Co-located Campuses
Performance Audit Summary

WHAT WE LOOKED AT

There are seven co-located campuses in Ohio where two public institutions of higher education exist on either the same or adjacent property. Because these institutions exist in a shared location, they have a unique opportunity to collaborate closely with each other to provide services to students and the community in general. We focused our review of these institutions on seven key operational areas to determine how resources were used and shared on each co-located campus:

- **Programs and Courses,** focusing on unnecessary course and program duplication and educational pathways between co-located campus partners.
- **Facilities Utilization,** determining instructional space utilization for each co-located campus partner to identify additional opportunities for sharing.
- **Information Technology,** emphasizing opportunities for improved efficiency and effectiveness related to cyber security, data center usage, purchasing, and wireless networking.
- **Student Services,** centering on library services, academic advising, and tutoring.
- **Campus Security,** focusing on improved efficiency or operational effectiveness, as well as opportunities for further collaboration.
- **Facilities Management,** centering on opportunities for further collaboration that would result in improved efficiency and effectiveness, as well as a review of a co-located campus that stopped sharing facilities management operations.
- **Staffing,** determining what opportunities exist for co-located campus partners to share additional personnel.

Where appropriate we compared each institution to existing industry standards. We also reviewed existing agreements within each area to identify any best practices that could be replicated at other co-located institutions.

WHAT WE FOUND

The co-located campuses have been studied before in 2004 and 2016, by an Ohio General Assembly appointed task force and committees and were included in the Governor's 2015 study on college affordability in Ohio. These studies resulted in recommendations that were directed at the institutions, the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE), and the General Assembly. We were able to determine that the recommendations directed at institutions were not uniformly implemented by each co-located partner. We did not attempt to determine the impact of any attempted implementation of recommendations. However, these studies, and the associated recommendations, indicate that there is a perceived benefit from the co-located campuses and opportunities to increase operational efficiency and effectiveness.

We found that Ohio's co-located structure is unique among the states, mainly due to the development of Ohio's higher education system in the mid-20th century. While many states have multiple campuses for different institutions of higher education located in one city, we found none where a regional campus of a public four-year university shares a campus with a community college. Because of this, identifying peer states, similar campus models, or industry best practices was difficult due to limited data relating to shared campuses. However, by reviewing each co-located institution individually and any cost share agreements between the co-located partners, we were able to conduct various analyses and compare the individual institution to state and federal requirements along with industry standards or best practices for each respective area. This allowed us to find opportunities of efficiency and transparency for individual institutions and notice any trends that exist across institutions.

In **Appendix A**, we created a recommendation matrix. The recommendation matrix identifies to which institutions each recommendation is addressed. For recommendations 5 through 7, institutions are not identified due to the sensitive nature of the recommendations.

KEY OBSERVATIONS

Key Observation 1: Co-located campuses, as they exist in Ohio (regional campus of a four year public university and a community college), appear to be a unique arrangement. The research we conducted and higher education organizations we interviewed did not identify similar arrangements in other states. As a result, we were unable to compare Ohio's co-located campuses to peer states.

Key Observation 2: Among the seven campuses we observed varying degrees of collaboration between institutions. While collaboration between co-located institutions is not required by law, the proximity of these institutions does provide the opportunity to work together in order to provide more effective and efficient services to students and the community at large. At the Newark campus, the two institutions shared significant portions of operations and, in some cases, we were unable to separate them for purposes of analysis. Other campuses share some services, such as a central library or facilities management staff. Conversely, at the St. Clairsville campus, the two institutions shared no services and collaboration existed only in that the community college used two buildings owned by the regional campus.

Key Observation 3: The majority of classrooms and laboratories on the co-located campuses were built more than 40 years ago. Since their construction, student enrollment in Ohio's higher education institutions has declined. As a result, every co-located institution has excess instructional capacity leaving institution leadership and boards of trustees with difficult decisions to make related to the future of these spaces.

PROGRAMS AND COURSES

One of the main benefits to students on a co-located campus is the opportunity to change programs or courses if their intentions change. We attempted to determine if there were opportunities for co-located institutions to improve a student's ability to move between institutions. Of the 800 programs offered across all of the co-located institutions, there were 11 instances where an articulation agreement, which outlines program specific credit transfer guidelines, could be established. We also identified five instances where co-located partners had a duplicative program, however four of the five programs were for an associate degree in general studies of liberal arts, which is appropriate for both to offer. This indicates that, at the program level, the co-located partners are not operating an abundance of overlapping programs and courses.

Unfortunately, we were unable to complete a similar analysis on the course, or class, level. This is because institutions do not share common course numbering. While there are some limited resources related to course numbering, it is not comprehensive enough to conduct meaningful analysis. Our work in this area identified two recommendations for the institutions to improve collaboration efforts and one issue for further study for the General Assembly in coordination with ODHE and other key stakeholders:

Recommendation 1: Since 2015, ODHE has been working on establishing statewide agreements or pathways for programs and institutions across the state. Those agreements are in addition to the bilateral articulation agreements institutions can establish for any suitable programs. While many programs were found to be covered by active articulation agreements there are still programs that would benefit from ensuring credits can be transferred between the co-located institutions**.** These additional program articulation agreements would guarantee the efficient use of credits from a transfer student between co-located institutions while staying in the articulated pathway. Co-located institutions should work to establish articulation agreements between overlapping programs to allow students to transfer credits more easily between institutions.

Recommendation 2: Articulation agreements help ensure that if a student follows the specific path detailed in the articulation agreement, the credits transfer to a certain program at the receiving institution. For those planning to transfer, an outdated articulation agreement means the student could take unnecessary courses, need to take additional courses, or pursue a pathway that no longer exists. An institution's website serves as an accessible channel of communication for this information. The reconciliation process of each institution's website containing active articulation agreements revealed discrepancies. Every co-located institution's website required at least one articulation agreement change. Co-located institutions should ensure articulation agreements are kept up-to-date and clearly communicated to students, faculty, and advisors. An updated website will help ensure the effective use of articulation agreements through updated communication.

Issue for Further Study 1: Standardized and uniform course numbering does not currently exist across all of Ohio's public higher education institutions, rather the course numbering system used is dependent on the institution. ODHE only reviews low enrolled courses for efficiency and opportunities for collaboration. Although Transfer Assurance Guides (TAG) and Career-Technical Assurance Guides (CTAG) established course equivalencies, they apply to a limited number of overall courses offered, this is equivalent to an average of 9.8 percent for all co-located campuses. The Legislature, in consult with ODHE and key stakeholders, should explore expanding course equivalent guides or similar State policy on course numbering. Expansion of course equivalency would allow further insight on institution collaboration at the course level.

FACILITIES UTILIZATION

Because the co-located campuses have several buildings that may be shared, we reviewed scheduling and room usage to determine if partner institutions could collaborate to more efficiently use existing space. We found that overall utilization at each co-located campus was lower than industry benchmarks. Because of this, our analysis determined that the co-located campuses have excess capacity based on the number of courses offered. Because of this, the institutions may not be sharing facility space because there is a lack of need to do so.

We did find that the sharing of space is common across the seven campuses, though the sharing of facilities exists in many forms. Most commonly, one institution will own a facility, use it, and permit its partner institution to use it as well. In some cases, an institution may "lease" a facility from their partner—here, the institution owning the facility does not use the facility, and instead strikes up an agreement with their partner institution to permit the partner to use the facility in full.

Combined with declining enrollment trends and the increasing use of online course delivery, the current facilities footprint at each institution is likely to be more space than will be required in the future. Our analysis identified two recommendations for institutional leadership to consider as they make decisions regarding future facility needs:

Recommendation 3: Excess facilities capacity existed at co-located institutions prior to the COVID-19 pandemic as a result of declining enrollment and changes in how students have been educated in the past decade. Further, even if enrollment at each institution were to return to its historical peak, all institutions would have remaining capacity. As a result, institutions should review their existing space and work with co-located partners as a part of long-term strategic plans in lieu of facility additions or replacement. Buildings that need notable repair to remain current or safe should be considered for decommission, demolition, or sale where appropriate.

Recommendation 4: Institutions of higher education in Ohio report their building and space inventories to the ODHE. However, not all classrooms and laboratories reported to the ODHE were reserved over the five-year period of analysis, 2017-2021. The institutions should submit accurate self-reported facilities information to ODHE and ensure that area type descriptions for rooms remain up to date, so that leadership at co-located institutions and stakeholders around the state can make informed decisions about the use and needs of the institutions.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Well maintained, secure, and up-to-date information technology (IT) can be a costly undertaking for an institution. Ensuring proper hardware, software, and personnel is critical to operational success. Because the co-located campuses share some services and facilities, we reviewed each institution's IT policies and procedures to determine if there were opportunities to share resources.

Within this functional area, we determined that the regional campuses each fell under the umbrella of the university main campus IT department. For this reason, our analysis involved only 10 institutions instead of other sections of this audit where each regional campus was treated individually.

We found that outside of wireless networking, there is little to no sharing of IT services at most of the co-located campuses. For those institutions that share buildings, there were a variety of methods used to share access to wireless network services. These include fully integrated networks, responsibility designated to an IT department by building, overlapping network coverage, and third party network sharing services.

Despite minimal sharing, we did identify seven recommendations and one issue for further study that would help improve overall IT operations at each co-located institution:

Recommendation 5: The Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act (GLBA) was established to ensure the security and confidentiality of non-public consumer data that is collected and maintained by financial institutions. The Federal Trade Commission, which administers this law for institutions that are not regulated by other federal agencies, has determined that institutions of higher education, because they engage in activities related to the lending of money, are financial institutions and are required to comply with the Safeguards Rule section of the GLBA.

As the GLBA Safeguards Rule has been updated with new requirements that take effect in December of 2022, each co-located institution should review its IT security protocols to ensure compliance with these changes. Further, the institutions should identify an individual who is responsible for ensuring compliance with future updates to the GLBA or other cybersecurity statues. Doing so will meet minimum security standards and prevent institutions from potentially becoming ineligible to participate in federal student aid programs and losing access to federal student aid information systems.

Recommendation 6: Not all co-located institutions use NIST or a similar set of security controls, which are considered best practices by the IT industry. Each institution should implement NIST, or a similar set of security controls, which are designed to prevent potential security breaches.

Recommendation 7: When preparing to purchase or renew cyber insurance, co-located institutions should predetermine critical areas of cyber risk based on industry trends and peers. Using these criteria, the institutions should analyze the cost, types of payouts, and coverage limits that exist within multiple policies, with the goal of accessing robust, yet affordable coverage. Institutions should maintain high cybersecurity standards as affordability of coverage can be improved through demonstrating minimized risk.

Recommendation 8: As opportunities present themselves, such as discontinuities in the physical hardware replacement cycle and the procurement of major new software programs, the co-located institutions that currently host servers on premise should explore alternative hosting options such as cloud providers or third-party commercial data centers. Institutions should also proactively anticipate these scenarios in IT strategic planning in advance of them occurring.

Recommendation 9: The co-located institutions should ensure they are collecting and storing useful data, such as unit cost, date acquired, location or user of the asset, and other information pertaining to their IT assets' useful life and current state, in a centralized location in order to assist in creating or carrying out a current management strategy. This data should be used to understand the current inventory status, and implement a formal lifecycle and refresh plan.

Recommendation 10: Institutions should maintain data relating to software licenses including the number and types of licenses, the cost of those licenses, and authorized user data. Institutions should track the use of existing software in a centralized manner so that future purchasing is made through a data-driven decision-making process based upon need. Doing so will also allow for the possibility of future collaboration between co-located institutions.

Recommendation 11: When making large IT purchases, co-located institutions should consider existing cooperative purchasing agreements. Additionally, they should enhance purchasing polices to include the review of all purchasing options to ensure the most efficient method of purchasing is used.

Issue for Further Study 2: ODHE should consider providing resources such as education or personnel to public colleges and universities in Ohio as needed to ensure each institution is up to date on best practices relating to IT security. Further, the Department can help to provide solutions to institutions that have previously experienced issues related to gaps in IT security.

Note: Many of the recommendations in the IT area would apply to all higher education institutions regardless of co-located status.

STUDENT SERVICES

Student services comprise a wide array of services that an institution may offer. Beyond academic assistance, student services may offer health and wellness counseling, job placement assistance, or other services designed to support and enhance a student's educational experience. Our audit focused on three components of student services: library services, tutoring, and academic advising.

Of these three areas, the only one in which shared services existed was library services. Six of the seven co-located campuses share library services and space. These shared spaces are used by both students from the institutions and the general community. All six co-located campuses that share library services have some form of an agreement in place. These agreements encompass the sharing of books, periodicals, building space, computer access, and staff. The agreements also outline the varying methods for how costs are split among partner institutions. Co-located campuses that share space and services also have the responsibility to track data, often based upon their cost-share agreements. However, we found that data tracking of library services at all of the co-located institutions is limited.

After reviewing how the co-located institutions provide library services, academic advising, and tutoring services, we identified two recommendations. While no recommendation was identified for tutoring service, the following recommendations stem from patterns recognized during the audit and will help better the student experience:

Recommendation 12: Tracking usage of academic libraries on co-located campuses will better inform each institution of how and when students use library space, materials, and online services. Obtaining this data will allow each institution to adjust its services to more effectively meet student needs. Understanding this data can also be a useful asset for partnered institutions when discussing and negotiating cost-share agreements.

Recommendation 13: Academic advising is critical to student success. Co-located partners should hold regularly scheduled, formalized meetings focused on academic advising topics to help facilitate communication and information sharing between them. More consistent discussions about student needs and trends can assist academic advising offices in tailoring their services to better meet those needs.

CAMPUS SAFETY

Planning and providing for campus safety and security is crucial to the peaceful operations of each co-located institution. All of the co-located institutions have some provisions in place to provide campus safety services, with the majority using internal security staff to supplement local law enforcement.

There is no standard method used by the co-located institutions in providing campus safety. Some share a single security force while some operate separate forces. Further, the number and type of staff vary between institutions. While there is no best practice for campus security, the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) group within the United States Department of Justice (DOJ) outlines a variety of factors institutions should consider when determining the proper staffing model. These factors include the type of institution, student population, number of buildings, the extent of on-campus housing, days and times of classes, overall campus size, and an institution's expectations.

Based on our analysis of current operations and existing guidance on campus safety, we identified one recommendation and one issue for further study which may assist the institutions in improving overall campus safety and security operations:

Recommendation 14: Institutions of higher education are responsible for communicating important safety messages to staff and students along with being prepared for emergencies. While each institution has its own campus safety considerations, co-located partners should hold regular, formalized, standing meetings which include all relevant members of the campus and local communities, particularly first responders. These meetings should be held to discuss shared campus safety needs, concerns, and potential solutions and develop specific plans for communication needs during an emergency event.

Issue for Further Study 3: Emergency mass notification systems are a common element of campus safety used by higher education institutions. These systems are capable of sending alert messages to a set list of contacts for a wide range of events from weather advisories to active aggressor situations. Each co-located institution has its own alert system, separate from its campus partner, with the exception of the Newark and Marion campuses.

Because many of the co-located institutions have separate alert systems, there is a potential for students on co-located campuses to only be enrolled in one of the two systems present on the campus. This could lead to a delay in communication to those students if they are in a building that the other campus partner is responsible for when an incident occurs, during which immediate information is needed. To assist with adequate ongoing coverage and to better ensure that each co-located campus partner's expectations and needs are met, each institution and campus partner should evaluate their policies and procedures regarding emergency mass notification systems and include this as a topic for discussion during their regularly scheduled campus safety meetings.

FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

Maintaining grounds and buildings so that they remain in safe, clean, and usable condition requires significant amounts of labor, machinery, and supplies. We reviewed the facilities management at each co-located campus to determine if a best practice existed for staffing levels and cost-sharing agreements. There is variability in how facilities management services are provided at each of the co-located campuses. Contracted custodial services are not currently used at many of the institutions; however, those that do are aligned with the costs of in-house staff at other institutions. There is no clear indicator on which operating model for custodial services is best. For co-located campuses with cost share agreements, it is important to have routine communication to ensure agreements are actively managed and that the needs of the organizations are being met. Active management and communication allows institutions to stay on top of rising costs of service and to monitor the level of service received to avoid future potential pain points.

Because Ohio University Zanesville and Zane State College ended the facilities management portion of their cost share agreement effective July 2020, we were presented with the opportunity to conduct a comparative case study. This case study was conducted to determine if there was any identifiable benefit to sharing facilities management operations or providing them separately. We reviewed facilities management financial data both pre and post separation. Additionally, we reviewed the assets being divided and equipment and building needs as a result of the separation along with staffing levels and responsibilities.

Multiple factors contributed to the financial differences which occurred as a result of Ohio University Zanesville and Zane State College ending their facilities management cost share agreement. While both institutions appear to have realized initial savings, Ohio University Zanesville is considering options to house its maintenance operations separate from Zane State College's maintenance building. The costs associated with constructing a new building and maintaining it year-round may offset part or all of the savings realized as a result of the separation. Therefore, the financial impact may be mutually beneficial to both institutions or may be beneficial to only one institution.

The results of this case study illustrate the complicated nature of separating once shared facilities management operations. As such, the results may not be applicable to all co-located campuses as the division of assets and building needs would vary among the co-located campuses due to the unique settings of each institution. Overall, staffing arrangements, whether shared or not, must be flexible to the changing needs of the institutions they serve, and should be actively managed.

STAFFING

An organization's employees are typically the largest expense of doing business. Individuals who perform the core work of an organization's mission and goals, and individuals who are hired into support or management positions both require salaries, benefits, paid time off, training, and other forms of compensation. When seeking to increase operational efficiency and reduce expenditures, staffing is oftentimes an area where changes can be made.

Our analysis found much variation in the amount of sharing between co-located institutions and the number of students served per employee. Even when considering different sharing approaches, no clear trend or best practice was. However, the current staffing arrangements on the campuses indicate that employee sharing is feasible in some situations. As such, our analysis resulted in one recommendation:

Recommendation 15: The co-located institutions should continue to assess their current and future staffing needs and consider sharing employees with their co-located partner where feasible. The institutions should also consider cost-sharing opportunities with their co-located partner when hiring for new positions or when a position is difficult to fill or in demand. Sharing employees could assist institutions in achieving cost efficiencies, particularly in light of declining enrollment at most co-located institutions. Ultimately, keeping operating costs low helps keep the cost of education lower for students.