

As adopted by OACC and mailed by T. Thomas on 10/20/05 to the Governor and c: to members of the Higher Education Funding Study Council and the Partnership for Continued Learning

Ohio Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program – Position and Recommendations

by

THE OHIO COUNCIL OF CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICERS FOR TWO-YEAR COLLEGES

I. Introduction

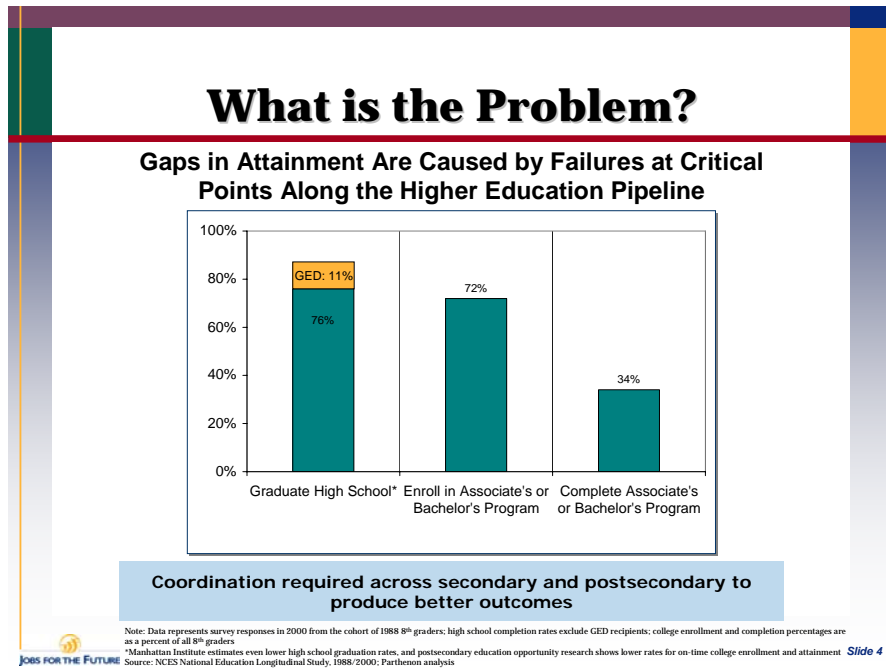
The Ohio Council of Chief Academic Officers for Two-Year Colleges was asked by the OACC to begin a discussion concerning Ohio's Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) Program. The request was prompted by testimony given by Robert G. Cyders before the Ohio Senate Education Committee on May 11, 2005.

What follows is a discussion and recommendations for best practices regarding Ohio's PSEO Program, which are endorsed by the Ohio Chief Academic Officers for Two-Year Colleges.

II. Assessment of Need for the PSEO Program in Ohio

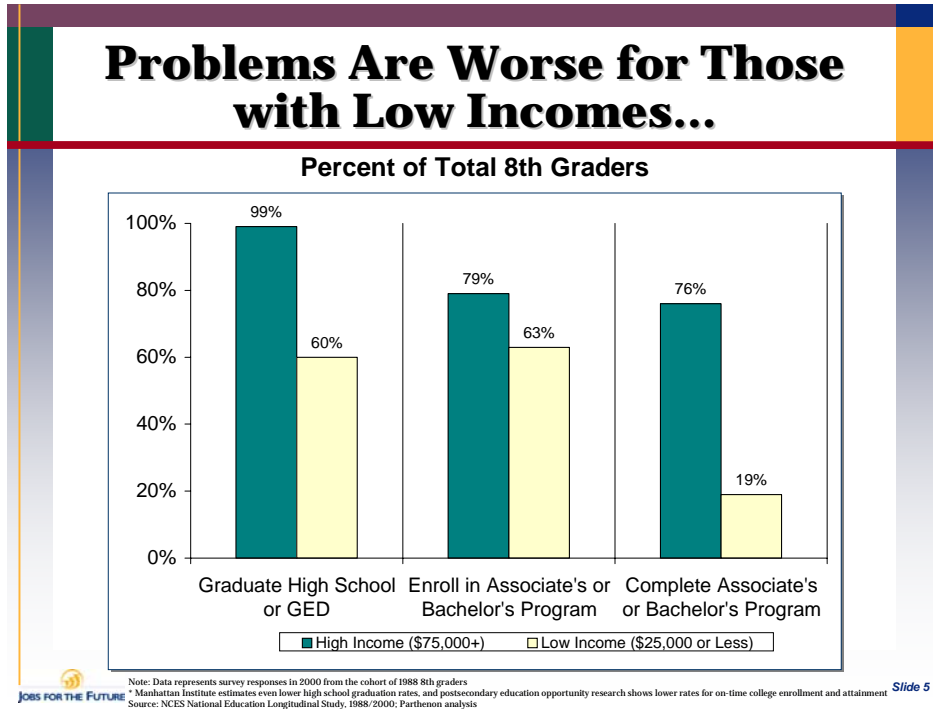
The context for the Chief Academic Officers' position paper on Post Secondary Education Options (PSEO) is reflected in *Lost in Transition? Policies and Programs Making Real Connections Between High School and Postsecondary Education*, a PowerPoint presentation presented by Jobs For The Future at the Preparing America's Future Regional High School Summit (May, 2004). The following slides from that presentation illustrate how the disconnected K-12 and postsecondary education systems cause gaps in attainment along the educational continuum.

Table I: Gaps in Attainment



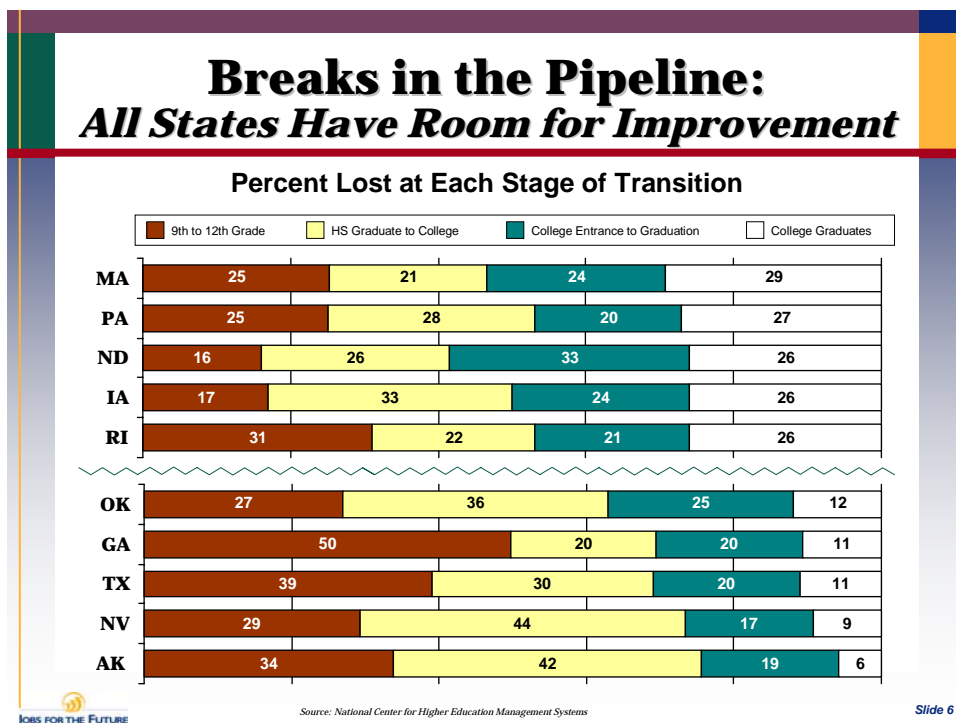
Of the percentage of students who graduate from high school, a vast majority enroll in associate or bachelor degree programs. However, less than half of those enrolled in postsecondary college programs complete an associate or bachelor program. As demonstrated in Table II, educational attainment is significantly worse for students with low incomes. Table III demonstrates that many, if not all, states have gaps in attainment along the educational continuum.

Table II: Effect of Low Incomes



Slide 5

Table III: Stages of Transition



Slide 6

In addition to what researchers know about gaps in attainment caused by failures at critical points along the higher education pipeline, they also know that “America’s high school students have higher educational aspirations than ever before. Yet these aspirations are being undermined by disconnected educational systems and other barriers”, according to *Betraying the College Dream*, a report released by Stanford University’s Bridge Project after six years of research (Venezia, Kirst, and Antonio, 2004).

PSEO is a viable strategy for bridging these gaps in educational attainment and meeting the higher education aspirations of Ohio secondary students. It is the view of The Ohio Chief Academic Officers for Two-Year Colleges that Ohio should be passing legislation and developing policy that enhances PSEO rather than restricting it.

Furthermore, Boswell and Wilson, in *Keeping America’s Promise – A Report of the Community College*, predict that “there will be a strong demand from high school graduates on to 2015.” They further note that “if the nation and individual states do not plan for future enrollment, capacity constraints are likely to challenge the promise of open access at community colleges” (Boswell, p. 23). Ohio’ legislators need to recognize that PSEO is one solution to the capacity demands that will be made on higher education and the two-year college system in general if Ohio is to meet the challenge of educating its citizenry (Boswell, 2004).

Finally, Ohio must attract students whose parents did not attend college if the state is going to meet the challenge of educating an undereducated citizenry. “First-generation college students were more likely to have taken remedial courses, to have had trouble deciding on a major, and to have earned fewer academic credits than other students were” (Schuman, 2005). These students would benefit significantly from the PSEO experience and requisite exposure to the promise of a college education.

Thomas Bailey and Melinda Mechur (November, 2003) reviewed programs similar to Ohio's PSEO program and reported that policy literature, program information, and interviewed practitioners typically evidence eight reasons why such programs serve a wide variety of students:

- *Prepare students for the academic rigors of college.*
- *Provide more realistic information to students about the skills that they will need to succeed in college.*
- *Help high school faculty prepare their students for the college experience.*
- *Expose traditionally non-college-bound students to college.*
- *Provide curricular options to students.*
- *Improve motivation through high expectations.*
- *Lower the cost of postsecondary education for students.*
- *Promote institutional relationships between colleges and high schools.*

In addition to these eight reasons, dual enrollment provides a promising strategy for increasing higher education participation by underrepresented students (Hoffman, 2005). This is especially promising in Ohio given the large number of both urban and rural students. The PSEO program also provides access to many types of educational experiences such as fine arts, calculus, foreign languages, and social sciences that many high schools cannot offer. It has been the experience of Ohio's community and technical colleges that the afore-mentioned benefits are representative of Ohio PSEO programs, students, parents, and school partnerships.

Ohio ranks 41st out of 50 states in per capita funding of higher education and, consequently, average tuition rates are high and the participation rates rank Ohio low at 36 out of 50 states. PSEO is a cost-efficient and time-efficient way to increase higher education attainment in Ohio and to increase the talent pool to drive economic prosperity.

Therefore, Ohio's community and technical colleges view the PSEO legislation (ORC 3365 – the Post-Secondary Education Option) as being an overwhelming success and a positive influence for student achievement, educational attainment, and Ohio families and citizens. The

experience of Ohio's community and technical colleges with PSEO, coupled with the recommendation of the Governor's Commission on Higher Education and the Economy (CHEE) that Ohio educates 180,000 additional citizens through the Bachelor's Degree over the next 10 years, establishes PSEO as a critical strategy for achieving the CHEE goal.

III. Strengthening the PSEO Opportunity

Incentives. In consultation with their respective school and college of choice, Ohio families are in the best position to decide whether the PSEO program presents an opportunity for a child. While secondary schools are obligated to apprise families about PSEO enrollment and provide guidance, and colleges have the responsibility to establish admission criteria and teach quality courses, the decision to participate should rest in the hands of students and families.

Some states like Virginia provide incentives to families and to schools as they assess the value of PSEO for their students. Governor Mark Warner launched the *Senior Year Plus* in 2003. College-bound seniors and seniors who want to immediately enter the workforce can earn up to 15 college credits leading to industry certification or the Associate of Arts Degree, paid for by the state. This state's economic development strategy is to expose secondary school students to college in hopes of increasing higher education attainment. If the top 10 states with respect to higher education attainment adopt strategies like Virginia's strategy, educating 180,000 more Ohio citizens will not be enough to improve Ohio's competitive position.

Funding the PSEO Student Experience. Secondary schools' budget constraints and levy failures across the state of Ohio have exacerbated the issues surrounding the funding of PSEO. It is recommended that Ohio consider funding models similar to those in other states. It is imperative that Ohio remove or minimize financial disincentives so that secondary schools will not only fulfill the letter of the law by notifying families about PSEO, but also actively promote it.

Community and technical colleges are concerned about the average amount of reimbursement they receive for student tuition, which is generally thought to be somewhere between 70 and 85 percent for *most* students. Additionally, colleges provide textbooks at no cost to students. Therefore, colleges are already discounting the cost of education in the PSEO program. Policy or practice that would allow schools or individuals to negotiate even lower rates of tuition reimbursement would be untenable.

Further, the reimbursement from the secondary schools occurs well after the end of the academic year in which students attended and as late as November for students attending in the previous fall, winter, or spring sessions. All of the expenses incurred in delivering educational services to PSEO students must be paid as they occur, thus putting increasing pressure on the institution's cash flow beyond those of the tuition discount. A budget provision should be made to allow colleges to receive tuition that is reimbursed at a 100% level in a timely manner. This is especially important since tuition increasingly comprises a greater share of the total cost of education for all students.

In addition, the state could provide incentive funding to high schools that lose students to colleges implementing the program.

PSEO March 1 Notification. A consistent process for notifying students and families about what the Ohio Revised Code (ORC) says about the PSEO program should be developed and practiced by all school districts alike. Notification should be overtly obvious and thorough. Some notifications are buried in small print, which does not satisfy the spirit of the law. More should be done to promote and advertise the PSEO option. It is recommended that a statewide cross-functional task force be formed to develop guidelines for the consistent dissemination of PSEO information and practices to families who would potentially benefit from this program.

In addition, while one can measure academic ability, emotional maturity is difficult to measure. Orientation sessions for students and parents are essential and might be uniformly structured for all PSEO students and their families.

Rigor of PSEO Courses. Colleges are accountable for and consistently control the quality of all courses offered. It is typical for quality issues to be addressed if they arise, and there are avenues established for hearing complaints with regard to course rigor. Inasmuch as PSEO students are enrolled in college-level courses, the same courses taken by any other students, there should never be a question of a course's capacity to qualify for dual credit as prescribed in the ORC. Furthermore, equity relative to grades earned in PSEO courses should be established by developing a guideline applicable to all students whereby school districts will accept the grade earned in a PSEO course and uniformly apply it to the high school cumulative GPA calculation. If students in a district earn weighted grades for AP courses, grades earned in PSEO courses should be equally weighted and applied.

Other Transformative Ideas. Innovation of the current PSEO Program to augment program equity, viability, and quality might espouse the following concepts:

1. Create summer PSEO options
2. Share high school faculty where faculty have the credentials to work for colleges as adjunct faculty in order to strengthen ties between secondary schools and two-year institutions
3. Use distance learning capabilities
4. Have all secondary students complete a college admission application prior to graduation, which can be maintained in a contingency file at the college
5. Review the findings of the College and Career Transitions Initiative (CCTI) to learn about the value of career pathways, and apply the knowledge to construct additional innovative PSEO options

IV. Summary

In summary, it is the opinion of the Ohio Chief Academic Officers for Two-Year Colleges that the state of Ohio has a winning program in the PSEO Program. However, implementation of the program is, at best, problematic. In a seriously under-educated state, it is important to remove barriers to educational attainment and increase access to postsecondary education. The spirit of the PSEO Program is to support access to higher education while it contains the cost of education. Duplication of services and course requirements should be minimized for those who opt into the PSEO program. As funding for all education has become a precious, scarce resource, it is recommended that the PSEO Program in Ohio be strengthened and options therein expanded.

References

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A Summary of Position and Recommendations for the Ohio PSEO Program

by

THE OHIO COUNCIL OF CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICERS FOR TWO-YEAR COLLEGES

Why is PSEO so critical to Ohio?

- PSEO is a critical strategy for achieving workforce development goals and increasing the number of Ohioans attaining a Bachelor's Degree by 180,000 students in accordance with the State Return on Educational Investment (ROEI) strategy.
- There will be an increase in high school graduates going to college, and PSEO is a proven strategy not only for meeting this challenge, but also for introducing first-generation college students to the rigors of the college experience and preparing them for success.
- PSEO is a viable strategy for bridging the gaps in educational attainment and meeting the higher education aspirations of Ohio's secondary students.
- PSEO prepares students for the rigors of college, exposes traditionally non-college-bound students to college, provides curricular options, improves motivation through high expectations, and promotes institutional relationships among colleges and high schools.

What can be done to enhance effectiveness?

- Provide greater consistency for implementation across the state.
- Restructure the financial relationship between the state, local school districts and higher education so that the focus is on educational goals not financial competition.
- Establish a strategic vision for PSEO.

What specific recommendations should be considered to ensure effectiveness?

- Ensure that Ohio families are in a position to decide whether the PSEO program presents an opportunity for their children.
- Courses in which PSEO students are enrolled are the same rigorous, college-level courses taken by other students and should continue to qualify for dual credit as prescribed in the ORC. Grades earned should uniformly apply to the high school cumulative GPA calculation. If students in a district earn weighted grades for AP courses, grades earned in PSEO courses should be equally weighted and applied.
- Under no circumstance may a college course designated as "remedial or developmental" be eligible for PSEO funding or dual credit.
- **Vision:**
 - Create a bold state vision that every high school graduate will have earned at least a term of college credit before high school graduation.

- **Consistency:**
 - Create a statewide, cross-functional task force
 - to develop guidelines for the consistent dissemination of PSEO information to families, including elements of good practice for conducting an orientation program for parents and students,
 - to delineate eligible coursework,
 - to develop academic progress policies including monitoring student course success rates,
 - to ensure there are competency-based content expectations.

- **Finance:**
 - Establish a process for colleges to receive timely reimbursement for tuition and textbook costs at a 100% level, which recognizes that PSEO students are supported at the same level as other students as well as being accommodated with additional recordkeeping, advising, and communication with schools and parents.

 - Charge the statewide, cross-functional task force with the responsibility of creating a restructured financial relationship between the state, local school districts and higher education so that the focus is on educational goals not financial competition. The rationale is that this expenditure will shorten the time to degree (and subsequently to tax paying employment) and reduce the overall cost of higher education tuition for Ohioans as well as recognize the secondary additional support costs for marketing, advising, logistics, and accounting for inter-sector delivery costs, particularly in motivating 1st generation and low-income students.

Benefits to Ohio

- PSEO reduces the need for remediation which translates into a cost savings for the post-secondary sector.
- Reinforces a seamless K-16 educational system
- Lowers the cost of higher education to parents while accelerating time to completion and to economic productivity.
- Puts Ohio on the cutting edge of educational and workforce enhancement.