

OACC

OHIO ASSOCIATION OF
COMMUNITY COLLEGES

STRATEGIC PLAN

2026 - 2030



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Dear Ohio Community College Leaders and Partners,

We share our new OACC strategic plan with pride and optimism as we look forward to a future of continued service to Ohio. This plan reflects not only where we are headed for the next five years, but also the extraordinary dedication, innovation, and perseverance that has long defined our colleges and the people who power them.

Over the past year, presidents and trustees across the state came together to imagine what is possible for Ohio's community colleges to accomplish together. Through a series of facilitated discussions and reflection, a plan has emerged to guide OACC's daily efforts, anchored in a collective mission and vision that is aligned with students and workforce needs. Ohio's community colleges are the top workforce partner for our state's employers and the best value in higher education for Ohio's students. Every day, they create pathways to opportunity, responding to local and regional economic needs, and supporting students who are balancing work, family, and education. OACC will use this new plan to support those efforts and is proud to be the champion of Ohio's community colleges and their students.

The plan is anchored in four key priorities that position us to thrive, including:

- 1. Policy & Advocacy:** position OACC as the voice of the community college sector and a leading influence in shaping state higher education and workforce policy.
- 2. Student & Workforce Success:** advance innovation, create pathways, eliminate barriers, and expand opportunities so all Ohio students can succeed and the state's employers can thrive.
- 3. Professional Development & Network Engagement:** equip OACC members to lead effectively in a rapidly evolving higher education and workforce environment.
- 4. Innovative Solutions:** serve as an incubator for ideas and position Ohio's community colleges to be future-ready.

To our community colleges: this plan represents our support for the daily work each of you lead on your campuses. Your unique strengths and unified commitment to excellence will guide our implementation.

To our partners: thank you for your leadership, vision and support of Ohio's community colleges and students. This strategic plan is a testament to what is possible when we work together for a prosperous future.

With appreciation,

Avi Zaffini
President & CEO,
OACC

Sandy Barber
Trustee, Northwest
State Community
College; OACC Chair

Jo Alice Blondin, PhD
President, Clark State
College; OACC Vice-Chair

John Berry, PhD
President, Central Ohio
Technical College; Strategic
Planning Committee Chair

Our Mission

OACC advocates for Ohio's community colleges with strong policy leadership, empowers members to drive workforce alignment and student success, and convenes partners across education, workforce, and government to advance the vitality of Ohio's communities.

Our Vision

As the unified voice for Ohio's community colleges, OACC will advance policies and partnerships that position the state's community colleges as the model for access, affordability, workforce alignment, and student success.

Our Strategic Priorities

OACC's strategic priorities aim to maximize the impact, success and innovation of Ohio's community colleges. The goals and strategies will position OACC to support the evolving needs of its member colleges to ensure they thrive in a dynamic higher education landscape.

Policy & Advocacy	Student & Workforce Success	Professional Development & Network Engagement	Innovative Solutions
Advance policies that strengthen and elevate community colleges	Support student and workforce outcomes across Ohio	Build member leadership capacity and collaboration	Foster creative models and new approaches for sector success
			

Policy & Advocacy

Position OACC as the voice of the community college sector and a leading influence in shaping state higher education and workforce policy.

Goals

- » Advance supportive state policy and funding frameworks that strengthen the financial sustainability and competitiveness of Ohio's community colleges.
- » Strengthen relationships with policymakers and key agencies to position OACC as a trusted advisor on higher education and workforce policy.
- » Lead through research and thought leadership to shape state policy discussions and elevate the role of community colleges in driving workforce and economic development.
- » Enhance visibility and statewide recognition of Ohio's community colleges through strategic communications, brand development, and stakeholder engagement.

Tactics

1 Strengthen Policy Influence and Relationships

- » Develop and communicate a unified policy agenda that reflects the shared priorities of the community college sector.
- » Conduct one-on-one engagement with policymakers, agency leaders, and partners to build trust and visibility.
- » Cultivate strategic partnerships and explore new funding streams to advance OACC's policy and advocacy goals.

2 Elevate the Value and Visibility of the Sector

- » Promote the impact of community colleges through stronger storytelling and success narratives.
- » Support the creation of clear, consistent messaging that conveys the vital role that community colleges play in advancing Ohio's workforce and economic priorities.
- » Establish OACC's website and communications platforms as central sources for compelling storytelling and policy information.

3 Build OACC's Organizational Capacity

- » Invest in developing branding and marketing as core organizational competencies to sustain advocacy and visibility efforts.

Student & Workforce Success

Advance innovation, create pathways, eliminate barriers, and expand opportunities so all Ohio students can succeed and the state's employers can thrive.

Goals

- » Position community colleges as statewide leaders in lifelong learning and talent development.
- » Support colleges in innovating to expand access, improve learner success, and remove barriers to completion.
- » Promote multiple and stackable pathways that connect education, training, and work, ensuring flexibility for learners at every stage.
- » Shape Ohio's higher education and workforce narrative through shared language and forward-looking concepts.

Tactics

1 Strengthen Statewide Capacity for Student Success

- » Expand and enhance the Success Center for Ohio Community Colleges as a hub for statewide collaboration, innovation, and professional learning.
- » Identify and secure philanthropic support to sustain and scale learner success initiatives across the state.

2 Drive Innovation in Curriculum and Practice

- » Lead and coordinate statewide curriculum development efforts that improve alignment between education and workforce needs.
- » Publish and disseminate best practices and findings to share innovation and strengthen Ohio's national profile in learner success.

3 Deepen Partnerships with Employers and Industry

- » Support the launch of pilot projects with Ohio employers and corporations to expand work-based learning and strengthen connections to in-demand industries.
- » Use OACC's data tools and storytelling platforms to highlight community college innovation and demonstrate learner potential in current and emerging industries.

4 Elevate the Community College Value Proposition

- » Communicate the breadth of opportunities available to community college learners and the sector's role in advancing Ohio's workforce and economic goals.

Professional Development & Network Engagement

Equip OACC members to lead effectively in a rapidly evolving higher education and workforce environment.

Goals

- » Expand professional learning opportunities for members at all levels, including trustees, presidents, and staff, to strengthen leadership and institutional capacity.
- » Build member capacity for change management and continuous improvement through targeted training, peer learning, and technical assistance.
- » Facilitate collaboration and knowledge-sharing across the network by elevating promising and evidence-based practices among institutions.
- » Strengthen engagement and collaboration with OACC's executive officer groups to ensure alignment and shared ownership of collective goals.

Tactics

1 Strengthen Partnerships and Collaborative Networks

- » Partner with the Ohio Department of Higher Education, Department of Education and Workforce, and other state and national organizations to advance shared goals and policy alignment.
- » Leverage national partnerships to connect members with leading research, innovative practices, and peer learning opportunities.
- » Strategically engage OACC executive officer groups and establish new affinity or task-oriented networks to address emerging needs.

2 Expand Professional Learning and Leadership Development

- » Continue convening member networks and learning communities through events such as the Student Success Leadership Institute and the OACC Leadership Academy for Student Success.
- » Develop targeted programming for trustees, including orientation, training, and exposure to national best practices.

3 Enhance Data and Technical Assistance Support

- » Continue developing and maintaining data dashboards and analytic tools to inform institutional decision-making.
- » Expand technical assistance offerings to meet emerging member needs and support institutional improvement.

Innovative Solutions

Serve as an incubator for ideas and position Ohio’s community colleges to be future-ready.

Goals

- » Encourage an entrepreneurial mindset and adoption of emerging technologies.
- » Build institutional capacity to adapt to AI and other technological revolutions.
- » Strengthen the role of community colleges as partners in community impact and revitalization.
- » Support a collaborative mindset across the sector.

Tactics

1 Promote Innovation and Collaboration Across the Sector

- » Support shared services initiatives among community colleges to enhance cost savings, operational efficiency, and institutional cooperation.
- » Pilot innovative projects with member colleges to test and scale new models that improve institutional performance and learner outcomes.

2 Strengthen Knowledge Sharing and Foresight

- » Conduct ongoing environmental scanning to identify emerging trends and position Ohio’s community colleges ahead of shifts in higher education and workforce development.
- » Convene and share best practices from within Ohio and from leading institutions nationwide.

3 Advance Community and Economic Development Partnerships

- » Position community colleges as key educational partners in local and regional community development initiatives who can rapidly respond to workforce needs and drive economic growth.

In Conclusion: A Collective Commitment

Guided by this strategic plan, the OACC has a clear and coordinated direction for the years ahead. It reflects the realities our institutions face, the priorities our stakeholders identified, and the tremendous potential that exists across our system. We are grateful for the thoughtful engagement that shaped this work and for the daily effort our colleges invest in serving students and communities. By staying aligned, focused, and collaborative, we will carry this plan forward and turn its goals into measurable progress for Ohio.

- 1 Belmont College
- 2 Central Ohio Technical College
- 3 Cincinnati State Technical & Community College
- 4 Clark State College
- 5 Columbus State Community College
- 6 Cuyahoga Community College
- 7 Edison State Community College
- 8 Hocking College
- 9 Lakeland Community College
- 10 Lorain County Community College
- 11 Marion Technical College
- 12 North Central State College
- 13 Northwest State Community College
- 14 Owens Community College
- 15 Rhodes State College
- 16 Rio Grande Community College
- 17 Sinclair Community College
- 18 Southern State Community College
- 19 Stark State College
- 20 Terra State Community College
- 21 Washington State College of Ohio
- 22 Zane State College



Appendix: Strategic Planning Team

The strategic planning process was led by a collaborative team representing OACC's leadership, staff, and external partners.

Strategic Planning Committee	OACC Leadership & Staff	HCM Strategists
<p>The Strategic Planning Committee provided overall oversight and strategic guidance throughout the process, ensuring that the plan reflected the collective vision and priorities of Ohio's community colleges.</p> <p>Chair: John Berry, PhD President, Central Ohio Technical College</p> <p>Sandy Barber Trustee, Northwest State Community College</p> <p>Michael Baston, JD, EdD President, Cuyahoga Community College</p> <p>Chad Brown, PhD President, Zane State College</p> <p>Tracey Carter Trustee, Stark State College</p> <p>Dorey Diab, PhD President, North Central State College</p> <p>Ryan McCall, PhD President, Marion Technical College</p> <p>Nicole Roades, PhD President, Southern State Community College</p> <p>Dione Somerville, EdD President, Owens Community College</p>	<p>OACC leadership and staff played a central role in defining the organization's vision, role, and objectives for supporting member institutions. Their insight into operational realities and member needs was instrumental in shaping the goals and strategies outlined in this plan.</p> <p>Avi Zaffini President & CEO, OACC</p> <p>Laura Rittner Vice President, Operations & Student Success, OACC</p> <p>Katelyn Bowling Senior Director of Government Relations, OACC</p> <p>Crystal Jones, EdD Senior Director of Workforce Partnerships, OACC</p>	<p>HCM Strategists served as OACC's facilitation and project management partner, guiding the planning process, managing stakeholder engagement, and supporting the synthesis of input into actionable strategies.</p> <p>Martha Snyder Partner, HCM Strategists</p> <p>Stephanie Murphy, PhD Director of State Policy & Research, HCM Strategists</p>

Appendix: Strategic Planning Timeline

Phase	Key Activities
May 2025	Kickoff meeting with Strategic Planning Committee Presentation and facilitated discussion w/Executive Committee
July to September 2025	Committee Meeting Stakeholder engagement
September to October 2025	Committee workshop Draft and finalize plan; Framework development and review with Strategic Planning Committee Preview framework with presidents Preview plan with external partners (e.g. ODHE)
November 2025	Final draft complete Governing Committee approval

Appendix: Stakeholder Engagement

The development of OACC’s strategic plan was guided by a comprehensive stakeholder engagement process designed to ensure that the organization’s future direction reflects the priorities, needs, and perspectives of its members and partners. The engagement process began with two targeted surveys—one distributed to community college trustees and another to member institutions. The trustee survey focused on assessing awareness, perceptions, and engagement with OACC, while the member survey explored institutional priorities, key challenges, and the value of OACC’s services and support.

Findings from the surveys informed the next phase of engagement, which sought to deepen understanding of the issues and opportunities identified. One-on-one interviews were conducted with all members of the Executive Committee to capture leadership perspectives on OACC’s role and impact. In addition, focus group discussions with officer groups provided a forum to explore shared needs, challenges, and emerging priorities across the membership.

The engagement process culminated in a town hall session at the Statewide Strategic Leadership Institute (SSLI) meeting, where members had the opportunity to review early insights, offer feedback, and collectively inform the strategic priorities and goals that anchor this plan.



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