

Working Toward Broader Collaboration In Ohio Higher Education



National Evaluation of Lumina Foundation's Productivity Initiative

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**Working Toward Broader Collaboration
in Ohio Higher Education:
National Evaluation of Lumina Foundation's Productivity Initiative**

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Executive Summary

Ohio was one of seven states selected by Lumina Foundation in 2009 to launch a statewide initiative to increase productivity in higher education. This report summarizes Ohio's achievements and its challenges in advancing productivity and increasing completions during the grant period.

Since 2008, SPEC Associates has been funded by Lumina to be the third-party evaluator of this productivity work. The seven states participating in Lumina's productivity initiative were Arizona, Indiana, Maryland, Montana, Ohio, Tennessee, and Texas.

Ohio had some success in advancing existing efforts to increase administrative efficiencies in higher education and in developing new statewide plans to expand the use of prior learning assessment to help more adults attain degrees. The state also revised its performance-funding formula during the grant period, adding more weight to rewarding institutional efforts to graduate more students.

In order to achieve a 60% adult completion rate by 2025, Ohio will have to graduate more than one million more adults.

Ohio has not formally adopted a completion target statewide, but in testimony to the state Legislature the chancellor of the Board of Regents said that in order to meet workforce demands the state needs to increase the share of its adult residents with a certificate or degree from about 36% currently to 60% by 2025. This is an ambitious goal that will require substantial increases in student completion, including among adult populations.

Shift in Emphasis Toward Prior Learning Assessment

Ohio's productivity work initially focused on lowering institutional costs by creating a model for implementing shared administrative services, expanding an online purchasing consortium, and creating an online communication network for sharing best practices in this area. This work had some modest advances, including a new statewide mandate that public colleges and universities benchmark progress in cost savings and report annually to the chancellor, who in turn will report to the Governor and Legislature.

Leadership changes in the governorship and the chancellor's office in 2011 led to a shift in focus toward increasing student completion, particularly among adults. In 2013, the Board of Regents investigated ways to increase the visibility and expand the use of prior learning assessment statewide in order to help adults receive college credit for skills and experiences they have already attained, including military service. Prior learning assessment also has potential to increase transfer opportunities among all students by enabling them to receive credit for their full range of knowledge and skills.

As an important step, Governor John Kasich signed an executive order in 2013 requiring the development of prior learning assessment for veterans. In 2014, the Ohio House and Senate passed legislation that contained provisions for awards of college credit for military training, experience, and coursework. At that time, statewide policy supporting broader use of prior learning assessment had not yet been adopted, but the work was progressing through regular meetings of a statewide consortium.

Building on a History of Performance Funding

Ohio has a long history in performance funding that dates to 1986. During the grant period, the state revised its funding formulas, so that beginning with the 2014-15 academic year 100% of state allocations for universities and community colleges will be based on student success measures. This work was outside the state's grant goals, but aligned with it.

Having higher education leaders work together to agree on performance formulas generated the buy-in that legislators needed to pass the legislation.

Even though Ohio has a historical culture of institutional autonomy, performance funding has generally been accepted. In part, this was attributed to a shared sense of responsibility to use state resources wisely during the recent Great Recession. Higher education leaders also said that their engagement in determining the funding formula in 2013 contributed to their support. However, some concerns about performance funding were expressed by higher education leaders, including the potential for unintended consequences, such as institutions ratcheting up admission requirements as a way to improve graduation rates.

Accelerating Degree Progress Will Continue to Be Crucial in Ohio

Beyond the development of prior learning assessment policy, other advances to speed degree progress in Ohio include a study of high school and college dual enrollment and the design of structures that permit one-year certificates to be applied toward earning an associate degree. State legislation passed that requires universities to create three-year pathways to bachelor's degrees for 60% of their programs by 2014. All have done so, but some institutions embraced the concept more than others and it is too soon to tell whether these pathways will be widely utilized by students.

Other efforts in the state aligned with the productivity goals include the following:

- An initiative for near-completers—that is, former students who nearly completed the requirements for an associate degree before dropping out.
- Development of a statewide approach to reverse transfer—that is, awarding associate degrees to students who completed the requirements for that degree after transferring to a four-year institution.
- Development of statewide articulation agreements between apprentice programs and colleges.

Affordability Remains a Challenge

Ohio did not make substantial changes to state student aid policies during the grant period, but legislation was passed to permit institutions to guarantee entering students level tuition for four years of continuous attendance. Level tuition may improve completion rates since tuition charges at all levels of public higher education in Ohio have for decades exceeded the national average. Despite tuition freezes prior to the grant period, public higher education in Ohio has become less affordable since the 1990s. The issue has not escaped the attention of state leaders, who named affordability as an area of increasing focus. As shown by the table below, Ohio has made progress in this area in the last several years.

Percentage above the national average of resident undergraduate tuition and fees at Ohio institutions, by sector¹

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Flagship	9%	10%	6%	4%
Comprehensive Colleges and Universities	34%	33%	28%	25%
Community Colleges	14%	2%	3%	3%

The Importance of Sustained Leadership

The productivity work was overseen by a grant team led by the Ohio Board of Regents. The team changed significantly during the grant period, but has been constant in the second half of the grant. Ohio's achievements encompass several moving parts, most of which are interrelated and only measurable in the long term. Sustained state leadership will likely be required to assure that forward movement continues. A pressing need, now that some state policies have changed, is to gather and share information about the relationship between these recent developments and changes in institutional behaviors and student outcomes.

¹ England-Siegerdt, C. (2013, July). *2013 National Tuition and Fee Report*. Washington Student Achievement Council. Retrieved from: http://www.wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2013%20National%20Tuition%20and%20Fee%20Report-final3-6-13_revision7-23-13.pdf.

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Introduction

Lumina Foundation invested in Ohio’s efforts to increase the number of residents who have high-quality postsecondary credentials beginning in 2008. Lumina’s investment was part of a multistate initiative that focused on improving productivity in higher education by supporting statewide and systemwide efforts to enroll and graduate more students, without increasing the cost per degree.

Ohio was one of eleven states to receive a learning year grant from Lumina in 2008. Ohio was one of seven states selected for a four-year implementation grant in 2009. During the grant period, Lumina developed and refined its productivity agenda called “Four Steps to Finishing First in Higher Education”¹ and asked the states to develop strategies aligned with these four areas:

Seven states received implementation grants:
Arizona, Indiana, Maryland, Montana, Ohio, Tennessee, and Texas

- 1)  **PERFORMANCE FUNDING** Targeted incentives for colleges and universities to graduate more students with quality degrees and credentials.
- 2)  **STUDENT INCENTIVES** Strategic use of tuition and financial aid to incentivize course and program completion.
- 3)  **NEW MODELS** Lower-cost, high-quality approaches substituted for traditional academic delivery whenever possible to increase capacity for serving students.
- 4)  **BUSINESS EFFICIENCIES** Business practices that produce savings to graduate more students.

Ohio’s productivity work focused initially on business efficiencies and communications through three projects:

- Implementation of shared administrative services between the University of Akron and Lorain County Community College;
- Expansion of a consortium of schools using a common online purchasing tool to receive discounts through bulk purchasing; and
- Creation of a real-time network of campus personnel communicating about productivity through social media.

"Respondents" and "interviewees" referred to in this report include state policymakers and their staff, higher education administrators and faculty, business representatives, national experts, and others.

Strategy Labs Network Resources Available to States

Strategy Labs activities included telephone, online, and in-person meetings with individuals and groups; convenings within states, across states, and nationally; and nonpartisan research and information, such as policy briefs, reports, and state-specific analyses. HCM Strategists served as the primary conduit of technical assistance in the states, and other national organizations provided resources through the Strategy Labs. Many organizations contributed to the states' work. Overall, organizations supporting the Strategy Labs included:

HCM Strategists: National intermediary for the productivity policy work; managed the advisors in the seven states; provided policy experts, technical assistance, report writing; and organized cross-state convenings.

Public Agenda: National intermediary for engaging college and university leaders, faculty, and staff in efforts to increase productivity. Provided research, stakeholder engagement and capacity-building assistance to elevate the voices of students, faculty, employers and institutional practitioners to support states' progress.

SPEC Associates: National evaluation firm, providing real-time insights used to develop and manage the work across states.

National Governors Association Center for Best Practices: Advised the intermediaries and developed a set of high-level metrics for policymakers to evaluate the return on public investments in higher education.

Institute for the Study of Knowledge Management in Education: Provided workshops for change and hosted the online Knowledge Collaborative to facilitate information sharing and peer learning.

Catalytica: Facilitated the use of video-based stories for individual, organizational, and community transformation.

In 2011, Ohio received permission from Lumina to shift its focus from these projects to the development of prior learning assessment, and so in 2012, the state engaged in another planning year involving a formal re-scoping of Ohio's work plan to focus on expanding and coordinating the use of prior learning assessment at the state's public colleges and universities. Lumina grant funds also supported a state evaluation.

Ohio's productivity work was overseen by a grant team led by the Ohio Board of Regents. The team originally consisted of the chancellor, two staff members of the Board of Regents, institutional representatives from two-year and four-year institutions, legislative staff, and business representatives. In 2011, the team's composition shifted. Its membership, which had been stable since 2012, now includes Board of Regents' staff, the presidents of Ohio's two-year and four-year college associations, and representatives from the Ohio Articulation and Transfer Council and the Ohio Department of Education.

As well as receiving grant funding, Ohio received access to resources associated with the initiative, including participation in a Strategy Labs Network. The Strategy Labs Network is Lumina's method for delivering contextualized, just-in-time technical assistance, engagement opportunities, and support to state policymakers and higher education system leaders to help catalyze policy action in the Four

Steps to Finishing First. Ohio's grant team members participated in telephone, online, and face-to-face meetings in the state and nationally. Examples of Ohio's Strategy Labs Network engagement include: hosting a multistate site visit about business efficiencies; participating in site visits to learn about Maryland's course redesign efforts, Tennessee's performance-funding model, Western Governors University, and a "how to" workshop on competency-based three year degrees; attending a webinar about Indiana's transfer websites and Lumina's convening about prior learning assessment; and obtaining assistance from HCM Strategists to the Ohio Association of Community Colleges with discussions about performance funding.

In 2008, Lumina asked SPEC Associates (SPEC) to evaluate its investments in Ohio and the other six states participating in the initiative. This report presents SPEC's findings and analysis regarding the state's achievements. Data collection for this evaluation ended in December 2013.

Beyond describing what Ohio accomplished, SPEC examined factors that appeared to contribute to and/or challenge this work. The first section of this report focuses on the state's activities and outcomes within the initiative's agenda for change: the Four Steps to Finishing First. The second section provides insights about the state's experiences across the Four Steps, including the identification of some challenges and opportunities facing Ohio. Many individuals and organizations contributed to this evaluation and they are listed in Appendix I. Appendix II describes the evaluation methodology.

Any conclusions in this report are those of SPEC Associates and are not meant to represent the opinions of any other individual or organization affiliated with this evaluation.



Four Steps to Finishing First

I. Ohio's Achievements

This section examines Ohio's activities and achievements in the Four Steps to Finishing First, particularly in the area of state and systemwide program and policy change. Where appropriate, the report discusses the state's work in engaging stakeholders and supporting champions—both of which were strategies used by the Strategy Labs Network to support policy change. The final pages of this section discuss two state efforts that span the various components of the Four Steps: the state's communications efforts in productivity and Complete College Ohio.

Tables 1, 2, and 3 summarize the support Lumina provided to Ohio over the grant period, the value that Lumina added to the state's efforts, and the state's accomplishments in the Four Steps to Finishing First. SPEC recognizes that Lumina's investments were only one of many factors that contributed to Ohio's achievements in higher education productivity in recent years. In general, however, participants described Lumina's contributions as significant in helping Ohio achieve its outcomes. A more detailed analysis can be found in SPEC's 2012 report, *National Evaluation of Lumina Foundation's Productivity Work: Interim Report for Ohio*.²

Table 1: Lumina's Support for Ohio's Productivity Work

A planning grant in 2008 to conduct a policy audit and create an implementation plan for improving higher education productivity.

A four-year implementation grant starting in 2009, which supported the following:

A shared-services project developed by the University of Akron and Lorain County Community College.

Expansion of an e-procurement consortium coordinated through the Inter-University Council.

Social media communications training for Board of Regents staff and institutional leaders.

A re-scope of the work plan to focus on statewide efforts to promote and improve prior learning assessment.

Table 1: Lumina's Support for Ohio's Productivity Work (continued)

Support for the state advisor as liaison between Lumina and the Ohio Board of Regents as lead agency for the grant.

An online community to facilitate knowledge-sharing and collaboration.

Participation of state higher education leaders and policymakers in national higher education productivity convenings and Strategy Labs Network site visits.

Public Agenda's facilitation of focus groups to inform Ohio's work on prior learning assessment and state-legislated "One Year Option" articulation between Ohio Technical Centers and public community colleges.

A presentation by HCM Strategists to the Regents about how Ohio compares nationally with regard to affordability, and consultation with Ohio's community colleges to help finalize a performance-funding formula.

Showcasing Ohio's work on business efficiencies at a Strategy Labs site visit.

Highlighting Ohio's work on performance funding and business efficiencies in the materials associated with Four Steps to Finishing First.

Table 2: Lumina's Value-Add

Lumina enabled useful demonstration projects.

"It is appropriate to fund relatively small . . . grants that convince people, because of the experiment, that it is useful and effective."

Lumina's convenings and Strategy Labs Network helped re-shape Ohio's approach to productivity.

"I had a different appreciation having attended [the National Productivity Conference] about the type of change Lumina is looking for."

"In an environment where everything otherwise might just come to a grinding halt, [the state advisor] acts . . . as a motivator and source of information and as an activator, a supporter, for the people who are still doing that good work."

Lumina's opinions carried weight with Ohio's state and institutional leaders.

"To get the external grant and blessing from Lumina, and for Lumina to invite campus leaders to some of their regional or state convenings, it really helped share information and share the religion of the movement."

Note: Lumina's value-add is based on interviews with state and higher education leaders.

Table 3: Ohio's Achievements under Four Steps for Finishing First

Step 1: Ohio passed legislation that revised its funding formula so that beginning with the 2014-2015 academic year, 100% of state allocations for undergraduate education at both universities and community colleges will be based on student success measures.

Step 2: Ohio did not make any major changes to its student aid policies. Legislation was passed to allow four-year tuition guarantees after institutions expressed interest in offering this option.

Step 3: Ohio focused on using prior learning assessment to help students complete degrees. Recent legislation directed the Board of Regents to study dual enrollment and to design a program where one-year certificates can be applied to two-year associate degrees.

Step 4: Ohio advanced existing work on a shared-services demonstration project and an e-procurement consortium. Recent legislation mandated that an efficiency advisory committee composed of representatives from each public institution meet regularly and that the chancellor benchmark progress and report annually to the Governor and Legislature.

Note: Other funders and initiatives also contributed to the accomplishments Ohio made in higher education productivity.



Performance Funding

Ohio passed legislation that revised its funding formula so that beginning with the 2014-2015 academic year, 100% of state allocations for undergraduate education at both universities and community colleges will be based on student success measures.

History: Strong foundation in performance funding before the grant


Ohio first added a performance component to its funding formulas for higher education in 1986. Additional components were added in the 1990s, so that approximately 10% of the total state share of instruction was affected by performance components.

Ohio's work on performance funding was not part of the state's grant goals.

Findings: Substantial reforms to the state's performance-funding formulas

KNOWLEDGE AND ENGAGEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS

During the grant period, Ohio took the following actions toward building knowledge and stakeholder engagement related to performance funding:

- 
- 2011** The state team lead attended a Strategy Labs site visit on funding formulas in Tennessee.
 - 2012** Ohio team members were invited to a second site visit on performance funding, but were unable to attend.
 - 2012** Governor John Kasich asked Ohio's public college and university presidents to work together under Gordon Gee, then-president of Ohio State University, to recommend revisions to the funding formulas so as to further emphasize completion. News articles indicated that the institutional leaders were pleased to have been included in the process.³
 - 2013** A consultation group consisting of representatives from the majority of public two-year institutions, the Board of Regents, the Higher Education Funding Commission, and the Office of Budget and Management held a total of 29 meetings to determine the new funding formulas for the two-year institutions. Through the Strategy Labs Network, the group requested and received extensive consultation and facilitation from HCM Strategists personnel throughout the process.

ACTIVE CHAMPIONING


Governor Kasich championed both the idea and the process of making Ohio's funding formulas more performance based.⁴ Gee was an effective leader in working with the

Ohio reformed its funding formulas that were supported by both legislators and institutions.

institutional presidents to obtain their support for and agreement on more comprehensive performance-funding measures. At least one of the institutional leaders, Ohio University President Roderick Davis, publically supported the revised models.⁵

POLICY ACTION

Ohio enacted substantial reforms to its funding formulas to further incorporate performance components.

- 
- 2009* The new formulas, which took effect in the 2010-2011 biennial budget, based 80% of state funding for university main campuses on undergraduate course completion and 20% on degree completion. Funding for university regional campuses was based primarily on undergraduate course completion (80%). Funding for community colleges was based primarily on enrollment (78%) and for student achievement of "success points" such as progressing from remedial to college-level academic classes (10%). The new formulas included a "stop-loss" provision (to ensure that institutions did not suddenly lose substantial amounts of funding) and provided an additional subsidy to institutions that demonstrate success with at-risk students.
 - 2010* Legislation (implemented for the 2012-2013 biennium) revised the definition of "at-risk student" so that the formulas would not disadvantage campuses that served large numbers of diverse and underserved students.
 - 2013* Based on recommendations in 2012 from Ohio's public college and university presidents, Ohio's funding formulas were revised so that 100% of the State Share of Instruction funds for undergraduate education will be distributed according to student success criteria in the 2015-16 academic year. Funding for all four-year institutions will be based 50% on degree completion and 50% on course completion. The funding formula for all two-year institutions will be finalized in 2014 and is expected to be based 50% on enrollment, 25% on course completion, and 25% on success points such as students' completion of 12, 24, or 36 credit hours. Other significant changes include the elimination of all stop-loss provisions after fiscal year 2014 and the proportional awarding of credit for transfer students based on the number of credits completed at each institution.



2013

The biennial budget bill requires each public college and university to submit a campus completion plan, approved by the institution's Board of Trustees, to the Chancellor no later than June 30th, 2014. These plans were to articulate strategies and actions the campuses plan to undertake to increase their completions.

Analysis: Engagement of higher education leaders was effective, but some concerns about performance funding remain

Ohio avoided overt resistance to changes in its funding formulas in 2009, which was attributed to a shared sense of responsibility among the state's public institutions to use state resources wisely during the nation's economic crisis.⁶ This was important given the tradition of strong academic independence among Ohio's public institutions. With respect to the 2013 revisions, interviewees identified several factors that contributed to Ohio's on-going commitment to performance funding:

- The Governor's interest and drive in making the formulas more completion-based.
- The institutional leaders' openness to the idea and preference to have a say in the process.
- A high level of trust between Governor Kasich and Gordon Gee, as well as Gee's credibility among institutional leaders in the state.⁷
- The state's focus on completion in higher education, backed by a growing national conversation about performance funding and accountability.

Respondents said that Lumina contributed to Ohio's commitment by drawing attention to performance funding and exposing the state's leadership to the experiences of other states.

Interviewees said that having higher education leaders work together to agree on formulas, under Gee's guidance, provided support that legislators needed to pass the legislation, and that the process was a departure from the more competitive policy negotiation process of recent years. Respondents said that even though the success was due in part to Gee's credibility, they were confident that the process would continue beyond his leadership.

Having higher education leaders work together to agree on formulas provided support that legislators needed to pass the legislation.

At least two editorials in major newspapers in Ohio expressed support for the new formulas and the state's increased focus on completion.⁸ An article in the Ohio State University newspaper was also generally favorable.⁹

Higher education stakeholders also expressed concerns about the potential pitfalls of performance funding. In 2009 and 2013, faculty and other campus leaders said:

- Educational quality could suffer if institutions feel pressured to graduate additional students.
- The formulas provide incentives for institutions to raise admission standards and accept only the better-prepared students who are more likely to succeed.¹⁰

Specifically in relation to the 2013 formulas, interviewees expressed the following concerns:

- The formulas adopted in 2009 were only in effect for two years when the 2013 formulas were adopted. Given this short turnaround, institutions and policymakers had not yet assessed those formulas' effectiveness when the new formulas were approved.
- Although simulations were conducted throughout the process and the presidents agreed in principle with the funding formula, the 2013 legislation was passed on the basis of preliminary simulations which did not provide a final assessment of the impact on each two-year institution.
- Gaps in existing data did not allow non-degree-seeking students, who are enrolled for purposes such as job training, to be fully recognized.¹¹

Regarding the lack of simulations, on the one hand, there were comments such as the following from one higher education leader:

“We launched into this distribution of 50% enrollment 25% course completion 25% success points blind. We did not have the actual institutional data-runs of what it would mean for the institutions before the legislation was passed. That appeared to be by design, so that there would not be a basis for a lot of disagreement as it went through the General Assembly.”

On the other hand, another respondent noted that the advisory group led by Gee had agreed in advance to focus initially on working out the basic principles for the formulas, knowing that the two-year institutions would have an additional year to work out the details. None of these objections was strong enough to generate organized opposition to the changes. A member of the state grant team said that institutional leaders recommended the shift to 100% performance-based funding “because they believed it was the right thing to do at the time.”

The university funding formula was adopted in the 2013 biennial budget; community colleges had an additional year to finalize the details of their funding formula. To assist in developing a formula for the two-year institutions, some simulations were run in late 2013 as part of the funding consultation process facilitated by HCM Strategists through the Ohio Association of Community Colleges. Multiple respondents described this process and the role that HCM Strategists played as valuable.

Since the adoption of the new funding formulas for the universities, a staff member from the Board of Regents said that discussions about productivity issues have greatly accelerated between the Regents' staff and the institutions. The staff member further commented that institutions appear to be more open to getting information about prior learning assessment and other completion strategies.

WHAT IS THE TAKEAWAY?

Ohio was able to achieve agreement on new funding formulas by engaging institutional leaders in a collaborative process guided by a respected president, as well as subsequent extensive discussions among two-year leaders with consultation from HCM Strategists. The leaders' agreement, in turn, provided legislators with the consensus they needed. Because the formula changes are part of the biennial budget legislation, however, they may be up for renegotiation again in two years.

NOW WHAT?

It is too soon to know what impact the changes will have on institutional behavior. Campus completion plans that were due in June of 2014 should be an early barometer of those changes. Given the move to 100% performance-based funding and the elimination of stop-loss provisions, Ohio deserves a close study of performance funding and its effects.



Student Incentives

Ohio did not make any major changes to its student aid policies. Legislation was passed to allow four-year tuition guarantees after institutions expressed interest in offering this option.

STATE AND SYSTEM-LEVEL STUDENT FINANCIAL AID POLICIES

History: Cuts in state funding to need-based aid at the start of the grant period

In general, state-funded grants and scholarships in Ohio are a mix of need-based programs and programs specific to academic disciplines; none offer incentives to students for graduating more quickly.¹² However, in 2008, Ohio launched a pilot project on performance-based scholarships that targeted low-income students with dependent children, using one-time surplus federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (welfare) funds. The students were awarded scholarships of up to \$1,800 for one academic year if they earned at least a “C” in each course and enrolled in 12 or more credits per term. Initial results showed that, compared with a control group, pilot project recipients attempted and earned more credits, were more likely to be enrolled full-time, and had less debt.¹³ Follow up research in the second and third years of the grant period, when students were no longer receiving the scholarship, indicated that recipients were more likely than the control group to attain degrees.¹⁴



At the beginning of the grant period, Ohio had shifted funding for its primary need-based aid program known as the Ohio College Opportunity Grant to the state share of instruction, or SSI. This allowed institutions to constrain tuition increases, but resulted in an approximate 50% decrease in need-based aid, and as a result, Ohio dropped from among the top 18 states in need-based aid from 2005 to 2008, to 35th in 2009.¹⁵

Financial-aid-based student incentives were not part of Ohio’s grant priorities, nor were they a focus of state efforts during the grant period. Although it was beyond SPEC’s timeline for data collection, we subsequently heard that in June of 2014, the Ohio legislature mandated the creation of a working group to study and make recommendations regarding changes to the state’s financial aid programs. The group was to issue a report to the Governor and legislature by December 31, 2014.

Findings: Task force considers variety of student aid interventions, but no policy changes enacted

Outside the purview of the Lumina grant, the Board of Regents in 2012 launched Complete College Ohio, an initiative to identify state strategies for increasing student completion rates. A work group identified student incentives to increase completion, and in November 2012, the Complete College Ohio Task Force recommended a variety of incentives, such as performance-based scholarships, tuition rebates, and loan forgiveness for students who graduate within four years with acceptable grade point averages.¹⁶ No pertinent system-level or state policy changes have been made to date.

Analysis: State emphasizes institutional incentives rather than student incentives

Ohio's investments in higher education have focused on funding its institutions rather than its students. Perhaps as a consequence, the state has not placed a high priority on using student financial aid to incentivize on-time completion of certificates or degrees. In seeking to increase student completions, Governor John Kasich, former Chancellor Jim Petro, and current Chancellor John Carey generally favored developing policies for the institutions to work toward that goal, rather than using student financial aid incentives as a complement to institutional support.

STATE AND SYSTEM-LEVEL TUITION POLICIES

History: Lack of state tuition policies that directly incentivize completion

In Ohio, tuition is set by boards of trustees of individual public institutions, and is limited by a legislated annual cap. For decades, tuition charges at all levels of public higher education in Ohio have exceeded the national average. Prior to the grant period, the Governor and state lawmakers had frozen tuition rates for two years, providing somewhat of a respite for students.

Table 4 shows the percentage above the national average of resident undergraduate tuition and fees at Ohio institutions for the grant period. As of 2009, when the grant period began, Ohio did not have any state tuition policies to encourage completion. The development of such policies was not part of the state's grant priorities.

Table 4. Percentage above the national average of resident undergraduate tuition and fees at Ohio institutions, by sector¹⁷

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Flagship	9%	10%	6%	4%
Comprehensive Colleges and Universities	34%	33%	28%	25%
Community Colleges	14%	2%	3%	3%

Findings: Policy change to accommodate guaranteed tuition models

In 2013, some public institutions expressed interest in guaranteed tuition models, where tuition rates are locked for four years for each cohort of incoming students.¹⁸ To accommodate such models, legislation was passed allowing colleges and universities to exceed state-mandated tuition caps in each cohort’s first year.¹⁹ Those that enact the guarantees are required to report to the chancellor regarding their effectiveness.

Except for guaranteed tuition models, Ohio is not using tuition policies statewide to encourage students to complete more quickly.

Beyond the guaranteed tuition models, there is no indication that Ohio is working at a statewide level to encourage students to complete more quickly through the use of tuition policies. However, individual institutions have implemented some tuition incentive programs:

- *Cleveland State University* adopted an incentive plan so that undergraduates would see a two percent tuition increase for 2013-14, but would receive that amount as a credit toward the following year if they completed 30 course credits in good standing during the year. They would also receive \$100 per semester in book credits. Graduating seniors would also receive \$400 toward graduate school.²⁰
- *The University of Akron*, through a program called Zip Start, offers discounted tuition for incoming freshmen who take designated general education courses in the summer.²¹
- *Baldwin-Wallace University* and *Ashland University* now offer four-year graduation guarantees to full-time students who meet specified criteria and follow agreed-upon degree pathways.²²



New Models

Ohio focused on using prior learning assessment to help students complete degrees. Recent legislation directed the Board of Regents to study dual enrollment and to design a program where one-year certificates can be applied to two-year associate degrees.

SYSTEM-LEVEL AND INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES FOR ACCELERATION AND COMPLETION

Findings: State required the development of three-year pathways to bachelor's degrees

Ohio's grant objectives did not include the development of policies to support new instructional delivery models to improve acceleration and completion, but the state did take action in this area during the grant period.

ENGAGEMENT AND CHAMPIONING

In 2011, Governor Kasich and then Chancellor Petro publicly promoted the development of three-year degree pathways as a means of improving higher education productivity.²³ In 2012, a university staff member attended a Strategy Labs site visit that focused on three-year competency-based degrees, but there is no evidence that the session impacted Ohio's work in this area.

One way institutions are complying with the three-year degree mandate is by requiring students who expect to graduate in three years to transfer in with 30 credit hours already completed.

POLICY ACTION

Under the 2011-2012 biennial budget, state colleges and universities were required to create three-year pathways to bachelor's degrees—for 10% of their programs by the end of 2012 and for 60% of their programs by 2014. To comply, institutions were required to offer sufficient courses in appropriate sequences as well as during the summer session to allow students to complete a bachelor's degree in three years.

Analysis: Colleges have complied with the three-year degree requirements, but some have expressed reservations

Media coverage of the three-year degree pathways highlighted numerous concerns from both students and faculty.²⁴ For example, some stakeholders questioned whether three years allows enough time to enable students to mature before entering the workforce.²⁵ An

editorial emphasized the importance of focusing on what students know and how they think rather than how quickly they graduate.²⁶

There were also occasional editorials and opinion pieces in favor of three-year degree plans,²⁷ and the president of Bowling Green University described the pathways as one of several strategies to increase Ohio's graduation rates.²⁸

As of December 2013, the state's four-year colleges and universities have complied with the legislated requirements, but some institutions, such as Ohio State University and Kent State University, are essentially requiring students who expect to graduate in three years to enroll with 30 credit hours already completed.²⁹

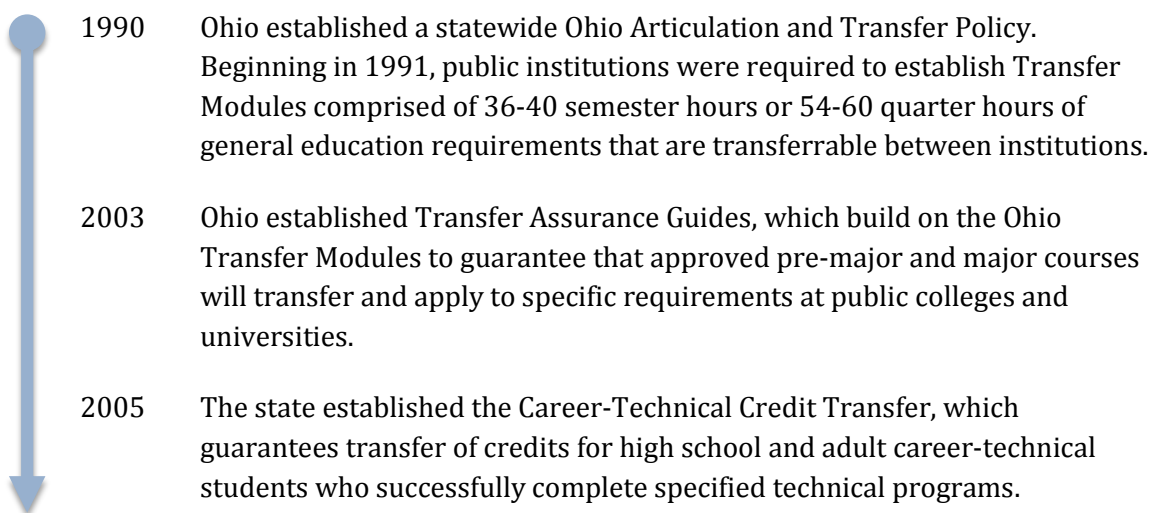
NOW WHAT?

Three-year degree pathways were not initially popular with institutions, but in light of the state's new performance-funding formulas, they may gain favor.

STATE AND SYSTEM-LEVEL POLICIES FOR IMPROVED ARTICULATION AND TRANSFER, INCLUDING PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT

History: Solid foundation of articulation and transfer

Well before the Lumina grant, the state had a foundation for articulation and transfer as evidenced below:



Prior to the grant period, Ohio did not have state policies encouraging the development and use of prior learning assessment.


Findings: Progress on a statewide approach to articulation and transfer, including prior learning assessment

During the latter years of the grant, Ohio used Lumina’s support to work toward developing a statewide approach to prior learning assessment. In addition, the state worked in other areas to improve articulation and transfer which were not funded by the state’s grant. However, most were aligned with Lumina’s productivity goals, including the following:

- An initiative for near-completers—that is, former students who nearly completed the requirements for an associate’s degree before dropping out.
- Development of a statewide approach to reverse transfer, that is, awarding associate degrees to students who completed the requirements for that degree after transferring to a four-year institution.
- Development of statewide articulation agreements between apprentice programs and postsecondary institutions.

KNOWLEDGE AND ENGAGEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS

The state grant team participated in and led a broad range of engagement efforts to develop state policy on prior learning assessment.

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- 2011* After participating in Lumina’s 2011 National Productivity Conference, grant team members reported that the conference strongly influenced their decision to re-focus Ohio’s grant more on student completions than on business efficiencies.³⁰
- 2012* A grant team member attended a Strategy Labs site visit on the experiences of other states in prior learning assessment.
- 2012* The Board of Regents made available on its website a resource guide, created by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning and HCM Strategists, on state policy approaches to prior learning assessment.³¹
- 2012* The Board of Regents released findings from the statewide survey of institutional practices on prior learning assessment. The report outlined the types of prior learning assessments currently in use in Ohio, noted several student outcomes that resulted from these practices, provided examples of systemwide prior learning assessment programs, and offered samples of legislation from other states.³²
- 2013* Lumina approved Ohio’s use of a portion of its remaining productivity funds to develop state policy for prior learning assessments.



- 2013 The Regents' staff worked with Public Agenda to conduct six listening sessions with faculty and administrators that revealed wide differences in knowledge about prior learning assessment as well as concerns among faculty that its increased use would lead to a loss of quality and faculty jobs. Interviewees said that as a result, staff are positioning prior learning assessment as a tool that institutions are already using but whose use could be expanded.
- 2013 The Board of Regents hosted a well-attended symposium on prior learning assessment. At the conclusion of the symposium, the Board of Regents sought nominations for a statewide Prior Learning Assessment Network, representing each college and university, to develop policies and practices related to prior learning assessment.
- 2013 The Board of Regents convened working groups to investigate credit by exam, credit by portfolio assessment, and credit for military training, and make recommendations to the statewide Prior Learning Assessment Network.
- 2013 The Board of Regents and the Ohio Department of Education partnered to form an Advanced Placement Advisory Council to develop policies and strategies at the state level to make Advanced Placement classes more accessible to all students.³³
- 2013 Public Agenda worked with Board of Regents' staff to design and conduct three focus groups to inform the implementation planning for "One Year Option" transfer and articulation agreements between Ohio Technical Centers and Ohio community colleges.
- 2014 Although this is beyond the scope of SPEC's data collection, we subsequently learned that the Board of Regents released the Network's recommendations in the report *PLA with a Purpose: Prior Learning Assessment and Ohio's College Completion Agenda*.

The Board of Regents is planning to continue and deepen engagement with campuses on prior learning assessment. This will occur in two significant ways: a) continuing the work of the statewide Prior Learning Assessment Network to articulate statewide policies and best practices and b) partner with Council for Adult Experiential Learning to explore statewide use of learning counts.org (also supported through Lumina).

ACTIVE CHAMPIONING

In 2012, the Complete College Ohio Task Force recommended that the state and its public colleges and universities expand Ohio’s articulation and transfer programs, including better student tracking and improved transfer between certificate programs and associate degree programs for adults. In particular, the task force recommended better use of prior learning assessment to “increase opportunities for adults to earn college credits for meaningful knowledge and skills.” Suggested actions by the Task Force included:



- Identifying and communicating promising practices to faculty and institutions;
- Identifying professional development opportunities for faculty;
- Developing a communications campaign targeting adult students;
- Improving data collection regarding student outcomes; and
- Recognizing credit for military training and experience.³⁴

POLICY ACTION

In June 2013, Governor John Kasich signed an executive order requiring the Board of Regents to work with public institutions to find ways to award college credit for military training and education, and to identify any state and federal barriers to accomplishing that goal. The executive order also requires departments, boards, and commissions that issue occupational certifications or licenses to revise policies to take into account relevant military education, skills training, and service. All groups were asked to notify the state Office of Workforce Transformation by the end of 2013 regarding any state and federal laws that pose barriers to these efforts.³⁵

Also, legislation was passed in 2013 that requires the chancellor to establish “One Year Option” beginning in 2014. Under this policy, students who receive a Chancellor-approved 900-hour technical certificate will be granted 30 credits toward a technical degree upon enrollment in a public higher education institution.

Analysis: New institutional interest in prior learning assessment, partly due to new completion focus

Interviewees identified several factors that contributed to Ohio’s progress with prior learning assessment, including:

- The recent changes to Ohio’s performance-funding formulas, as prior learning approaches provide a tool for institutions to improve completion rates;
- The state’s engagement strategies associated with prior learning assessment;
- Governor John Kasich’s executive order to move forward with prior learning approaches for veterans;

- The support of Chancellor John Carey for prior learning assessment; and
- Lumina’s funding and support.

Positive feedback from the Board of Regents’ 2013 symposium on prior learning assessment suggests good initial support among institutional leaders. Since the Board of

Prior learning assessment has support from Ohio’s higher education leaders, but concerns remain.

Regents is a coordinating body, it must leverage institutions’ willingness in this area. When asked, interviewees in Ohio said that public colleges and universities are very interested in expanding their use of prior learning assessment. One stated that the state needs more adults with certificates and degrees; the use of prior learning assessment furthers that goal.

Focus groups conducted by Public Agenda with administrators and faculty revealed perceived benefits as well as concerns about prior learning assessment. There were questions about whether the expanded use of prior learning assessment would: reduce opportunities for students to benefit from classroom learning experiences; contribute to the sense that education is a business and that students are to be treated as consumers; or sideline faculty in favor of lower-quality for-profit vendors. Faculty also questioned the feasibility of accurately assessing student learning through tests.³⁶ The Regents’ staff are reportedly taking these concerns into account.

WHAT IS THE TAKEAWAY?

Ohio’s development of state policy for prior learning assessment aligns well with its completion strategies and goals. Governor John Kasich signed an executive order requiring the development of prior learning assessment for veterans. While it was beyond the scope of SPEC’s data collection, we did learn that legislation regarding the awarding of credit for military training, experience, and coursework passed in both the House and the Senate in 2014.

NOW WHAT?

Next steps on improving articulation and transfer in Ohio will focus primarily on prior learning assessment.

The Board of Regents will be working with the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning to explore options for scaling existing prior learning assessment practices. The work will include standardizing a prior learning approach through learningcounts.org as one possible model as well as communicating with faculty about their reservations.

The work will also include bringing faculty together across institutions to develop transfer agreements for accepting prior learning credits granted by other institutions. This is a crucial step in determining success; the credits must be transferrable and count toward degrees at the accepting institutions if students are to receive the full benefit of prior

learning. According to a higher education leader, the Board of Regents originally developed its Transfer Assurance Guide years ago by bringing together faculty from two- and four-year institutions to work out the details in each academic discipline. The process built trust and helped to quell concerns that transferred courses would be of lower quality than those offered at the accepting institutions. A similar process may be suitable as Ohio develops a statewide approach to prior learning assessment.

USE OF NEW (AND REFORM OF EXISTING) MODELS FOR ACCELERATED LEARNING AND LOW-COST DELIVERY


History: Some background in dual enrollment

Historically, Ohio's public colleges and universities have used dual enrollment and distance learning to facilitate accelerated and low-cost educational delivery. In dual enrollment programs, high school students can enroll in college classes tuition-free and thereby begin earning college credits before high school graduation. The programs are guided by state policies established in 1989, but are coordinated through agreements between individual school districts and higher education institutions. From 2008 to 2010, the Board of Regents coordinated a statewide dual enrollment program involving 49 school districts and higher education institutions. Limited state funding for dual enrollment remains a barrier to increasing participation by some school districts.³⁷

Regarding distance learning, the Ohio Learning Network is a consortium of 80 Ohio colleges and universities offering over 3,000 distance learning courses, including more than 182 complete degree and certificate programs.³⁸

Findings: Most action was at the institutional level

The development of new models of educational delivery was not a focus of Ohio's grant work, but there were some relevant activities, primarily at the institutional level, during the grant period.

- 
- 2012 Cuyahoga Community College and Ohio State University received \$50,000 grants from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to develop and offer free Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) in remedial math.
 - 2013 Ohio State University developed and offered four MOOCs through Coursera.
 - 2013 Legislation passed that directs the Board of Regents to work with the Ohio Department of Education and with public colleges and universities to recommend statewide dual enrollment policies for cost-sharing and quality.



- 2013 Interviewees said that the Board of Regents and Governor John Kasich began talking with Udacity about the possibility of providing skill-focused courses aligned with workplace needs.
- 2013 Dayton public schools and Sinclair Community College collaborated to create curriculum for Dunbar Early College High School, where qualifying students will graduate in four years with a high school diploma and an associate degree.³⁹ This is the twelfth early college high school to be established in the state.

Analysis: State priorities in this area are dual enrollment and prior learning assessment

The state’s grant team said that the Regents’ staff were considering potential state policies for dual enrollment, but had not developed recommendations as of the end of data collection in December 2013. SPEC was told that Chancellor Carey released a report with his recommendations about dual enrollment in January of 2014 and that the recommendations were making their way through the legislative process with expectations that they will be adopted. Of particular interest were suggestions for splitting costs among students, school districts, and postsecondary institutions. Interviewees said that some school districts are not fond of dual enrollment because they are required to bear some of the costs; also, students who participate in dual enrollment tend to be among the top performers and their absence is felt at the high school.

Ohio institutions are moving slowly with MOOCs and other new technological models for educational delivery. The Regents expressed interest in MOOCs at a June 2013 meeting, but also said that Ohio institutions should not “reinvent the wheel” regarding their use.⁴⁰ The development of competency-based education offerings, such as through new partnerships with Western Governors University has not been a priority.

WHAT IS THE TAKEAWAY?

Given the chancellor’s and Board of Regents’ focus on dual enrollment and prior learning assessment, new technological models for educational delivery are unlikely to move forward unless individual institutions lead the way.



Business Efficiencies

Ohio advanced existing work on a shared-services demonstration project and an e-procurement consortium. Recent legislation mandated that an efficiency advisory committee composed of representatives from each public institution meet regularly and that the chancellor benchmark progress and report annually to the Governor and Legislature.

PROGRAM AND BUDGETARY REVIEWS

The review of academic programs and budgets to find efficiencies was not a focus of Ohio's productivity work. In 2013, however, the Regents began to streamline the state's program review and approval process by taking it online. As of December 2013, information on potential cost savings had not been released. The first phase of implementation was to address teacher preparation programs in math and science.⁴¹ These initial programs were expected to be fully online by summer 2014.

Regents' staff reported that during the grant period, their office made use of the Degree Qualifications Profile, which was developed as a tool to identify what students are expected to know and do at the associate, bachelor's, and graduate levels. The goal of the Degree Qualifications Profile is to define quality in American higher education in terms of student knowledge and skills, rather than institutional inputs. Regents' staff have distributed the Degree Qualifications Profile on a case-by-case basis as a guide to faculty who were seeking guidance on course or program design. SPEC does not have interview data from faculty or other campus leaders about their use of or perspectives about the Degree Qualifications Profile.

Ohio took its program review process online and the Board of Regents' staff began using Lumina's Degree Qualifications Profile.

ADMINISTRATIVE COST SAVINGS INITIATIVES

History: Some work already underway in shared services and e-procurement

Achieving administrative cost savings was an initial priority of Ohio's productivity grant, particularly in advancing existing shared-services and e-procurement projects.

What do we mean by “shared services?”

Two or more higher education institutions share back office operations, such as human resources and information technology.

SHARED SERVICES

At the start of the grant period in 2009, the University of Akron and Lorain County Community College were already working together to create a proof-of-concept for shared services regionally. Their first step, using the community college’s funds, was to shift the college to the same technology platform (PeopleSoft) that the university used.

What is e-procurement?

E-procurement is an online system of collaborative purchasing of supplies and/or equipment among a group of institutions that provides more favorable prices than if the colleges purchased these by themselves.

E-PROCUREMENT

At the onset of the grant, Ohio already had implemented some statewide purchasing agreements. The use of e-procurement software had the potential to streamline that process, but its upfront costs were a barrier for smaller institutions. In 2009, Ohio’s Inter-University Council, the state association of public universities, negotiated favorable statewide pricing for one such software platform (SciQuest P2P), and seven public institutions had implemented or were in the process of implementing the software.

Lack of funding for upfront costs was a barrier to bringing additional institutions into shared services and e-procurement.

OTHER EFFICIENCY EFFORTS

Finding administrative efficiencies in higher education was also a focus of the Ohio Legislature. Unrelated to the state grant work, the Legislature mandated the creation of Ohio’s Efficiency Council in 2008 to focus on

efficiencies in five areas: academic, administrative, energy, information technology, and procurement. In addition, the Legislature mandated reductions of three percent in operating costs for public institutions in fiscal years 2009, 2010, and 2011.⁴²

Findings: Limited progress in administrative efficiencies

SHARED SERVICES

Lumina’s grant supported the second phase of the shared-services work, to assess and prepare for combining back-office functions at the University of Akron and Lorain County Community College. External consultants predicted a 30% cost savings from combining the information technology units at the two institutions, primarily from staff reductions. They predicted more modest savings for consolidating payroll operations.⁴³ In order to generate buy-in and reduce resistance, project leaders communicated with administrative employees about the ways the initiative would benefit the institutions. Project leaders also

communicated that any expected savings in personnel costs would be realized through attrition rather than layoffs.

In 2010, the two institutions completed a governance charter and bylaws to formalize the project. In 2011, Stark State College joined the project informally. By 2013, the work was no longer bringing additional colleges into the partnership, partly due to lack of funding for upfront costs. The University of Akron and Lorain County Community College remain interested in the project, and representatives from the community college said that sharing the same technology platform had already resulted in cost savings, including software discounts, savings on labor expenses, and a higher level of service. Additional substantial savings are not likely, however, unless several more institutions participate.

E-PROCUREMENT

The Inter-University Council initially had limited success in engaging with community colleges to promote the e-procurement consortium. Grant team members said the smaller institutions were not convinced about potential cost savings and some community college purchasing officers found SciQuest's initial presentation to them to be unprofessional.⁴⁴ Nonetheless, two community colleges joined the consortium in 2011 and Lumina's support defrayed their initial costs. Four additional community colleges joined in 2012.

OTHER EFFICIENCY EFFORTS WITHIN OHIO

The efforts of the Efficiency Council lost momentum after turnover in the Governor's Office and the chancellor's office in 2011. In 2012, the Legislature directed the chancellor to create a new council; the efficiency advisory committee was convened in September 2012 with a similar charge as the original council, spanning both two- and four-year institutions. In 2013, the Legislature added an annual reporting requirement regarding progress in efficiencies from the prior year. Institutions are not required to quantify dollar savings or disclose how their savings are reinvested, but the committee, in its first report to the chancellor in December 2013, included a template for institutions to use for benchmarking progress.

Ohio is continuing its statewide efforts to fund more efficiencies among its public institutions.

Institutions are also pursuing business efficiencies on their own. Wright State University signed a \$25.2 million contract with ABM Industries, Inc., to implement energy efficiency measures beginning in spring 2013. The plan is expected to reduce energy consumption over 40%, saving over \$35 million over the next 15 years.⁴⁵

Analysis: Stable outlook currently, but new partnerships proving difficult to secure

Both the shared services and e-procurement projects faced challenges:

- *Shared services.* Personnel turnover at Lorain County Community College may have slowed progress initially, but this was not the largest challenge. Interviews suggest that project staff at both institutions were, and remain, committed to the work. Several stakeholders said that other institutions' interest in shared services peaked when institutional leaders thought they would be facing 40% cuts in state funding. When budget discussions later shifted to 15% cuts, interest in working together to share back-office operations waned.⁴⁶
- *E-procurement.* Ohio's state evaluation identified the following challenges that prevented institutions from joining the consortium: (1) participation required implementation of a new software platform; (2) many smaller institutions do not have the capacity to take advantage of strategic purchasing; (3) many staff members were concerned that increased automation would lead to layoffs; and (4) some institutions were reluctant to move away from established relationships with preferred vendors.⁴⁷ More broadly, interviewees said that Ohio institutions are autonomous and find it difficult to work together on institutional operations.

During the grant period, leadership of the state team was also experiencing turnover, which may have made it difficult for Ohio to take advantage of Lumina's resources to manage the project-related challenges. In addition, new leadership in the Governor's Office and the chancellor's office in 2011 shifted state attention from efficiencies to efforts to increase student completion.

In interviews, several higher education leaders said that business efficiencies continue to offer opportunities for cost savings, but that academic efficiencies may ultimately offer greater savings.

SHARED SERVICES

What is the takeaway? The shared-services project provides several lessons for those interested in finding savings by combining back-office functions. Interviewees said that:

1. Cross-institutional sharing of services is difficult and time-consuming, and requires strong commitment from all parties. Partnerships of unlike institutions, such as universities and local governmental agencies, may be promising, as they offer few turf and control issues;
2. Return on investment can take several years, can be difficult to measure, and may not be substantial without participation from multiple institutions; and
3. Shared-services projects need to engage staff in the affected departments and address their concerns early. Staff members at the University of Akron and Lorain County

Community College raised concerns early in the project, including the potential for personnel reductions and implementation problems.

What's next? For Lorain County Community College, expanding its shared services with the University of Akron has shifted to a lower priority until other institutions can be brought on board or there is additional support from the state or elsewhere to fund a central data hub. Nonetheless, interviewees said that enthusiasm among project leaders remains high. Five additional institutions in the region currently use a compatible software platform and are therefore well-positioned to join the project. It is also possible that alternative partnerships, such as with local government offices, will provide the economy of scale needed for expansion. Shared-services work may receive a boost from the state's recent investment in OARnet (a high-speed network that serves Ohio K-12 schools, college and university campuses, and state and local governments), due to its potential to allow centralized, cloud-based services.⁴⁸

E-PROCUREMENT

What is the takeaway Cost savings have been difficult to document since new contracts typically provide different levels of usage compared with previous contracts. In addition, most institutions cannot track cost savings by authorized buyers at the department level where a substantial amount of purchasing takes place.⁴⁹ However, at least two institutions, Bowling Green State University and Ohio University, have reported savings through volume discount pricing.⁵⁰

What's next? The e-procurement consortium appears to be stable in its current form, but is unlikely to attract many new institutions in the immediate future.

E-procurement and shared services appear to be stable in their current form, but are unlikely to attract many new institutions in the immediate future.

INITIATIVES THAT SPAN THE FOUR STEPS

Ohio also oversaw two initiatives that span multiple aspects of the Four Steps for Finishing First: a communications project supported by the Lumina grant and Complete College Ohio, a state initiative to increase student completion.

Communications Project

Ohio's original productivity work included a communications initiative. In 2011, a total of 60 individuals, including staff from the Board of Regents and from several public institutions, received social media training to spread information about the state's productivity work to opinion leaders, partners, and constituency groups. The training was reportedly well-received, but there is no evidence that the work led to improved or increased public communications regarding higher education productivity. This aspect of Ohio's work was discontinued after 2011.

Complete College Ohio

Activities: A 2013 law now requires each institution to create a completion plan

Beyond the state grant work, the Board of Regents in 2012 launched Complete College Ohio, an initiative to identify policies and programs with the potential to increase student completion of degrees and certificates at public colleges and universities. A task force consisting of three work groups, named “ready for college,” “no time to waste,” and “help me cross the finish line” recommended a wide range of actions by the state, the Board of Regents, and the public institutions. These included adopting “a consistent, statewide definition of ‘college and career readiness’ ” to expanding “incentives for achieving critical benchmarks and timely completion.”⁵¹ The centerpiece was a recommendation that each public institution be required to create a completion plan to benchmark and measure progress.

The state’s increased emphasis on accountability and its revamping of the performance-funding formulas was said to have impacted institutions’ support for Complete College Ohio.

The biennial budget legislation passed in 2013 required institutions to submit completion plans approved by their individual boards of trustees to the chancellor by July 2014. The format and measures are to be determined by the institutions, but as of fall 2013, staff at the Board of Regents were planning to distribute tools and suggestions to assist campuses. The staff reported receiving technical assistance to develop “toolkits” from Complete College America. Staff members said that they consulted frameworks and metrics

used by the Completion by Design initiative, the Voluntary Framework of Accountability, and the Community College Research Center. The new law also requires that institutions submit updated status reports to the chancellor every other year.

Analysis: Complete College Ohio aligns well with performance funding and prior learning assessment

Complete College Ohio relied heavily on engaging the leadership of the state’s public institutions in developing its recommendations. The Regents’ success in generating buy-in was evident from the convening to release the recommendations held in November 2012. The Regents’ staff estimated that over 350 people attended this standing-room-only event, including trustees, provosts, presidents, and other campus leaders. Even more telling, the legislation requiring campuses to create completion plans had no substantive opposition.

Several interviewees said that the institutions’ support was partly due to the state’s increased emphasis on accountability and its revamping of the performance-funding formulas. This work, in turn, set the stage for Ohio’s prior learning assessment initiative, which the Board of Regents viewed as a way to assist institutions in using existing tools to further completion goals.

One interviewee noted that Complete College Ohio should have included faculty on the task force, but nonetheless supported the recommendations, saying that they were “not a re-tread” of previous plans.

WHAT’S NEXT?

The next step is for the campuses to submit their completion plans to the chancellor. The quality and thoroughness of the plans will provide a strong indication of Complete College Ohio’s potential impact.



II. Insights across the Four Steps

OVERALL INSIGHTS AND TAKEAWAYS

Leadership changes in the governorship and the chancellor's office in 2011 led to a shift in Ohio's emphasis in higher education productivity, from increasing efficiency to increasing student completion of certificates and degrees. Governor John Kasich, former Chancellor Jim Petro, and current Chancellor John Carey championed the need to increase completion rates and align higher education more closely with workforce needs. Although the state has not formally adopted a completion target, Chancellor Carey recently asserted that Ohio needs 60% of its residents to hold a certificate or degree in order to meet future workforce needs.⁵²

The state had modest success with its initial grant projects in shared services and e-procurement, but by the third year, it was apparent to the state team that these projects were unlikely to lead to

With recent leadership changes, there has been more collaboration among the Board of Regents, the chancellor, institutional leaders and faculty.

substantial gains in higher education productivity. After participating in Lumina's National Productivity Conference in 2011, the team decided that engaging more adult learners would be more effective in increasing higher education productivity, and better aligned with Ohio's emphasis on student completion. With Lumina's permission, the team revised its grant priorities to focus on state policy to expand prior learning assessment.

Since Governor Kasich has been in office, he has requested that leaders from the state's public higher education institutions come together to agree on budget and policy recommendations in advance of each legislative session. The strategy was effective during 2012 and 2013 in generating a capital budget for the state's public institutions and recommendations for revised performance-funding formulas. Institutional leaders had not worked together in this way for years, though some interviewees recalled periods of relative cooperation in the 1980s and 1990s.

Similarly, former Chancellor Petro, current Chancellor Carey, and the staff of the Board of Regents have worked more collaboratively with institutional leaders and, in some cases, with faculty. In the state's productivity efforts, the following engagement strategies proved effective:

- Engaging institutional leaders in the development of new recommendations for performance funding, under then-President Gee's leadership.
- Engaging campus administrators and faculty in exploring prior learning practices around the state and how those might be scaled, getting feedback from faculty through focus groups, and holding a statewide symposium.
- Engaging institutional leaders in developing the recommendations for Complete College Ohio.

Challenges that persist in the state's productivity efforts include the following:

- The new performance-funding legislation was passed without assessing the impact on individual two-year institutions, so the impacts on institutional funding were not initially clear. However, data simulations were expected to inform the details of the final two-year formula that was to be legislated in 2014.
- The shared-services project is unlikely to move forward without substantial new funding for a central data hub or the addition of several new institutional partners.
- The e-procurement consortium is unlikely to expand further in the near future.

Interviewees in Ohio said that there is substantial agreement between the state's higher education priorities and Lumina's productivity priorities, and that the alignment increased over time, as the state embraced a completion agenda. Respondents had mixed opinions about whether campus leaders—including administrators and faculty—are in agreement with the state's completion priorities. Several said that the completion agenda had not yet reached the faculty.

Interviewees identified two higher education priorities that are important for Ohio, but not emphasized in the Four Steps:

1. *Messaging to reinforce the value of higher education.* A state leader said that because Lumina recognizes the value of higher education, its outreach focuses almost exclusively on how to improve policy and practice. To institutions, however, this can sound like criticism.
2. *Efforts to improve alignment between higher education and workforce needs.* Several state leaders mentioned Ohio's commitment to linking higher education with economic development, especially under the current governor. One state leader noted specifically that Lumina's Four Steps approach did not address questions of workforce and economic development needs.

Impacts associated with Ohio’s focus on productivity and completion

Interviewees easily identified changes that they associated both with Ohio’s participation in the Lumina grant and with the state’s emphasis on completion. They said that the state is no longer rewarding institutions for enrollment, and they pointed to Ohio’s new performance-funding formulas as a driving factor behind changes they had seen at the institutional level. One comment explaining this phenomenon was that institutions “are evaluating everything with student success in mind.” Concrete changes that were described on campuses include the following:

- Revising course curricula
- Identifying barriers to completion
- Exploring ideas for new instructional models
- Providing additional advising services
- Working with students to identify degree and career paths

A related comment described a shift in conversations on campus:

“[We used to say] ‘we can’t innovate or do new things because of the Board of Regents guidelines.’ So now, through the numerous statewide committees and consultations, that has become an urban myth.”

Interviewees pointed to Ohio’s new performance-funding formulas as a driving factor behind changes they had seen at the institutional level.

Respondents also identified broader changes, including saying that higher education is working more closely with K-12 education on pipeline issues such as teacher preparation; business leaders are taking a greater interest in completion; and workforce needs are increasingly part of the conversation, especially for community colleges.

Lumina’s role and Ohio’s use of initiative resources

During the grant period, Lumina demonstrated flexibility in allowing the state to shift its grant priorities. Team members and other higher education leaders agreed that without the Lumina funding, Ohio’s work on prior learning assessment would not have gained momentum so quickly.

Many interviewees described Lumina’s convening role as crucial in generating interest in and understanding about productivity, and in helping to share information within Ohio and with other states. One state leader’s comment is explanatory:

“This is something that I undervalued and was probably a bit skeptical of and became a great supporter of and that is simply the convening power, the ability of Lumina ...to bring people together who would never get together to talk about problems and issues to share data, to start developing a shared

agenda that they continue the conversations of the time, I just thought it was a tremendous thing that required and probably even merited more of it if one could afford it and you could get campus people free to do and attend those sort of meetings. It really did break the ice in so many respects.”

Some interviewees in Ohio emphasized the value of bringing together a variety of stakeholders who would not normally interact. Others emphasized the value of bringing together multiple mid-level staff who would then be well-positioned to share information both horizontally and vertically within their home organizations. Both practices appear to have been supported by the grant.

Interviewees also described several technical assistance offerings by HCM Strategists and Public Agenda as important, including Strategy Labs Network site visits, access to experts, and exposure to new tools and ideas. Of particular note, according to respondents, were:

- Presentations on affordability by HCM Strategists at a 2013 Board of Regents meeting, which were helpful in advancing the Board’s thinking on the issue;
- The expertise of HCM Strategists in facilitating discussions among Ohio’s two-year institutions as they finalized new performance-funding formulas; and
- Public Agenda’s focus groups in helping the grant team understand faculty perspectives and concerns about prior learning assessment.

Grant team members described the role of the state advisor from HCM Strategists as effective particularly in serving as a liaison with Lumina and with HCM Strategists; providing guidance as the state shifted its grant focus and sought approval from Lumina to do so; and helping the state’s productivity work remain on track during the state leadership transitions. One respondent commented that having an advisor who was not from Ohio allowed her to be perceived as neutral. A few respondents noted that communications from Lumina and HCM Strategists to the state grant team could sometimes have been more timely in order to allow Ohio to take advantage of more Strategy Labs Network site visit invitations. In addition, the grant team’s four-month wait to hear whether their final work plan was approved delayed grant activities.

Can institutional boards of trustees play a stronger role in the completion agenda?

Ohio’s higher education governance is decentralized and there is a strong culture of local control. With much of the policy authority in the hands of institutional boards of trustees, there is no “system” of public higher education per se. State-level policy is set by the Legislature. The Board of Regents advises the chancellor, who is appointed by the Governor.

Many interviewees said that working at the institutional level is the most effective way to change higher education practices in Ohio, and that strategies need to be developed to engage institutional boards of trustees in the completion agenda. Competition was described as a strong motivator for institutions to adopt practices that are shown to be effective.

BROADER QUESTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

In November 2013, SPEC met with state leaders through site visits in Ohio to examine some of the implications of the state's productivity work. The purpose of the meetings was to generate an authentic exchange of perspectives about Ohio's accomplishments and the broader challenges and opportunities the state faces, some of which reach beyond the grant activities. A wide range of state and higher education leaders participated in the site-visit meetings, which led to vibrant and enthusiastic discussions of the following issues.

Tuition, financial aid, and affordability

Developing tuition and financial aid incentives for students to enroll in college and complete certificates or degrees was not part of Ohio's grant work. However, issues related to affordability are gaining attention in the state. State need-based aid is often viewed as critical for improving access to higher education. Yet tuition at Ohio's public institutions is higher than the national median, and state need-based aid has dropped.

Site-visit participants agreed that state need-based aid is not as well funded as higher education leaders would like, but they also noted that when the state reduced funding for need-based aid in 2009, the funds were added to the state share of instruction as part of an agreement with institutions to freeze tuition. Interviewees said that institutions and the Board of Regents have since focused more intently on lower-cost pathways for students, including articulation and transfer agreements, dual credit, three-year degrees, and now prior learning assessment. It is not clear how much these efforts have reduced the price of higher education for low-income students, though respondents did refer to lower tuition available at two-year institutions and the state's policy of granting postsecondary credits for a score of 3, 4, or 5 on Advanced Placement exams.

Several higher education leaders suggested that the revised performance-funding formulas could have an impact on affordability if the stronger focus on completion incentives institutions to work more closely with K-12 education to ensure that students are better prepared for college. Students who are better prepared for college are more likely to complete certificates and degrees in a timely manner.

Respondents also pointed out the implications of federal policies on state aid programs. A higher education leader said that fewer students are now eligible for the Pell Grant due to new federal regulations that require students to have a high school diploma or equivalent. Another leader said that for veterans, states are required to apply need-based aid before taking GI Bill funds into account. This policy maximizes the overall state aid available to

some veterans, but reduces the amount of state funds available for veterans who are receiving GI Bill education benefits and who attend university main campuses.

In discussing the state's policy to apply Pell Grants as the first dollars of need-based aid before applying the Ohio College Opportunity Grant, site-visit participants pointed out that as a result, community college students do not qualify for the state grant. Instead, the state funds go to students at public four-year institutions and independent institutions with higher tuition rates. One interviewee said that the Opportunity Grant could be improved by making it available during summer sessions, and further said that students who complete summer courses and enroll in a subsequent term are more likely to complete their programs.

WHAT IS THE TAKEAWAY?

There are few, if any, indications that increasing state funds for need-based aid is a priority in Ohio, nor do there appear to be efforts to structure the state's need-based aid to include student incentives to complete degrees or certificates more quickly. However, respondents identified affordability as an up-and-coming topic in the state.

Business efficiencies

Business efficiencies comprise one of Lumina's Four Steps, and were an initial focus of Ohio's grant work. Since 2008, Ohio has worked to increase business efficiencies through statewide efficiency councils. Yet business operations, while significant, can be a small portion of an institution's budget compared to the cost of delivering an institution's academic courses and programs.

At the site visit, many participants said that college leaders do not see a strong link between finding business efficiencies and increasing student completion. For example, one person said:

Where Ohio Stands with Regard to Student Financial Aid

- In order to achieve a 60% adult completion rate by 2025, Ohio will have to graduate more than 1 million more adults. Many of these prospective graduates will need financial aid to complete their degrees.
- Research has demonstrated that financial aid can be used in creative ways to incentivize students to complete their degrees in shorter periods of time.
- Increases in tuition and fees over the past five years in Ohio are among the lowest in the nation, at 3% for four-year colleges and 9% for two-year colleges. The state still ranks above the national median for tuition and fees charged, at 18th for four-year institutions and 21st for two-year institutions.
- Ohio applies Pell Grants as the first dollar of need-based aid, with the result that many students do not qualify for the Ohio College Opportunity Grant because the Pell covers most or all tuition costs, especially at community colleges. If the Ohio College Opportunity Grant were applied first, students would be able to use Pell funds for other necessary expenses such as transportation, rent, and books.
- While Ohio still ranked 12th in the nation in state need-based financial aid in 2011-12, its investment in need-based aid declined 53% from 2006-07 to 2011-12. This was the 4th highest decline among the states.

Business Efficiency Efforts and Perspectives in Ohio

- An Efficiency Council was established in Ohio in 2008, and a new efficiency advisory committee was established in 2012, to monitor and share institutions' strategies for efficiency.
- The Complete College Ohio initiative did not include a focus on business efficiencies.
- Many state leaders said that both academic and business efficiencies offer substantial potential for institutional cost savings, but Ohio institutions are much more energized by the completion goals, and the new work with prior learning assessment, than they are with business efficiencies, such as shared services and e-procurement.

“My sense is that campuses, while they may buy into efficiency and collaboration and all that, I’m not sure that they see it as a student success, student completion issue. It’s a different issue.”

Several respondents said that many smaller institutions do not have the capacity, particularly in terms of staff resources, to find and implement business efficiencies. For this reason, the efficiency advisory committee, they said, can serve a valuable function in sharing information and ideas statewide. When asked about other barriers to improving business efficiencies, interviewees identified the following:

- Some institutions are reluctant to sever long-standing relationships with local vendors.
- When institutions achieve cost savings, state Legislatures have a tendency to reduce their funding, leaving them no better off.
- Many institutions are not experienced at making personnel changes to achieve efficiencies.

WHAT IS THE TAKEAWAY?

Ultimately, it is unclear from Ohio’s experience whether substantial administrative savings can be realized across independently governed institutions. Seeking efficiencies within institutions may offer more promise.

Changes in leadership

Ohio experienced extensive turnover in state leadership during the grant period. These changes especially impacted higher education because, as of 2007:

- The chancellor is now appointed by the Governor rather than selected by the Board of Regents; and
- The Regents’ roles are limited to being advisory to the chancellor.

A new Governor was inaugurated in 2011, resulting in turnover at the chancellor’s office and subsequently changes in numerous staff positions at the Board of Regents. In 2013, the chancellor’s position turned over a second time, although most of the staff remained in

place. Over the past few years, the new leadership created momentum toward increasing degree and certificate completion in higher education. Yet because the chancellor is appointed by the Governor, each new election has the potential to bring substantial turnover in higher education leadership and priorities.

State leaders said that changes in some state priorities are inevitable with the inauguration of each new Governor. They acknowledged that shifts in state leadership and direction can present challenges for institutions, but also said that this is not particularly new. For example, an institutional leader described “skepticism” on campuses in response to the imposition of external initiatives, and a reluctance to implement new policies that are likely to change again within a few years. Another higher education leader said that regional four-year universities, in particular, have years of experience implementing different Governors’ visions regarding the purposes of their campuses.

As well as pointing out the independence of institutions in Ohio, state leaders also described several factors at the state level that may stabilize Ohio’s approach in higher education over time:

- The presence of state organizations representing the two- and four-year institutions: the Ohio Association of Community Colleges and the Inter-University Council.
- Many staff members at the Board of Regents have been in place for a number of years.
- Many state policies have been enacted through legislation, which can be difficult to overturn.
- The Governor has established new processes for engagement with institutional leaders.

Ohio’s Political Leaders and Higher Education

- The 2010 elections brought changes to the Governor’s Office, the chancellor’s office, and some of the Board of Regents’ staff positions.
- The new Governor, the chancellor, and the Board of Regents promoted a statewide focus on completion in higher education through Complete College Ohio. Interviewees reported high levels of institutional engagement with the goals of Complete College Ohio.
- The state grant team, in line with the shift in leadership toward completion, shifted its focus to the development of a statewide approach to prior learning assessment.
- The Governor has had success in engaging institutional leaders in collaborative agreements on the capital budget and on new performance-funding formulas. Many interviewees reported that the funding formulas are providing incentives for institutions to focus on student success.

Ohio's higher education associations and recent co-location of the Board of Regents with the Department of Education will help moderate the impact of the state's frequent turnover of political leadership.

Site-visit participants said that a structural change in 2012—the co-location of the Board of Regents and the Ohio Department of Education—had improved coordination between the two agencies. For example, the concept of shared services is being explored between the Board of Regents and the Department of Education. A participant said that the Board of Regents' efforts to develop systems that can support progress, rather than relying on individual leaders to do so, is crucial in sustaining initiatives over

time. Examples include the Complete College Ohio initiative, the Board of Regents' on-going engagement with higher education institutions, and its collaborations with the Department of Education.

One aspect of Ohio's governance structure that participants found challenging is legislative term limits. Several state leaders noted that in the past, legislators often worked to impact a few key issues on which they were well-informed. The process was slower, allowing for careful consideration of potential unintended consequences. Now that term limits have been instituted, one person said, not one legislator "has any knowledge of anything. . . By the time you educate, they're out of office. It's just impossible."

WHAT IS THE TAKEAWAY?

Ohio's strong culture of institutional autonomy complicates state efforts to achieve consensus on statewide higher education policy. In addition, the chancellor's position in the Governor's cabinet has the potential to bring substantial turnover in higher education leadership and priorities with every election. So far, the cooperation fostered by Governor Kasich and Chancellor Carey offers a promising approach to formulating statewide policies and strategies.

THOUGHTS LOOKING FORWARD

Several higher education leaders described the current cooperation among Ohio's public colleges and universities and their engagement with the state's completion agenda as breaking new ground. Some interviewees said that Lumina's emphasis on productivity contributed to the state's focus on completion, and pointed to the resources Lumina brought to the state its convening functions and its overall productivity approach, including performance funding, prior learning assessment, and business efficiencies. One comment made was that "Lumina should feel proud of the difference they've made in Ohio because I think a lot of the work they've supported led to significant policy decisions which I think frankly that many people see as one of the best things going on in Ohio right now."

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Higher education leader

Interviewees also expressed optimism about sustaining current grant projects and making further progress in prior learning assessment:

- *Business efficiencies.* The projects in shared services and e-procurement were described as stable in their existing forms. Expansion of shared services is unlikely without additional funding. The e-procurement consortium is unlikely to attract many new colleges or universities in the immediate future.
- *Prior learning assessment.* Efforts to develop state policy on prior learning assessment have gained a firm foothold and will be pursued through work with the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning. The development of prior learning assessment for veterans has contributed to the momentum. Engagement of administrators and faculty at the campus level is currently being planned, for example, in developing transfer agreements on prior-learning credits.

Beyond the Lumina-funded work, interviewees said that Ohio's focus on performance funding would continue, with possible modifications as the institutions and state assess the impact of current formulas on state funding of individual institutions. Interviewees also predicted that state policymakers and higher education leaders will increasingly focus on college affordability in the years ahead.

Some aspects of Ohio's work are spreading outside of the state. For example, Ohio is well-known nationally as a leader in performance funding. The state is also participating in a multistate collaborative on prior learning credits for military training and skills.

Ohio's focus on completion is forging new cooperation among the state's public higher education institutions.

State leaders expressed optimism about future progress, now that Ohio's priorities for higher education have become more focused on completion. Historically, the state's public colleges and universities have been accustomed to working independently; Ohio's original grant work (demonstration projects in shared services and e-procurement) reflected this culture. The state's more recent work reveals a culture that is more collaborative, demonstrated by the creation of new performance-funding formulas and work on a statewide approach to prior learning assessment. The Governor's and the Board of Regents' work to engage college and university leaders in a statewide completion agenda shows promise in improving Ohio's ability to graduate more students with high-quality credentials.

Appendix I: Acknowledgments

SPEC Associates (SPEC) is grateful to many individuals and organizations who contributed their insights, guidance, and other resources to the development of this report. Responsibility for the findings and analysis, however, rests entirely with SPEC.

At the Ohio Board of Regents, Stephanie Davidson, Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, and Brett Visger, Associate Vice Chancellor of Institutional Collaboration & Completion provided SPEC with access to information and staff at their organizations, facilitated access to other higher education leaders in the state, participated in dozens of conference calls, provided important documents, and reviewed many SPEC reports. In earlier years of this evaluation, Rich Petrick, former HCM Advisor for Ohio, David Cummins, former Vice Chancellor, Finance and Data Management at the Ohio Board of Regents and Darlene Evans McCoy, former Associate Vice Chancellor for Affordability and Efficiency at the Ohio Board of Regents also provided valuable information and participated in SPEC's data collection efforts. At the Ohio Board of Regents, Patty Klein, Executive Assistant to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, provided assistance for SPEC's visits to the state.

Also within Ohio, many legislators, higher education administrators, institutional presidents and provosts, faculty members, business leaders, students, and others contributed their time and perspectives during interviews and site visits. This report would not have been possible without their participation, and we hope they hear their voices within it.

The national partners that participated in the productivity work were also instrumental. Kristin Conklin at HCM Strategists, Inc., provided information and insights about how the productivity work rolled out, how the Strategy Labs Network operates, and what both could mean for the future of higher education in Ohio. She also facilitated access to the state advisors and mentors who were part of the Strategy Labs Network. Among the Strategy Labs team members, Jimmy Clarke and Lana Oleen in particular contributed to SPEC's conference call preparation and reviewed many reports and interview questionnaires. At HCM Strategists, Anne Dudro provided behind-the-scenes support and connections to people, internal documents, and databases.

At Public Agenda, Alison Kadlec, Senior Vice President and Director of Public Engagement Programs, provided information about engagement of higher education administrators, faculty, and students. Michelle Currie, former Senior Public Engagement Associate, reviewed SPEC reports and contributed to conference calls. At the Institute for the Study of Knowledge Management in Education, President Lisa Petrides, as well as Cynthia Jimes, Clare Middleton-Denzer and Luna Malbroux, helped SPEC gain access to information and facilitated our sharing of findings on CollegeProductivity.org.

Many individuals reviewed prior drafts of this report: Brett Visger, Stephanie Davidson, Lana Oleen, and Jimmy Clarke.

Over the past five years, SPEC gathered and relied on an international team of evaluation and higher education experts to contribute to this and other reports on Lumina's productivity work. For this report, Wendy Limbert and John Wittstruck served primary roles in visiting the state, interviewing state leaders, gathering and analyzing data, drafting the report, and developing its findings and analysis. Thad Nodine facilitated our writing and analysis, and helped to clarify and draw out our key findings. At SPEC, Victoria Straub provided quality control on evaluation procedures and reports. Natalie De Sole managed telephone interview and on-site data collection, and assured consistency in report formatting. Other contributors on SPEC's team also provided invaluable feedback: Anne Clark, Melanie Hwalek, Stephen Maack, Ruth Mohr, John Muffo, Rick Voorhees, and Bob Williams.

Finally, SPEC is grateful to Lumina, for its leadership and support of evaluation as a crucial component of the productivity initiative. Lumina's executive team—Jamie Merisotis, Holiday Hart McKiernan, James Applegate, Dewayne Matthews, Kiko Suarez, Sam Cargile, and Dave Maas—provided direction and expertise as to the purposes of the foundation's work. Strategy Director Kevin Corcoran and former Program Director Suzanne Walsh shared knowledge and information about Lumina's productivity objectives, offered guidance, and ensured that our interviews, analysis, and reports addressed the needs of the foundation. Mary Grcich Williams, former Director of Evaluation, and Courtney Brown, Director of Organizational Performance and Evaluation, provided crucial feedback and facilitated our evaluative efforts throughout the initiative, as did other members of Lumina's team assigned to this work, including Jill Wohlford, former Director of Organizational Learning; Lucia Anderson Weathers, Communications Director; Susan Johnson, Director of Equity and Inclusion; Strategy Officer Christine Marson; and former Strategy Officer Marcus Kolb.

It is our hope that lessons from the evaluation portrayed in this report contribute to Ohio's productivity efforts and our nation's achievement of Lumina's Goal 2025.

Appendix II: Methodology

In 2008, Lumina asked SPEC Associates (SPEC) to evaluate its investments in the seven states participating in an initiative known as Making Opportunity Affordable, which later became known more broadly as Lumina’s higher education productivity initiative. The central evaluation question involved the relationship between the initiative’s work and changes in state and systemwide policies that affect productivity. It is important to note that SPEC’s evaluative efforts focused on the effectiveness of Lumina’s investments in each state, rather than the effectiveness of each state’s efforts in accomplishing its grant goals. Each of the states had access to an in-state evaluator to evaluate its own work.

Some of the challenges in this evaluative work included the following:

- The initiative’s overall purposes, objectives, and strategies emerged over the course of the work and changed several times during the grant period.
- The initiative did not adopt a theory of change or articulate critical assumptions undergirding its Four Steps agenda.
- The initiative did not adopt an overall cross-state definition of productivity or strategy to measure progress or effectiveness in achieving the initiative’s objectives.

This individual state report is one of seven that examines the productivity-related accomplishments in each of the implementation states during the grant period. A national technical report, *Cross-State Technical Report for Lumina’s State-Based Efforts to Improve Productivity in U.S. Higher Education: A Summary of Deeper Work in Seven States*, provides a detailed summary of the work across the seven states. A national evaluative report, *Improving the Yields in Higher Education: Findings from Lumina Foundation’s State-Based Efforts to Increase Productivity in U.S. Higher Education*, presents the evaluation team’s major conclusions about the initiative’s potential impacts and implications. The reports are available at www.specassociates.org.

SPEC gathered data from a wide range of sources and looked deeply at each state’s efforts. SPEC analyzed its data using multiple methods, as summarized below. The period of examination is from the beginning of Lumina’s work with the states in 2008 through the fall of 2013. SPEC’s evaluation team consisted of nine seasoned professionals in the areas of program evaluation, higher education systems and governance, state higher education policy, systems thinking, evaluation of inter-organization collaboratives and networks, strategic planning, institutional research, and assessment of student learning outcomes. Each of the seven states was assigned two members of the evaluation team who were responsible for identifying relevant documentation, participating in monthly conference calls with state teams, interviewing higher education leaders, analyzing state-specific data, and drafting state-specific reports.

Data analyses and interpretation

Data analyses and interpretation included the following:

- Examination of each state's goals and achievements through their policy contexts, including higher education governance, leadership, finance, and accountability
- Monthly synthesis of newly acquired information and insights
- Coding and tagging of concepts and themes in documents, transcripts, and data reports
- Comparison of states' progress in productivity-related activities
- Analysis of patterns and trends across states on factors external to higher education
- Sense-making via:
 - Focused discussions with state grant team members;
 - Final site visit discussion with key higher education leaders;
 - Feedback on reports from state team members and from Lumina's national support organizations;
 - Reflection with Lumina staff and its national productivity partners; and
 - Ongoing interpretive discussions among evaluation team members.

Data sources

Qualitative data were collected from the following sources, and included approximately 425 documents related to Ohio:

- State and national reports and legislation
- Focused observations at national and state meetings
- Monthly conference calls with state teams over a three-year period
- In-depth telephone interviews with higher education leaders, business representatives, faculty, students, and state legislative policymakers
- Three site visits to each implementation state for in-person interviews with stakeholders
- Focused interviews with national organizations and individuals connected to Lumina's investments in productivity
- Media reports

Quantitative data were collected from the following sources:

- Reports and secondary data from these sources:
 - Higher education boards
 - Legislative research organizations
 - U.S. Census Bureau
 - State demographers
 - K-12 agencies

- Statewide nonprofit organizations
- Higher education and education policy organizations

- Databases available from these sources:
 - National Information Center for Higher Education Policymaking and Analysis
 - National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs
 - Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)
 - Comparative state financial data (Grapevine)

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