-year colleges. In fact, the diversity has grown and students have been better prepared by the board’s courageous determination to eliminate social promotion at the college level.

In Massachusetts, the education leaders—when faced with this challenge—implemented Tuition Advantage Grants that promised substantial tuition discounts for qualifying transfer students who completed an associate’s degree at the community college with a 3.0 grade point average. Clemson University has implemented a bridge program with a local technical college helping to provide students with targeted advising and support services to succeed upon transfer to Clemson.

Bottom line: To improve completion, trustees must be focused on keeping college affordable and admitting students ready for college-level work.

Then let's turn to classroom utilization. This sounds boring but it is a most interesting way to look at completion and cost. Here is Penn State confessing in its strategic plan that it builds more buildings because its existing ones are overused during two days of the week:

The University has invested heavily in both the construction of classroom and laboratory facilities and the renovation of existing facilities. ... Too often, these facilities are not fully utilized—and the University constructs additional facilities—because of lack of use outside of certain “prime time” class periods or times of the day. Classroom space at University Park, for example, is near fully utilized between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. on a typical day, but much capacity is under-utilized at other times of the day. While a notable reduction in classroom utilization has occurred at 8:00 a.m., in response to student (and some faculty) preferences, mid- and late-afternoon scheduling remains significantly lower.

This has got to stop.

And it's not just Penn State. Here is North Carolina where you can see clearly that buildings are underutilized. (*Figure 3*)

As trustees, you need to make data-driven decisions on the number of hours each week that classrooms and teaching laboratories are used and the percentage of seats or stations used each week. This information needs to show usage by day of the week and hour of the day. You should couple this with data, department by department, on the number of courses taught and the student credit hours generated by each tenured, tenure track, and non-tenure track professor. Some schools are going year-round, which is a way to promote both greater access and completion. As we have noted in our publication on substance abuse, more effective scheduling also can help prevent various pathologies. [For example, according to the National Survey of Student Engagement, 59 percent of college seniors study 15 hours or less. And according to a survey of over 30,000 freshmen on 76 campuses, students who consumed at least one drink in the last two weeks spent an average of 10.2 hours a week drinking, versus an average of 8.4 hours a week studying.]

You should also look to provide directed choice for students. Here is a summary of a survey of core curricular requirements we did of public schools in Ohio. (*Figure 4*) It's not that the schools don't have requirements. It's that the distribution requirements, as they are called, give students many, many choices—some trendy, some tendentious. [As an example: “Gossip, Espionage, Hackers, and Outlaw Memes,” which satisfies the “Cross Cultural Perspectives” requirement—allowing them to graduate with vast gaps in their skills and knowledge.]

By way of example at Ohio University, the Cross-Cultural Perspectives requirement can be satisfied by over 130 courses offered in 43 different departments. The Humanities and Literature requirement may be satisfied by 56 courses in 17 departments. This is choice, but it also means costs, and creating limited and directed curricular pathways can help student progress.

In a recent Roper survey, seven in ten Americans said a core curriculum was necessary. And 80% of 25-34 year-olds who had most recently graduated wanted a core.

So a good question for trustees: How can we more effectively direct student choice to ensure more seamless completion?

Finally, I want to conclude with assessment. Completion is important but only if the education is one of real value. The Complete College Ohio report says emphatically that quality cannot be compromised. As the shades indicate, assessment offers both an accountability and diagnostics tool. It would be easy to hand out pieces of paper—in the name of college completion—but that would neither serve the students or Ohio if they are not receiving and learning and a meaningful credential.

Finally, let me conclude with advice you've heard from others. As trustees, you must demand data-driven decision-making. Trustees, not to mention parents and policymakers, deserve clear metrics—including student learning gains, faculty workloads, and building utilization. Using freshman orientation to emphasize completion is important. Improving student access to advisory services is important. And greater faculty/student engagement can help advance college completion and need not be a cost driver if faculty time is better used.

Again, let me say thanks to all of you. I would be happy to take any questions.

Graduation rates at Ohio schools, 2004 cohort (Source: IPEDS)

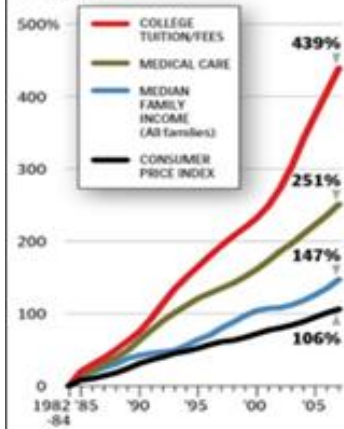
Institution	Four-year (National avg = 31.3%)	Six-year (National avg= 56.0%)
Bowling Green State University	36%	60%
Central State University	8%	19%
Cleveland State University	9%	30%
Kent State University	25%	50%
Miami University	68%	80%
Ohio State University	49%	78%
Ohio University	46%	65%
Shawnee State University	11%	21%
University of Akron	14%	35%
University of Cincinnati	21%	56%
University of Toledo	23%	45%
Wright State University	18%	42%
Youngstown State University	13%	37%

Figure 1

Tuition on the Rise

Cost is one of the major barriers to higher education.

Growth rate of tuition, as compared with other expenses in percent



NOTE: Growth rate is calculated from a baseline average of 1982, 1983 and 1984.  
Source: National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education  
By Tolby — The Washington Post

Figure 2

Classroom Utilization

(Source: UNC Space Utilization Dashboard for Fall 2011)

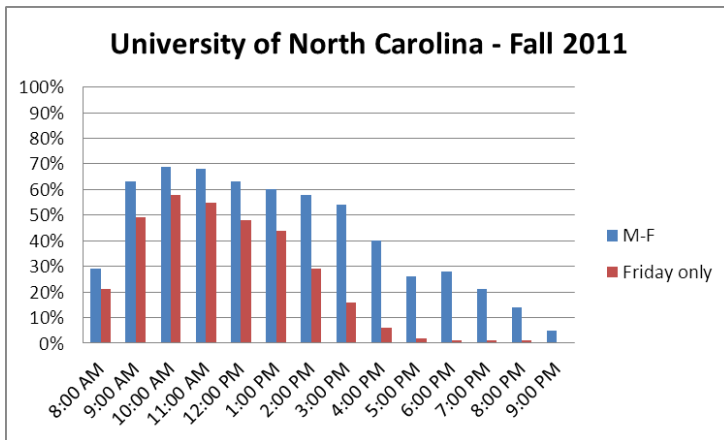


Figure 3

Core Curriculum  
(Source: ACTA, whatwilltheylearn.com)

Institution	COMP	LIT	LANG	HIST	ECON	MATH	SCI
Bowling Green State University	•					•	•
Central State University	•			•		•	•
Cleveland State University	•					•	•
Kent State University	•					•	•
Miami University	•		•				•
Ohio State University	•		•				•
Ohio University	•						•
Shawnee State University	•						•
University of Akron			•			•	•
University of Cincinnati	•					½	½
University of Toledo	•	•	•			•	•
Wright State University	•						•
Youngstown State University	•					•	•

Figure 4