

Choose Ohio First

FY25 RFP

PROPOSAL SUMMARIES

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Ashland University

Executive Summary

Ashland University's Master of Science in Applied Physiology of Exercise (MS APEX) program is poised to significantly enhance Ohio's workforce by addressing critical needs in healthcare and wellness through the Choose Ohio First (COF) scholarship program. This executive summary outlines the key components of the COF proposal, including program details, regional economic needs, and the anticipated impact of the scholarship on student recruitment and career development.

Program Overview

The MS APEX program is a comprehensive 33-credit-hour degree designed to provide advanced training in exercise physiology. It combines online coursework with an on-campus residency experience and a culminating internship. The program benefits from the state-of-the-art facilities at the Arthur L. and Maxine Sheets Rybolt Health Sciences and Recreation Center. This center features a 5,000-square-foot fitness facility, including weight training systems, free weight stations, and various exercise equipment, providing an optimal learning environment for students.

Economic Impact & Regional Needs

The proposed COF scholarship program is tailored to meet the economic needs of our students and address the regional and statewide workforce demands. The economic impact of these scholarships will be substantial, given that 78% of past COF scholars indicated that the scholarships were a critical factor in their decision to enroll. Of the 78 students who have received COF scholarships, 97% have pursued STEM careers or advanced studies, underscoring the effectiveness of the program in fostering career development.

Ohio faces several challenges that the MS APEX program is uniquely positioned to address:

Healthcare Workforce Demand: With an increasing need for healthcare professionals, particularly in exercise physiology, there is a critical gap that the MS APEX program can help fill.

Chronic Disease Management: Rising rates of chronic diseases necessitate specialized professionals skilled in preventive and rehabilitative exercise programs.

Corporate Wellness Initiatives: There is growing investment in wellness programs by businesses, creating demand for professionals who can design and manage these initiatives.

Program and Institutional Support

Ashland University has a proven track record with COF programs and is committed to continuous improvement of its academic offerings. The MS APEX program underwent a comprehensive review in 2023, focusing on various aspects including curriculum, accreditation, and external partnerships. Recommendations from this review emphasize pursuing specialized accreditations in Strength and Conditioning and Clinical Exercise Physiology to further enhance program quality and outcomes.

The COF Program Director, Dr. Randall Gearhart, will collaborate with key university offices, including Admissions, Financial Aid, the Center for Academic Support, and the Career Center for Life Calling. This collaboration will ensure effective student recruitment, timely disbursement of funds, and robust career support. The Career Center will provide career counseling, job placement assistance, and networking opportunities, further enhancing the program's value.

Future Directions

If awarded the COF grant, the MS APEX program is expected to experience significant growth, contributing to both regional and statewide economic development. The grant will support several key areas:

Faculty Development: Enhancing faculty expertise through professional development.

Student Scholarships: Attracting high-caliber students and fostering a diverse cohort.

External Partnerships: Expanding partnerships to increase internship opportunities and collaborative projects.

Research and Curricular Enhancement: Promoting research and updating the curriculum to include new tracks and align with industry trends.

The MS APEX program, supported by the COF grant, aligns with Ashland University's mission to provide transformative learning experiences. By addressing critical workforce needs in Ohio, particularly in healthcare, and offering robust support for students and faculty, the COF program represents a strategic investment in the future of both the university and the broader community.

Baldwin Wallace University



Executive Summary

Baldwin Wallace University

2025 Choose Ohio First Proposal

Transfer Pathways to Baccalaureate Completion and Career:

Leveraging Institutional Strengths and STEM Consortia

Baldwin Wallace University (BW) has strong STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) programs with a history of excellent performance with Choose Ohio First (COF). More than 400 undergraduate STEM students have been selected to the BW COF STEM Scholars program since its inception in 2008, the first year that COF funds were made available. The three most recent COF grant submissions by Baldwin Wallace sought to align institutional strategy with the educational and workforce needs of Northeast Ohio and the state of Ohio:

FY 2024: “Addressing Healthcare Disparities in Rural Communities: The Baldwin Wallace University Choose Ohio First STEM Healthcare Scholars Program”

FY 2023: “Academic Programs and Graduates that support Ohio Regional and State Economic Development in Manufacturing: Novel Approaches to Work Based Learning and Student Support

FY 2022: “Affordable, Accessible, Career-ready STEM Teacher Education:

The New BW Choose Ohio First STEM Teaching Scholars Program”

FY 2021: “Affordable, Accessible, Career-ready STEMM Education at an Emerging Regional Comprehensive University”

The current proposal continues this alignment of institutional strategy with educational and workforce needs, with a specific focus on STEM transfer pathways to baccalaureate completion, with an expansion to include not only students completing the associate's degree at two-year institutions, but also Career Technical Education (CTE) students. Key to this project is to leverage existing BW strengths in community college transfer (the A2BW program) and STEM consortia (to which BW belongs) that include partner two-year institutions. The A2BW program and STEM consortia are described in more detail in Section 1: Project Rationale and Section 2: Recruitment.

BW has enjoyed remarkable success with transfer students seeking baccalaureate completion in STEM disciplines. Our 2016 BW COF proposal focused, in large part, on community college transfers. That proposal was selected for funding (\$258,750) and ranked 2nd among 70 proposals submitted by colleges and universities across Ohio. As a result of the 2016 proposal and the financial support of Choose Ohio First 42 students admitted to the BW COF STEM Scholars program. Of those 42 students, 32 (76%) graduated as COF STEM scholars, 4 completed their degree, but not as COF STEM scholars, 2 students are still degree-seeking, and 4 left without completing their degree. In total 36 students completed a BW degree (86%). A deeper level of analysis revealed that 74% of student degree completers graduated within two years.

Section 3: Student Support details our well-tested BW COF STEM Scholars student support model that combines the Tinto framework for college student success and retention that includes success coaching that utilizes the Motivational Interviewing (MI) technique.

The bridge between Section 3 and Sections 5 and 6 below is the companion work-based learning (Section 4: Work Based Learning). Work-based learning has been well-integrated into the BW Choose Ohio First STEM Scholars program. As an institution, Baldwin Wallace has extended the concept more broadly to career preparation.

As in all proposals submitted to date, the STEM programs selected for this project (Section 5: Programs of Study) are aligned to meet the talent and workforce needs of regional and state-wide businesses and industry in in-demand healthcare occupations (Section 6: Regional and Statewide Economic Needs and Strengths).

Bowling Green State University

FY 25 Choose Ohio First (COF) Grant Application

Executive Summary

Bowling Green State University (BGSU) is committed to the strategic mission of Choose Ohio First (COF). To increase underrepresented undergraduate STEM, STEM Education, and healthcare majors and maximize the impact of COF scholarships, BGSU has developed a comprehensive program to identify, recruit, provide work-based learning experiences for, and graduate COF Scholars from high-quality, high-impact STEM programs that align with regional and State needs.

A. Rationale for the Selected Populations for Recruitment

Through several grant cycles, BGSU has developed and honed a robust recruitment strategy for Choose Ohio First. This strategy centers on direct targeting and outreach to underrepresented students, following up to ensure receipt of student COF applications, and the awarding of scholarships to students in identified populations. Eligible students receive notification by email, text, and phone, and are encouraged to attend an informational webinar. BGSU also markets COF to prospective students through social media, in-person recruiting events and campus visits, and inclusion on admissions webpages, printed media, and other digital ads.

B. Overview of the Selected Academic Programs

BGSU has chosen high-quality academic programs for COF that meet regional and Statewide workforce needs and are aligned with the institutional strategic plan. Programs in Robotics Engineering, Electronics and Computer Engineering, Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering, Actuarial Science, Aviation, and Science Education respond directly to regional workforce needs. Applied STEM and health programs (Nursing, Computer Science, Software Engineering, Forensic Science, Pre-Physical Therapy, Communication Disorders, Medical Laboratory Science, Dietetics, Applied Health Science, Systems Engineering) were selected because they support BGSU's work on Forward's "Initiative 1: Right programs that are sustainable," which is currently focusing on these areas. The remaining programs (Statistics, Chemistry/Biochemistry, Biology, Environmental Science, and Physics) were selected because of their broad relevance across STEM fields.

C. Address Regional and Statewide Economic Strengths and Needs

As reflected in the strategic plan, BGSU remains committed to creating and growing programs that meet the needs of BGSU students, the Northwest Ohio region, and the State. For example, to support the growing Ohio manufacturing sector, BGSU has included engineering programs developed to fill skills gaps identified by industry that will lead to meaningful employment upon degree completion. The need for qualified actuaries remains strong in the region and the State, with job demand expected to increase between now and 2031. BGSU has also included Aviation to address the need for qualified pilots. BGSU is uniquely situated to address this demand through partnership with the Bowling Green Flight Center and the Wood County Regional Airport.

D. Relationship to the Institutional Strategic Plan and Supports of Student Achievement

The Choose Ohio First program is directly aligned with BGSU's strategic plan, and particularly the four initiatives associated with Objective 1: Redefining student success: Initiative 1, which focuses on developing the right programs for our students and stakeholders; Initiative 2, an intense focus on outcomes, which is committed to eliminating opportunity gaps; Initiative 3, differentiating the undergraduate student experience, which ensures that students are empowered to design meaningful experiences; and Initiative 4, broadening access to students, which aims to make BGSU degrees more attainable for students who may not have seen themselves in college.

E. Institutional Assistance Leading to Successful Implementation

BGSU is committed to the success of COF Scholars. In addition to the financial commitment for the scholarship match, BGSU has dedicated resources towards personnel and programming to help COF Scholars retain and succeed. The COF Student Success Program lives in the Division of Student Engagement and Success, which was created to enhance the experience of BGSU students throughout their academic career. The COF Student Success Program, led by a professional staff member, has a Graduate Assistant to provide personalized support to students throughout the academic year; a partnership with the Radbill Center for College and Life Design to help students gain skills to help them succeed in their lives and careers; and two STEM faculty mentors. The Kuhlin Hub for Career Design and Connections supports COF Scholars in building a professional network and obtaining meaningful work-based learning experiences. Additionally, BGSU has a standing COF Coordinating Committee who works together to coordinate, evaluate, and enhance all aspects of the COF experience.

Capital University

Executive Summary

In the past five years, STEMM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Medicine) Capital University undergraduate students accounted for between 31% and 35% of all undergraduate students at the University. Of those STEMM students, the percentage of students identifying as underrepresented has grown from 21% in 2018 to over 30% of the incoming class in 2023. The proposed COF eligible STEMM programs include undergraduate majors in Biology, Biochemistry, Chemistry, Environmental Science, Exercise Science, Mathematics, Computer Science, Science and Math Education, and Nursing along with two master degree programs Master of Science in Nursing and Masters in Clinical Mental Health Counseling.

Since our founding in 1830, affordability and access have been key strategic goals for Capital University, and we have developed sophisticated methods and models to understand our students' needs relative to the cost of a college education. We strive to increase economic mobility for all students in our community including underrepresented populations and our rich history with STEMM disciplinary education has benefited many citizens in Ohio and especially in central Ohio. As the student body has become more diverse at Capital University, the average financial need has also increased over recent years to over \$39,600 per year. The University has continued to respond to this increased need by increasing institutional merit and need-based scholarships such as our Main Street scholarship program which provides a minimum \$20,000 per year to all accepted, full-time undergraduate students including transfer and international. We have also launched a full tuition scholarship (Gateway Scholarship) to close the funding gap between the cost of tuition and available financial aid for those students who have a 3.5 high school GPA, are Ohio residents, and have a maximum household income of less than \$60,000. However, there remains a significant funding gap for many STEMM students who want a Capital education that the COF scholarship program would address.

We have transformed the student support network at Capital University over the past 15 years through a series of deep self-studies in partnership with the Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education. These student support changes included revision of the academic advising model introducing a central advising office, the addition of supplemental instruction especially in STEMM courses, active learning techniques – POGIL methodologies in many STEMM courses, and work-based learning incorporated in many STEMM majors. With the changes that we have made to the curriculum, outside of classroom supports, and academic advising, our university-wide retention rate has increased, from percents in the low 70s to percents in the upper 70s. Graduation rates have also risen, and we have observed a narrowing of the gap for graduation rates between underrepresented STEMM students and overall STEMM students. We have more work to do and recently have been accepted as one of 11 institutions nationwide to work on transforming the first two years of college. This five-year project led by the Gardner Institute and supported by the Ascendium Education Group, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, ECMC Foundation and the Kresge Foundation aims to address performance gaps and improve student success outcomes. The goal of this work is to eliminate factors such

as demographics and zip code as the best predictors of who graduates from college. We are excited about the opportunity that COF program could remove additional financial barriers for STEMM students as we work to improve all other aspects of a college experience.

As a member of the central Ohio community for nearly 200 years, Capital University has deep roots in our community and a history with bring our students into the local businesses, agencies, hospitals, schools, and corporations as part of the Capital education experience. Work-based learning and experiential learning is central to who we are. We place our nursing students in over 34 clinical sites throughout central Ohio, we partner with over 45 local school districts to provide our education students classroom experiences, and our natural sciences departments have relationships with well over 80 agencies, businesses, hospitals, zoos, and laboratories where our students complete internship and research experiences.

Capital University is committed to successful implementation of the COF program. We had two implementation teams from across the institution who developed this proposal and will be key personnel in implementation of all aspects of the COF program to be successful at Capital University. One team is the administrative team composed of the Provost office (Terry Lahm, Senior Associate Provost and Jody Fournier, Provost), Financial Aid (Mary Cannon, Director), and Enrollment division (Stephanie Sanders, Vice President and Derek Faase, Director). The second team is the academic and student development team composed of Career Development (Eric Anderson, Director and Mary Kleffner, Associate Director), Academic Success (Bruce Epps, Director and Rachel Stroup, Associate Director), Dean of Nursing (Heather Janiszewski Goodin), Chair of Biological and Environmental Sciences (Christine Anderson), Chair of Chemistry and Biochemistry (Tracey Murray), Chair of Health and Sport Sciences (Benjy Pester), Chair of Mathematics, Computer Science and Physics (Leigh Johnson). This is a strong and talented team of individuals who will recruit, teach, guide, retain, graduate, and mentor Ohio students into STEMM careers who likely will stay in Ohio as many of Capital's students have in the past. We look forward to the opportunity to be part of the COF program.

Case Western Reserve University

CWRU Choose Ohio First Scholarship Programs:

Supporting STEM Success, Nursing, Neurosciences

Executive Summary

Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) is seeking funding to extend and expand its successful Choose Ohio First (COF) Scholarship programs. CWRU has benefitted from funding for COF scholarships since the inception of the program as have been evidenced by the rates of completion of STEM and Nursing degrees.

CWRU's philosophy for its COF scholarship program has intended to maximize the impact of the State's funding in two different regards. Many applicants for admission to CWRU's undergraduate programs have outstanding entrance qualifications. Students with the strongest academic credentials typically receive the greatest scholarship support from the University and because of their academic strength are generally retained to graduation at a higher rate than students with lesser entrance credentials. CWRU has focused its COF programs on students who, based on their entrance qualifications, would likely benefit from the extra supports provided through the COF scholarship program. Thus, by awarding COF scholarships to students who typically do not receive CWRU's highest academic scholarships, receipt of the COF scholarship has a significant positive impact on the students agreeing to attend CWRU. This aspect has been borne out by the student survey CWRU conducts for COF scholarship holders. Also, the extra academic and social supports that COF program mentors provides has a positive effect on degree completion. Completion rates for COF students match or exceed the average STEM-degree completion rate for CWRU. Details have been provided in our annual reports on the COF awards. Thus, the State's funding impacts both CWRU's ability to recruit (through extra scholarship funding) and retain (through extra academic and social supports) STEM and Nursing students.

CWRU requests additional funding to support three ongoing COF programs: Supporting STEM Success; Nursing - Research, Education and Practice; and Neurosciences. At CWRU, nearly 80% of our applicants indicate an interest in STEM fields. The Supporting STEM Success program is designed for any student with a STEM major. The program targets students who have identified interest in STEM majors but are less well prepared in mathematics. Students work closely with their course instructors to develop a plan for successful completion of their mathematics requirements. The Nursing Research Education and Practice program supports students seeking careers in this high-demand field; registered nursing has the most job openings annually in Ohio according to the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS), with 8,848 job openings forecasted per year from 2016 - 2026. Choose Ohio First nursing scholars receive academic support, mentorship and help with resume writing and interviewing skills from the CWRU Career Center. The Neurosciences program provides cohort support to students who are pursuing studies in this growing field. This program in Neurosciences also leverages the local strength in healthcare and biomedical research

Overall, CWRU's COF scholarship program will help prepare students for occupations in fields identified by the Ohio Office of Workforce Development as “in demand” as well as assist students in maintaining and graduating with STEMM majors. All the COF programs emphasize career opportunities in STEMM fields and prepare students to participate in internship, coops, and other work-based learning experiences.

Cedarville University

Executive Summary

2024 Choose Ohio First Proposal – Cedarville University

Cedarville University is recognized nationally for its rigorous academic programs, strong graduation and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings, and high student engagement ranking. We are grateful for the opportunity to apply for the 2024 Choose Ohio First award. As a recipient of previous COF awards, we understand the value of the COF program and firmly believe in its ability to strengthen Ohio's economy and our state's academic programs—two things that are inextricably linked. We also understand the importance of stewarding state of Ohio dollars well, and we believe that making an investment in Cedarville University will further the goals of the COF Program to “deepen Ohio's economic strength by developing talent in Science, including health professions, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)-related fields through the completion of post-secondary degrees.”

This proposal's focus is on recruiting Ohio students into undergraduate allied health, biology, chemistry, molecular biology, and nursing programs at Cedarville University. Our professional programs, specifically in the healthcare field, are well-known in our region for producing highly capable graduates of strong character who bring substantial value to their employers. These programs form the core of our healthcare offerings. Nursing is our largest undergraduate major and of vital importance in the face of huge nursing shortages across our region and state. Our allied health program is preparing athletic trainers, physical therapists, and occupational therapists to provide holistic healthcare with excellence and compassion. Biology, molecular biology, and chemistry represent our three pre-medicine disciplines and prepare students for medical school with a high rate of success. Growing these programs of study and strengthening them with additional academic support, work-based learning experiences, and a more diverse student population will contribute to our statewide need for qualified healthcare professionals.

We are proposing a cohort size of 20 Choose Ohio First scholars across these five areas of study. Cedarville has consistently set aside financial aid funds for the recruitment of minority and other diverse/underrepresented groups on campus, both through formal scholarship funds, and informal processes in the Financial Aid office. Cedarville will leverage COF scholarships with a matching of institutional funds of more than a 2:1 ratio to help students who could otherwise not attend Cedarville come to Cedarville to earn undergraduate degrees in these key fields, furthering our diversity recruitment goals and strengthening our undergraduate programs as a whole.

Our campus is committed to the successful implementation of this Choose Ohio First proposal. Our Undergraduate Admissions team is prepared to enact the recruitment efforts outlined, our Career Services offices will continue to build strong relationships with local industry and connect students to work-based learning, and our academic leadership remains fully supportive of the Choose Ohio First program and grateful for the impact it has had on our 111 current Choose Ohio First scholars.

The Christ College of Nursing and Health Sciences

Executive Summary

The Christ College of Nursing and Health Sciences (The Christ College) is a private institution of higher learning in Cincinnati, Ohio and has been dedicated to delivering the highest quality healthcare education to students since 1902.

Christ College (<https://www.thechristcollege.edu/>) is affiliated with The Christ Hospital Health Network and is located on the Network's main campus. The Health Network includes two hospitals and more than 100 centers and physician practices in the Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana tri-state region. Christ College focuses on bridging the academic and practice environments for students by guaranteeing clinical placement for all nursing students within The Christ Hospital Health Network or one of the College's many healthcare partners. Both Christ College and The Christ Hospital Health Network are secular institutions.

What makes Christ College distinct among its peer colleges is a 120-year legacy of nursing excellence, providing students hands-on clinical experience. Students know sharing a campus with the industry- leading healthcare professionals at The Christ Hospital fosters academic excellence and promising career opportunities. U.S. News & World Report recently named The Christ Hospital #1 in the Cincinnati Region for the tenth consecutive year and #3 in the state of Ohio (<https://tinyurl.com/2stdk8tn>). The Christ Hospital Health Network continues to make the Forbes list of Best-In-State Employers, based on employee feedback (<https://tinyurl.com/398mh3n8>).

As the region recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, demand for healthcare workers has far outpaced supply. The 2024 employer workforce survey provided by The Health Collaborative reports that the vacancy level of 11% is the 3rd highest RN vacancy rate in Greater Cincinnati hospitals since 2004 (<https://tinyurl.com/hcgc2024con>). The need for healthcare professionals is projected to continue growing, with the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimating that the demand for Registered Nurses will grow 6% in the next ten years. Growth has been exasperated by a wave of retirements and workers transferring to different occupations due to job dissatisfaction (<https://tinyurl.com/azsaum46>).

Christ College has the means to correct this imbalance. With Choose Ohio First scholarship funds, Christ College plans to recruit and retain students in its Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program to meet the regional and statewide need for nurses. Christ College's use of Choose Ohio First scholarships will encourage more students to pursue healthcare careers by relieving the financial burden that many college students face and ultimately alleviate the staffing shortage in our healthcare system.

As it has done successfully in the past, Christ College plans to utilize Choose Ohio First scholarships to recruit a cohort of 70 students into the BSN program over five years. A portion of the recruitment and enrollment efforts for the Choose Ohio First scholarship program will be targeted at under-represented populations in the nursing field, including men as well as students from black, brown, Indigenous, or other historically marginalized communities.

The Choose Ohio First initiative and Christ College have similar goals of growing the number of STEMM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math, and Medicine) professionals in Ohio and connecting students to work-based learning experiences that will set them up for success in their careers. The College aims to be known as the premier destination for healthcare education by 2030. The Choose Ohio First initiative will contribute to the College's 2024-2027 Strategic Plan. Key outputs of the plan include establishing sustainable models for mentoring and coaching, creating opportunities outside of the classroom to practice concepts, and developing flexible pathways to increase student enrollment and achievement.

Scholarships such as Choose Ohio First make healthcare careers more accessible and will increase college enrollment during this critical time. The pandemic has contributed greatly to a shortage of hospital workers nationwide. According to a recent report published by the Health Collaborative, approximately 7,700 Registered Nurse jobs were unfilled at the end of 2023 in Greater Cincinnati. The number of vacancies grew substantially over the last year and is 26% higher than previous years (<https://tinyurl.com/hcgc2024con>).

To increase the supply of nurses in our community, Christ College wants to make earning a healthcare degree more affordable. Scholarships, including Choose Ohio First, are part of Christ College's strategic initiative to increase enrollment and support student achievement. Most college students graduate in debt due to student loans. In 2020, nearly 60% of Ohio college graduates carried student loan debt at an average of about \$30,000, according to The Institute for College Access and Success (<https://tinyurl.com/5re7rbdd>). Borrowers with private loans are even deeper in debt, averaging nearly

\$55,000 per borrower. With compounding interest, it typically takes graduates decades to pay off these debts (<https://tinyurl.com/85pb2vbe>). The added financial strain caused by the 2020 recession has deterred many students from even starting college to pursue their careers. The Choose Ohio First scholarship opportunity will encourage more students, particularly nontraditional students, to earn their degree and contribute to the healthcare world with their unique skillset and experience.

Christ College is currently a participating institution in the Choose Ohio First program. Institutional supports have been put in place to assist Choose Ohio First scholars as well as all students attending Christ College. The College has refined the curriculum of incoming freshman to promote retention and improve the student experience. Curriculum changes to the First Year Experience include a focus on growth mindset, emotional intelligence, and empathy and early connections with advising coaches and campus resources.

Increasing diversity among the student body at Christ College is another strategic initiative of the College. Currently, diverse students at Christ College make up 23% of the student body. While this percentage has increased steadily over the years, it still falls below the general population. A portion of Choose Ohio First scholarships will be reserved for under-represented populations in nursing, boosting the overall diversity of our students and nurses in the field.

The Enrollment Management Team creates and fosters partnerships throughout the community to advertise the educational opportunities available at Christ College. Once a student is recruited and enrolled at Christ College, they are connected to the Student Success Team who focus on retaining students and providing them a rewarding experience. A newly established department, Career Services and Talent Partner Team, utilizes the strengths of Greater Cincinnati's business community to provide all students with career development activities. Through a student-centered approach to education, Christ College ensures that students are successful in school and in their future careers.

Cleveland State University

Executive Summary

Cleveland State University (CSU) is requesting \$1,200,000 for the five-year grant period AY 2025-26 through AY 2029-30 to support approximately 22 new undergraduate students and two Master’s level students each year for total of ~120 new students. This award will replace funds from previous cycles of COF that are phasing out to allow us to maintain the current level of funding. Funds from this grant will provide financial support to a diverse cadre of undergraduate and graduate students who are pursuing a variety of Science (including health professions), Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) majors. Matching funds will be used to support recruitment initiatives (with emphasis on underrepresented groups) and programming activities, including providing all of our students at least one work-based learning experience in conjunction with our partners in the northeast Ohio business and healthcare communities, and/or academic researchers.

In order to increase the total number of graduates in STEM fields, we need to attract populations of students who are traditionally underrepresented in these disciplines. Our COF program is committed to increasing the number of COF Scholars that demonstrate high financial need; are first generation students; and/or are minorities or women underrepresented in the engineering and science fields. To increase the number of applicants in these target populations, our COF program has a targeted recruitment campaign together with the Admissions Office. This campaign is identifying and reaching out to targeted students at high schools within the seven-county region immediately surrounding CSU. In addition, we are reaching out to potential COF applicants from underrepresented groups within CSU’s existing applicant pool. By providing additional scholarship funds, we plan to encourage these applicants to matriculate at CSU in STEM majors.

We will continue to fulfill existing and emerging statewide needs by supporting students in STEM degree programs offered by the College of Engineering; the College of Arts and Sciences; and the College of Health which can fill in-demand jobs in Ohio (Table 1). In particular, we will give preference to students intending to major in disciplines that overlap with the degrees that Cleveland State has committed to increase through JobsOhio.

Table 1. Selected Academic Programs for CSU’s Choose Ohio First program.

College of Engineering	College of Arts and Sciences	College of Health
*Biomedical Engineering	*Biology	Communication Sciences & Disorders
*Chemical Engineering	*Chemistry	Health Sciences
Civil Engineering	Environmental Sciences	Pre-Occupational Therapy
*Computer Engineering	*Mathematics	Pre-Physical Therapy
*Computer Science	*Pharmaceutical Sciences	Nursing
*Data Science	Physics	Pre-Nursing
Electrical Engineering		

Electronics Engineering
Tech.
Environmental Engineering
Mechanical Engineering
Mechanical Engineering
Tech.
*Software Engineering
Pre-Engineering

*Majors committed for growth in JobsOhio program

Team NEO, one of six network partners for JobsOhio, reports that Northeast Ohio is an 18-county region “igniting change and driving emerging markets with world-class developments – key industries in our area include advanced manufacturing, biohealth, information technology, and polymers and materials.”¹ Ohio is ranked by U.S. News & World Report as the #20 state for opportunity² – with Northeast Ohio comprising up 40% of the state’s economy.³

At CSU, we have been preparing students to work in key industries in Northeast Ohio. We work closely with internal and external partners to help current COF students obtain work-based learning experiences. The work-based learning experiences of the Choose Ohio First program in key industries will link local employers with knowledgeable and sustainable employees to allow their businesses to thrive and grow in Northeast Ohio.

Our COF initiative aligns with the overall institutional strategic plan of CSU. The mission of CSU is: “*Empowering Students. Creating Knowledge. Engaging Communities. Shaping our World.*”⁴ Under leadership headed by CSU President Dr. Laura Bloomberg, CSU is moving into a new phase and continues to implement CSU 2.0, an aggressive, growth-oriented plan for emerging from the global pandemic a stronger, more focused institution. It outlines multimillion-dollar investments in research, faculty positions, and initiatives to advance student success, develop new programs and build new partnerships.⁵ CSU has also committed to significantly increasing STEM graduates for in demand majors as part of the state funded JobsOhio initiative.

The COF supports student achievement through a variety of ways, in particular through the cohort model which provides services such as mentoring, advising, tutoring and cohort meetings. COF funds complement institutional financial support over the course of a student’s time at CSU. These additional resources allow students to focus on their academics when they may otherwise have needed to interrupt their studies for work or to attend to other financially related obligations.

¹ Team NEO. (n.d.). Key Industries. Retrieved from: <https://teamneo.org/why-northeast-ohio/key-industries/>

² U.S. News and World Report. (n.d.). Opportunity Rankings: Exploring if States are Granting Citizens Tools to Succeed. Retrieved from: <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/rankings/opportunity>

³ Team NEO. (n.d.). Opportunity Abounds: Positioned to Foster Prosperity for All. Retrieved from: <https://northeastohioregion.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/manufacturing-industry-northeast-ohio-qer-2020.pdf>

⁴ Cleveland State University. (n.d.). University Mission and Vision Statements. Retrieved from: <https://www.csuohio.edu/uspc/university-mission-and-vision-statements>

⁵ Cleveland State University. (n.d.). CSU 2.0. Retrieved from: <https://csu2.0.csuohio.edu/>

The University administration has been highly supportive of our Choose Ohio First programs, recognizing the value and impact that the program has on students. Matching funds surpassing the 1:1 requirement provide resources necessary for program support. These include substantial support for student programming (*Letter from Nigamanth Sridhar, Provost*). A full-time dedicated Program Coordinator is a key part of the success of our program. We have continued commitment from key departments on campus that allow COF scholars to obtain streamlined support including Admissions (*Letter from Cristina Wayton*), Financial Aid (*Letter from Rachel Schmidt*), and Career Exploration and Development (*Letter from Jeffrey Johnston*). We also continue to work with key staff on campus who help COF students locate work opportunities through the Fenn Academy (*Letter from W.C. Vance*) and the Engineering Co-Op Office (*Letter from Erin Elosh*).

Columbus State Community College

Executive Summary

Columbus State Community College (CSCC) is a public two-year college located in downtown Columbus, Ohio. Each year, CSCC serves more than 40,000 students who are pursuing certificates, associate degrees, and transfer opportunities. Approximately, 39% of students belong to a minority race or ethnicity, and 77% of students are attending part-time; many while working and supporting their families. Columbus State recognizes that many community college students face obstacles including finances and time constraints. The Choose Ohio First Program helps ease the burden of cost for students and promotes student success. The program will feature a three-year cohort structure to allow students additional time and flexibility to earn their degree.

- a. Rationale for the selected populations for recruitment, including recruiting underrepresented populations in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics or education majors with a STEM focus.

Columbus State has experience creating focused recruitment efforts for women and socially disadvantaged students. The college has long-running TRIO programs (educational Talent Search, Student Support Services, and Upward Bound) which have developed relationships with local K-12 schools, especially within Columbus City School District, with students in high need of academic and nonacademic support services. CSCC has also implemented Women in STEM initiatives such as the GenCyber summer camp series funded by the National Security Agency. The college also strategically recruits veteran students, students with disabilities, and former foster youth. A major strategy for recruiting underrepresented groups is promoting student success stories of alumni who represent these groups.

- b. Overview of the selected academic programs.

Information Systems Technology

At CSCC, the Information Systems Technology Department's core curriculum provides graduates with a foundation in computer programming logic, operating systems, systems analysis, application development, defensive and offensive cyber strategies, networking, and user support.

The following provides an overview of the eligible CIP codes and corresponding information systems technology academic programs selected for this proposal:

100305 Graphic and Printing Equipment Operator, General Production

Digital Design & Graphics AAS

Digital Design Certificate

110101 Computer and Information Sciences, General

Computer Science Cybersecurity AAS

Computer Science Network Administration AAS

Computer Science Web Development AAS

CCNA Routing & Switching Certificate

Computer Literacy Certificate

IT Security Certificate

IT Support Certificate

IT Technician Certificate

Network Administration Certificate

Software Developer Cert.

Computer Programming/Programmer, General

- Database Specialist Certificate

Computer Programming, Specific Applications

Game Developer AAS

Software Developer AAS

Interactive Media Mobile Application Design AAS

Linux Certificate

Mobile App Development AAS

Mobile Game Applications Certification

110301 Data Processing and Data Processing Technology/Technician

- Data Center Technician Certificate

150303 Electrical, Electronic and Communications Engineering Technology/Technician

- Information Technology Support Technician AAS

307101 Data Analytics, General

- Data Analytics, Analysis & Visualization AAS

521201 Management Information Systems, General

Management Information Systems AAS

Management Information Systems Certificate

- c. Synopsis of the plan to address regional and statewide economic strengths and needs for these targeted academic programs.

CSCC emphasizes employer engagement and continues to expand relationships with industry regionally and nationally. The infrastructure continues to redesign itself around changing careers and is responsive to adapting itself to fill the gaps in employment demand. The College has been working with an established Workforce Advisory Council to continue the feedback loop with regional employers. The College has engaged in a strategic planning initiative with Regionomics, a consultant providing data and analysis on the regional economy and trends.

CSCC is dedicated to serving as a workforce and education partner in the region. This includes educating students to not only meet the workforce demand but also stay in the state and region. Nearly 90% of CSCC alumni live and work in the central Ohio region.

- d. How the COF initiative is part of the institutional strategic plan and supports student achievement.

Columbus State is driven by its steadfast commitment to student success and advancing inclusive economic mobility throughout the communities it serves. The strategic plan is focused on four pillars:

Student Success—CSCC is a student-centered college that advances equitable outcomes through an intentional focus on teaching, learning, and holistic support.

Workforce Development—CSCC is the region’s workforce engine, powering inclusive economic mobility through comprehensive career pathways and innovative employer partnerships.

Community Impact—As the community’s trusted partner, CSCC extends its impact beyond the college’s boundaries through connections that benefit its students and central Ohio.

Our People—CSCC is a community that works as a team to support its students, the broader community, and one another in a culture of mutual respect and professional growth.

The Choose Ohio First program's purpose is to develop talent in STEM professions through the completion of post-secondary degrees and certificates to deepen Ohio’s economic strength. CSCC’s strategic plan aligns with this goal and each pillar contributes towards the COF program purpose.

e. Commitments by the institution that will lead to successful implementation of the COF program.

CSCC will coordinate and leverage specific departments to support the implementation of the COF program. While many areas across campus contribute to the success of the program and scholars, the five core student support partners are as follows:

Admissions • Office of Talent Strategy
Career Services • Financial Aid Office
Marketing & Communications

Cuyahoga Community College

Choose Ohio First Scholarship Program-Computer Science Focus

Executive Summary

In the JobsOhio Northeast Ohio region, computer and mathematical occupations will see a change of 10.8 percent increase in employment. In demand occupations include: Computer Systems Analyst, Computer programmers, Software Developers and Software Quality Assurance Analysts and Testers, Web developers, Database administrators Network and Computer Systems Administrators and Computer User Support Specialists.

Cuyahoga Community College proposes to recruit new students to information technology academic pathways and provide holistic interventions through the Choose Ohio First Scholarship (COF) program to ensure their success. Through Choose Ohio First and other grant-funded initiatives, Cuyahoga Community College has demonstrated success with enrolling underrepresented students in STEMM and seeing them through to completion. Fifty-one percent of COF students at Tri-C are female, 50 percent are Pell eligible, 15 percent are African American and 11 percent are Hispanic. The graduation rate for COF students is 80 percent, which is remarkable compared to 48 percent non-COF STEMM students.

Choose Ohio First is effective because it recognizes our students require more than just scholarship support to access and succeed in higher education. COF provides mentoring, work-based learning and tuition to build students social capital, resume, and sense of belonging in a STEMM field.

There are seven CIP codes associated with computer sciences that will be the primary focus of this grant. Five additional CIP codes in other high-demand fields that are particularly effective in using Choose Ohio First Scholarship to attract talent have been included to ensure opportunities are available for interested STEMM students.

Under the School of Advanced Manufacturing, Engineering and Computer Science, Cuyahoga Community College offers an array of cost-efficient accelerated programs that prepare students to enter the IT workforce or transfer to pursue further education and academic credentialing through partner colleges and universities. Tri-C provides credit and non-credit courses that lead to certificates and degrees in IT in networking, programming, and web design as well as specialized training programs in Cisco and Microsoft. It offers an Associate of Applied Business and a Post-Secondary Certificate in Cybersecurity, a successful degree and post degree program that enrolled more than 100 students within its first year.

Choose Ohio First is important to Tri-C and its mission because the model contributes to a highly effective student-oriented culture that supports inclusive excellence. Choose Ohio First Scholarships attract and help retain students in computer science academic pathways so that the college is responding to IT market demand for more qualified workers. Through work-based learning, Choose Ohio First scholarship recipients are placed in a variety of community settings allowing Tri-C to build deep, mutually beneficial relationships with diverse partners. Choose Ohio First scholarships also benefit from philanthropic giving for STEMM student retention services, student emergency funds, programmatic enhancements, curriculum development, technology lab upgrades and faculty professional development. The Choose Ohio First Scholarship Program-Computer Science Focus, will strengthen Tri-C's ability to deliver on its mission and goals and does not displace existing resources.

The project will be under the leadership of Rebecca Stolzman, Executive Director of Honors and Scholars program. She currently coordinates the College's success on three other active Choose Ohio First Scholarship grant awards and has the authority to work college-wide to engage institutional resources for optimal success of the program. Ms. Stolzman's leadership maximizes efficiencies and eliminates redundancies. In addition to her time and effort and the time and effort of work colleagues, COF will capture student wages, other supportive services provided to COF recipients, computer science programmatic enhancements, recruitment initiatives and faculty professional development as part of the required match.

Cuyahoga Community College is seeking support for five cohorts of 12 scholarship recipients each to participate in the Choose Ohio First Scholarship Program to foster their successful completion of a STEMM degree or certificate. A four-year model is requested to ensure an enriching experience for full- and part-time students alike. Selection as a Choose Ohio First Scholarship recipient will improve student outcomes resulting in job placement in an in-demand STEMM career field.

Defiance College

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Defiance College, founded in 1850, is a private four-year institution that provides a strong liberal arts-based education in rural northwest Ohio. Serving a large number of first-generation college students, students from low to middle socio-economic backgrounds, and a student population more diverse than the community surrounding it, the College plays an important role in shaping the success of our graduates. Additionally, each year, 60-70% of our undergraduate, full-time students are from Ohio, and we desire to have those alumni remain in our state.

The College is making great strides in the last several years to improve its physical infrastructure, strengthen academic program offerings, hire well-qualified faculty, improve student support services, and integrate work-based learning opportunities through fundraising initiatives and significant grant acquisitions. While scholarships for STEM majors have grown, they have not increased sufficiently to ensure that our STEM programs are fully enrolled to the level that the College can now accommodate. The scholarship funding provided by the Choose Ohio First grant would break down the remaining economic barrier for STEM students to attend Defiance College, persist to graduation, and contribute significantly to the strength of the workforce in Ohio.

This grant funding will allow Defiance College to focus on recruiting Ohio STEM students from populations often less represented in the STEM fields – minority students, students of low economic status, women, and first-generation college students. In working with these students, the college must be attentive to the barriers that thwart students' enrollment and persistence to graduation, and one of these barriers is finances. As a result, COF scholarship support plays an important part in our success. As we have done with the previous COF grants, we will work with area school districts to target these individual students. This grant will fund Ohio students in pre-health professions, including Pre-Med, Pre-Physician Assistant, Pre-Dentistry, Pre-Optometry, Pre-exercise science, Pre-Physical Therapy, and Exercise Science- Pre-Occupational Therapy.

Defiance College's mission statement shows its commitment to moving students beyond the boundaries of a classroom through the application of their academic knowledge and skills in real-world contexts, in order to develop leaders who will positively impact communities in Ohio and beyond. The College has clear strategies to support student success, most especially within STEM majors, through tutoring, supplemental instruction and mentoring. As noted above, students with exceptional potential who lack sufficient resources to enroll and persist at the institution are vulnerable to retaining and graduating, and the COF scholarships and our services help ensure their success.

Franklin University

Executive Summary for Choose Ohio First Grant Application

Franklin University, an accredited private non-profit institution founded in 1902 and located in downtown Columbus, Ohio, is committed to serving the diverse needs of its student population, particularly working adult learners. As a leader in providing flexible and accessible education, Franklin is dedicated to helping students complete their education, reskill, upskill, or transition into new careers. This mission aligns closely with the goals of the Choose Ohio First (COF) initiative, which supports Ohio's workforce by fostering education in STEMM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Medicine) fields.

Franklin University is seeking to renew its partnership with Choose Ohio First by applying for the AY 2025 grant. This partnership is vital to the university's mission to support students pursuing STEMM careers and to ensure the retention of specialized industry knowledge within Ohio. The COF grant will empower Franklin to continue providing high-quality education and training that aligns with the evolving needs of Ohio's industries.

In support of the COF initiative, Franklin has cultivated strong educational partnerships across Ohio and beyond. These include articulation agreements with 22 Ohio community colleges and 8 additional institutions in Indiana and Pennsylvania. Additionally, Franklin has established relationships with over 70 regional employers, enabling their employees to take full advantage of tuition benefits, thereby reducing the cost of obtaining a college degree. The university's involvement in the College Credit Plus (CCP) program further strengthens its connections with high schools, offering students early access to industry-aligned credentials and creating pathways into high-demand STEMM fields.

As a private non-profit institution, Franklin University is uniquely positioned to respond swiftly to the needs of employers and the broader community. The university has demonstrated this capability by developing and implementing new undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programs in areas such as informatics, analytics, cybersecurity, information technology, nursing, and healthcare—all of which are directly aligned with COF disciplines. These programs are shaped by advisory boards comprised of industry professionals, ensuring that graduates are equipped with the skills and knowledge required to meet the demands of Ohio's workforce.

Franklin's centers of academic excellence further enhance the student experience by integrating applied experiential learning opportunities, preparing students for immediate employment upon graduation. Through these initiatives, Franklin University remains committed to advancing workforce development in Ohio and supporting the state's economic growth by nurturing a well-educated, skilled workforce ready to meet the challenges of the future.

Franklin University is eager to continue its collaboration with Choose Ohio First and is committed to maximizing the impact of the AY 2025 grant to benefit both students and the Ohio community at large.

Heidelberg University

Executive Summary

a. Rationale for selected populations for recruitment, including underrepresented in STEM fields.

Heidelberg University (HU), accredited by Higher Learning Commission, offers a strong liberal arts foundation. Experiential learning, career readiness, professional growth and leadership are emphasized. Mission: *To promote and nurture intellectual, personal, and professional development, leading to a life of purpose with distinction.* HU is ranked #53 in Regional Universities Midwest (U.S. News & World Report).

Internships and work experience are the norm at HU; students are encouraged to incorporate work experiences into STEM education. The National Center for Water Quality Research lab offers students research experience in biology, chemistry, and water resources. HU offers 1:2:1 and RN: BSN pathways for Registered Nursing to optimize students' efforts as well as career placement. The Health Sciences program is ranked #3 of 50 (Learn.org) and requires local internships such as Nationwide Children's Hospital, Cleveland Clinic, or Akron's Children's Hospital. Education majors have student teaching opportunities in rural and metropolitan areas; they train with on-campus STEM and STEAM camps.

In NW Ohio, the Governor's Top Jobs List for in-demand jobs include health care (RN, nursing), computer/info systems/network specialist, environmental science, PTA/athletic training, chemists/chemical techs, data analysis, buyers/purchasers/helpers-production workers, and education/teachers secondary and elementary among others (<https://topjobs.ohio.gov/top-jobs-list>). Ohio is in a critical mental health professional shortage; "2,385,144 people in Ohio live in a community that does not have enough mental health professionals" (NAMI OH Fact Sheet, 2021). HU Computer Science majors find employment with in-demand careers at Google, IBM, and Microsoft. In the past three years, HU computer students had a 100% job placement rate within six months of graduation. HU just launched the Supply Chain management degree in response to demand for this field.

HU's COF will be marketed as a component of STEM programming. The current strategic enrollment management plan emphasizes filling these programs and increasing enrollment of underrepresented student groups. COF will be included in the planned materials to be sent to potential students during fall of their senior year in high school. Efforts will be made to attend college fairs and recruitment events throughout Ohio, promoting COF. Once students apply online, Financial Aid and Registrar verifies eligibility. Students will be asked to submit an essay that will be reviewed by the Provost Office designated team of STEM faculty. Applications will be awarded using a rubric evaluating Need, Quality of Student Essay, and CIP code priorities. If a tie occurs, GPA will break it.

HU is part of the consortium of colleges and universities in the Ohio region. The consortium hosts an Education Expo annually, which draws employers from around the country. The goal is to network HU students with employers. Students schedule interviews ahead of time with

employers they are potentially interested in. Many students are hired on-the-spot during the Expo interview sessions.

Athletics are huge at HU (58% of Spring 2024 graduates participating); HU expects 60-75% of Fall 2024 to be recruited athletes. As part of this recruiting athletes, coaching staff attend hundreds of events. As potential student athletes interact with HU staff, they learn about the athletics programs, academic programs, and potential financial aid. Note – student athletes are not paid to participate in athletics at HU; they must file their own financial aid or earn scholarships.

With special emphasis on diversity and equity in recruiting students, HU's admissions team has designated recruiters to focus specifically on underrepresented areas of Ohio. Admission counselors participate in specific diversity-focused college fairs. The Director of Diversity, Equity, and Belonging is available for individualized direct meetings with potential students.

b. Provide an overview of the selected academic programs.

The following 16 CIP codes include: **030104** Environmental Science, **110701** Computer Science, **131311** Mathematics Teacher Education, **131316** Science Teacher Education/General Science Teacher Education, **131322** Biology Teacher Education, **131321** Computer Teacher Education, **260101** Biology/Biological Sciences, General, **260202** Biochemistry, **400501** Chemistry, General, **510000** Health Services/Allied Health/Health Sciences, General, **513801** Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse, **307101** Data Analytics, General, **520203** Logistics, Materials, and Supply Chain Management, **511105** Pre-Nursing Studies, **510913** Athletic Training/Trainer, and **511508** Mental Health Counseling/Counselor.

Associated Academic Programs include: Environmental Science, Computer Science, Science and Math Education, ED-Computer Science Ed K-12, Biological & Medical Sciences, Chemistry, Other Health, Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse, Data Analytics – General, Supply Chain Management, Nursing Candidate, Master of Athletic Training, and Master of Arts in Counseling.

Associated In-demand Occupations include: Forestry, Wildlife, and Natural Resources; Computer Science; Math Teacher Education; Science Teacher Education/Gen. Science Teacher Education; Biology Teacher Education; Computer Science Teacher Education (Endorsement); Biology/Biological Sciences, General; Biochemistry; Chemistry, General; Health Services/Allied Health/Health Sciences; Registered Nursing/ Registered Nurse; Data Analytics, General; Supply Chain Manager; Nurse Educator/Trainer; Athletic Trainer; and Mental Health Counselor.

First year retention in these programs is 78% for all students entering the major (IPEDS 2023-24); however, graduation rates in four-years differ depending on economic position. Pell grant recipients graduate at 50% rate, No Pell Grant/ Yes to Stafford Federal Loan graduate at 58% rate, while No Pell/No Federal Stafford Loan Students graduate at 74% success rates (IPEDS 2021). This data demonstrates that financial burdens can decrease successful graduation. HU internal data analysis concurs that when the affordability gap is narrowed, the first-year retention rate climbs to above that of the well-funded peers. Historical graduation rates at HU

have been near 50% - these STEM majors included. Increased retention in recent years has resulted in expected graduation rates above 50%. With COF funds, plus ongoing efforts to continue increasing retention, the university SGAP goal of reaching 65% should be reached by 2025. *HU's fall-to-fall first-year student retention rate is 74.3% (5-year average)*, compared to a 77.1% return rate across all students who started college in four-year private non-profit institutions (National Student Clearinghouse) in 2014. The 5-year average of four-year (49.1%) and six-year graduation rates (52.7%) waiver compared to national averages of 53% and 55% (National Student Clearinghouse). Placement and outcomes in STEM programs vary based on discipline. Health Sciences and Athletic Training Placement Rate is above 70%. Natural Sciences Placement Rate is above 50%. Chemistry/Biochemistry have a 10-year average of greater than 95%.COF will improve STEM retention.

c. Plan to address regional/statewide economic strengths & needs for targeted academic program.

“2,385,144 people in Ohio live in a community that does not have enough mental health professionals” (NAMI Ohio Fact Sheet, 2021). 75 of 88 Ohio counties are designated Mental Health Professional Shortage Areas (ODMHAS). There is a known shortage of Registered Nurses and RN faculty that is contributing to the overall national shortage of nurses. This is impacting local health facilities, forcing them to close units if no licensed staff are available, or hire PCN traveling RNs at a much higher rate of pay than a hired employee, thus putting that facility at financial risk. 86% of school districts nationwide reported that they are finding it difficult to hire new employees due to a nationwide shortage of teachers. (Educators for Excellence website, 2023). Natural Resource/ Water Quality trained persons are critically needed to maintain Great Lakes freshwater; 11 million citizens depend on the region for drinking water. Local economic partners confirm that there is a high demand for Supply Chain management locally.

d. COF initiative is part of the institutional strategic plan, supports student achievement.

In 2022, HU President Robert Huntington initiated the Strategic Growth Action Plan (SGAP) which the Board approved. SGAP established a 5-year plan to strengthen HU's core student mission, to achieve financial sustainability, and to begin a planning process to navigate challenges. COF initiative aligns with SGAP and has the support of the HU's Senior Leadership and Board of Trustees. A *SGAP goal is to “Amplify Experiential Learning Opportunities”* with the “purpose to complement student academic portfolios and the impact to make HU students and graduates more attractive in the employment marketplace.” COF scholars will be linked with businesses and given network opportunities. Thus, job searching after degree completion will be easier, with hope to achieve a “90% career placement by FY2025” rate (SGAP). Every university third-year student is invited to network with business partners.

Knowing HU has always attracted a larger number of first-generation and lower-income students than comparable Ohio schools, the focus since 2010 has been on *Total Student Success*. To that end, the Academic Comprehensive Campaign for Excellence (ACCE), launched

the Owen Center for Teaching & Learning, raised \$9 million in new scholarships and over \$3 million for student internships/ conferences/service trips, and implemented programs to improve learning outcomes and retention.

e. Commitments by the institutional that will lead to successful COF implementation.

Commitment letters from all staff involved with the Business, Marketing and Enrollment, Academic Affairs and Provost, Career and Military Services, and Academic Placement confirms that staff and the Strategic Leadership Team have willingness to support future COF if awarded. The President and Board support these efforts.

Hiram College

CHOOSE OHIO FIRST PROPOSAL EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 2016, Hiram College students have benefitted from the generous scholarship support provided through Choose Ohio First (COF). Many nursing and STEM students enroll at Hiram with aspirations that require great financial support to make their dreams possible. COF scholarships make a Hiram education affordable and accessible to our Pell Grant and first-generation students while attracting women and underrepresented groups into STEM fields.

One out of every three college students will change their major, some as many as three times. About 35% of these students are in STEM programs, including nursing, compared to 29% in non-STEM fields. Some studies suggest as many as 60% of STEM students change their majors. About 25% of nursing students nationally do not just drop the major, they drop out of college. Many of these students fail to persist due to financial pressure as well as rigorous coursework and uneasiness with clinical settings.

Hiram's 2025 COF program will provide scholarships to capable and qualified students with a concentration on those who declare majors in nursing and will support students in other traditional COF STEM majors at the College. Hiram's many STEM science, computer, environmental studies, and biomedical humanities majors, among others, have been most active in the COF program since its inception, creating a community of scholars that incorporates prospective students, current students, graduates, and alumni. This professional network has had few nursing majors to date but continuing support for these STEM students may be just what Hiram nursing majors need if they decide the profession is not a fit for them. They will be exposed to other opportunities in STEM fields that may better suit them. They can remain COF scholars, remain in STEM majors, and remain in college.

Hiram educates future nurses to be compassionate caregivers who are clinically competent, ethically grounded, and socially and culturally responsible. Students within our Northeast Ohio Bachelor of Science in Nursing program train on campus and off, in facilities and clinical environments that are known to be some of the best in the country. Nursing students learn effective patient care through hands-on learning and clinical experience, with clinical beginning in the sophomore year. Nursing students at Hiram, especially those in underrepresented and marginalized populations who are common at the College, become significantly more mindful and skilled in the social, economic, and emotional diversity that can make the difference between whether a patient with cultural, religious, or other concerns accepts care.

Hiram's 10:1 student to faculty ratio engages students to learn beyond a customary curriculum. Students build relationships with their faculty through individualized advising and mentoring that supports their academic and career preparation while at Hiram and beyond. New COF students in nursing will join a well-established supportive COF learning community at the College that offers personalized attention, STEM-specific programming, career guidance and

networking opportunities, and work-based experiences aimed at preparing them for medical, research, industry, and primary and specialized care careers. COF faculty leads Dr. Steven Romberger, director of the COF program, and Dr. Sarabeth Abalos, director of nursing, aim to strengthen our current COF STEMM program to serve nursing students. Dr. Romberger already has worked to establish academic and career support programming and a culture that promotes persistence, completion, and career readiness among current COF scholars. Dr. Abalos will enhance this foundation for nursing majors with a project team that includes Dr. Romberger, nursing faculty and staff, admissions, and financial aid representatives.

Through existing collaborative efforts, Hiram's COF STEMM retention has increased significantly through attentive faculty and student involvement in related curricular and co-curricular programs. Through participation in the COF STEMM program over nearly 10 years and with the implementation of strategic STEMM recruitment, academic, and career support services, the number of STEMM majors and graduates, particularly those from traditionally underrepresented populations, at Hiram has grown consistently. The COF program with a concentration on nursing students, like previous COF majors, at Hiram does not just change the student but also transforms their family and community when that student earns a college degree.

Founded in 1850, Hiram is a liberal arts college with a proud heritage of educational innovation and excellence. Some of the College's unique characteristics that facilitate student success include the small student-faculty ratio, relevant degrees that point to specific careers, a curricular emphasis on real world problem-solving, and academic counseling that encourages students to complete their undergraduate degree in four-to-six years. Nearly 50% of students who attend Hiram are Pell eligible, nearly 30% are from underrepresented populations, many are first generation college students, and nearly 100% of all students at the College receive financial aid. The mean award is nearly \$22,000 per student, well above the national average. Hiram's average graduation rate over the past decade has been approximately 60% with about 76.0% of students persisting beyond their first year, a rate above the national average.

As we consider our recruitment and transfer strategies to bring students into the nursing and STEMM programs, Hiram will focus its efforts on first-time, full-time students as well as transfer students from our community and other college partners with whom we have articulation agreements: Cuyahoga Community College, Lakeland Community College, and Lorain County Community College. The goal of the COF STEMM program at Hiram will be to increase the number of students from Ohio entering STEMM careers within the state. We aim to achieve this goal by:

Providing scholarships to qualified nursing and STEMM majors entering Hiram either as high-school graduates, first-year students, or transfer students from local community colleges or other institutions.

Delivering academic and career support programming to increase persistence and completion among COF Scholars.

Developing students in the Hiram Connect innovative curriculum that directly links coursework with work-based learning and other high impact experiential learning opportunities.

Hiram College serves communities in Northeast Ohio and throughout the state by enrolling, educating, and imparting career experience and employment to about 1,000 students each year, nearly 75% of whom are Ohio residents and 72% of whom stay in Ohio after they graduate. About 95% of Hiram graduates are employed, in graduate school, or engaged with other education and training within the first year following their commencement.

Kent State University

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Kent State University is a leading regional university for Ohio, with eight campuses spanning Northeast Ohio, offering certificates and associate degrees, bachelor's, and graduate degrees. Kent State produces the most graduates of any of the universities in Northeast Ohio and is a major economic engine for the region. Nearly 94% of all students attending Kent State are from Ohio and Kent State is strongly committed to graduating career-ready students in high-demand STEM fields such as healthcare and engineering, further enhancing the economic health of our State. Notably, 63.8% of Kent State's alumni stay in Ohio to work, comprising 3.1% of the State's workforce. The current Choose Ohio First proposal exemplifies Kent State's commitment to workforce development for our State.

Kent State has been fortunate to receive generous support from Choose Ohio First in previous years. Kent State's Choose Ohio First program currently supports students in a variety of 4-year degree-granting majors in Biological Sciences, Mathematics, Environmental Sciences, Neuroscience, Computer Science, Chemistry, Physics, Aeronautics, and Engineering. In addition, we received Choose Ohio First funding to further enhance access to higher education to students in 2-year associate degree-granting programs in Healthcare, Information Technology, and Engineering Technology at our Regional Campuses, in the College of Applied and Technical Studies. During the past years we have successfully developed and implemented a university-wide approach to recruitment for Choose Ohio First that has resulted in increased access and diversity, a successful approach to Student Support resulting in high levels of retention and persistence in the Choose Ohio First cohorts, and a process for connecting students to work-based learning experiences.

In this current proposal, we request funding to support students in computer science and engineering programs. In 2019, Kent State was awarded a Choose Ohio First award (19-13) specifically to support students in Computer Science. This award currently supports 102 students, in Computer Science bachelor programs in the College of Arts and Sciences at the Kent and Stark campuses and graduate students who are completing Computer Science Teaching credentials in the College of Education Health and Human Services. However, the last cohort of new students to this Choose Ohio First award has now been recruited and we are therefore seeking new funding for these areas of high demand fields. Notably, Kent State University has greatly expanded educational programs in computer science and engineering to meet the high demand for workforce development. Therefore, this proposal will not only include our outstanding computer science and teacher endorsement programs mentioned above, but also our new and growing programs in Cybersecurity Engineering and Computer Engineering Technology in the College of Aeronautics and Engineering, Business Analytics and

Computer Information Systems in the Ambassador Crawford College of Business and Entrepreneurship, Information Technology in the College of Applied and Technical Studies, and the master program in Geographic Information Science in the College of Arts and Sciences.

The mission at Kent State is to provide access to higher education, independent of financial background. Kent State University enrolls a diverse population of students with critical needs for financial aid. The focus of the current Choose Ohio First proposal on degrees of interest and impact to students in computer science and engineering aligns well to this mission. We have implemented enrollment strategies with emphasis on removing barriers, both financial and structural, to make access to higher education more equitable. Our vision is to be an inclusive community whose collective commitment to learning sparks transformative thinking, meaningful voice, and sustainable outcomes to better our world.

Each of the selected programs have outstanding leadership from Choose Ohio First Leadership Teams, dedicated to support Choose Ohio First students. Moreover, we have developed and implemented university-wide support for the Choose Ohio First students to facilitate retention and on-time completion. Students will be supported by teams of designated and dedicated advisors in college and campus offices, Choose Ohio First Academic Program Leaders, and faculty in their programs. A key goal of the Choose Ohio First Program at Kent State University is to retain our credentialed graduates by connecting them to full-time employment in our state via work-based learning experiences and internships. Therefore, we have implemented university-wide career exploration services and aim for participation of all students in work-based learning experiences such as internships with our many business partners. Finally, events are organized to engage the students as a community and further strengthen their professional skills and preparedness for employment.

In conclusion, Kent State is well-positioned to build on the success of our current Choose Ohio First programs with an emphasis on associate degree programs at the Regional Campuses. Our selected programs in computer science and engineering are nationally recognized and accredited and provide graduates in high-demand fields in Ohio. This is coupled with our award-winning student success and support services and deep commitment to student access and belonging. We are excited for the prospect to expand into these education and workforce development areas and to continue to support the invaluable investment provided by the Choose Ohio First program.

Lake Erie College

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 1856 Lake Erie College's (LEC) strong liberal arts tradition has fostered a scholarly community that prepares students for professional success, responsible citizenship, and purpose-driven lives. Guided by hope and care, our students are empowered to lead lives of personal significance and professional success as global citizens. We envision their academic career, and future lives, enriched by self-discovery, strong personal attributes, creative problem-solving, and a thoughtful consideration that balances personal and professional goals in relationship to other's needs. We prepare graduates to cultivate character and a future career throughout their time at LEC.

Rationale

As we enter our third year of offering a Choose Ohio First (COF) program, Lake Erie continues to focus on growing enrollment of women and BIPOC students within our STEM programs. According to *The State of Science and Engineering 2024*, published by the National Science Board, 62.9% of STEM workers in the United States in 2021 were white, whereas women and BIPOC individuals continue to be underrepresented in the STEM workforce as a percentage of their share of the U.S. employed population. For example, although Black or African American workers comprise 11% of the total workforce, they only represent 8% of the STEM field; Hispanic or Latino workers make up 18% of the workforce and only comprise 15% of STEM workers; and women who total 47% of the adult workforce population, only comprise 35% of STEM workers.

Lake Erie College is poised to address this challenge and, indeed, has demonstrated our commitment by awarding 42 scholarships to women and BIPOC students since the inception of the program, and currently have enrolled (current cohort) or retained (previous cohorts) 39 of those individuals. This accounts for 81% of the total number of scholarships awarded to COF STEM Scholars.

Lake Erie employs both traditional and personalized recruiting strategies to attract students to STEM programs at the college. In addition to the efforts of our Admissions team, Dr. Johnathan Tedesco, dean of the School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics (SNSM), works with local high school administrators and guidance counselors to promote LEC's STEM Bridge Program, whereby highschoolers can earn CCP credit and gain direct admittance into the LEC science major of their choice. In addition, the SNSM is very active in the regional community and, in particular, the COF STEM Scholars routinely volunteer at events to both support our communities and build awareness of opportunities for STEM studies and careers at LEC.

Our recruitment efforts recognize that many Lake Erie College students come with a range of academic abilities and challenges, and many enroll with exceptional financial needs, which is why Lake Erie awards over \$17 million annually in institutional aid and the average out of pocket cost for a COF scholar is just over \$5,000. Lake Erie remains committed to recruiting students

from underrepresented populations into STEM majors and COF scholarships are an important element of our recruitment process.

Overview of Programs

The School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics offers undergraduate majors in biology, chemistry, mathematics, and environmental science, as well as pre-professional tracks in medicine, dentistry, and pharmacy. Physician Assistants enroll in our exceptionally competitive master's degree program. Within these disciplines and degree programs, students experience small class sizes that promote rich, interactive learning and lab-based experiences that deepen their understanding of the content. All courses are taught by faculty with a Ph.D. or M.S. degree and industry experience rather than graduate or teaching assistants. These faculty are available to any student who needs additional support.

Lake Erie College's ethos of personalized service and attention informs how we work each day and with each student. Dr. Johnathan Tedesco, dean of the School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics and associate professor of chemistry, serves as the primary point of contact for students and the program is also supported by staff in admissions, marketing, financial aid, academic services, and career development. Together, these faculty and staff leaders form an advisory work group that convenes regularly throughout the duration of the five-year grant period to assess, inform, and improve the academic and co-curricular experiences of COF students as well as program outcomes.

Addressing Regional and State-Wide Strengths and Needs

By all indications, graduates who enter Northeast Ohio's STEM workforce over the next decade will find an abundance of opportunity. Cleveland is home to many companies that rely on a skilled STEM workforce. Graduates can pursue employment in healthcare, bio-science, smart manufacturing, and the technology sectors. Reports and forecasts from Ohio Means Jobs | Team NEO and Ohio Department of Job and Family Services project growing demand in healthcare settings, which employs 17.1% of our local workforce. Ohio Means Jobs | ODJFS (2020-2030) reports for the Cleveland-Elyria MSA indicate that medical and health services managers, forensic science technicians, nurse practitioners, physical therapy assistants, physician assistants, and postsecondary instructors in biology, healthcare specialties, nursing, and veterinarians are expected to see the greatest demand for their expertise through 2030.

Lake Erie is poised to help fill the funnel for Ohio's STEM workforce due to our strong STEM programming, relationships with key Ohio businesses and organizations, and commitment to student persistence and success. We are continuously evaluating our curriculum and meeting with area business partners to ensure we are adapting to evolving needs and providing the skills and resources necessary to train tomorrow's workforce. Choose Ohio First is a valuable partner in that effort and enables us to help underserved students to imagine themselves in STEM careers and then, through the resources of the COF program at Lake Erie, take advantage of the many opportunities available to transition into a STEM career.

Connection to LECs Strategic Plan and Student Support

The COF initiative at Lake Erie is supported by our current strategic plan initiative to “build and enhance academic programs that strengthen our reputation, attract new students, and support the needs of the region.” This plan also includes the objective of “placing a focus on building and expanding intentional co-curricular activities to support student success” while “ensuring that students have sufficient access to academic support services such as advising, tutoring, and career development.” Indeed, now that COF is in its third year at LEC, the program has become a model for other student support programs on campus due to its success in engaging and retaining program participants. In fact, the COF STEMM Scholars are known around campus by staff and administrators, who are frequently engaged by the Scholars. As LEC undertakes strategic planning in the coming year, our success with the COF cohorts will be used to shape our future practices pertaining to student success, and STEMM will be a top priority as we work to prepare students for in-demand jobs in the region.

Institutional Commitment

Lake Erie College is committed to continuing our success with the COF Program with the 2025-2030 cohort and has the full support of the leadership team, faculty, and board. Additionally, in the coming year, the college will be making additional investments to increase classroom and lab space for STEMM studies with the goal of adding additional in-demand STEMM majors, such as exercise science, to the curriculum.

With large populations of high-need and underrepresented students enrolled, and considering the exceptional experience Lake Erie College offers to prepare students for STEMM careers, the College’s leadership respectfully requests an award of \$1,200,000.

On behalf of our COF Scholars, thank you for your consideration and the impact we can achieve together.

Lakeland Community College

Executive Summary:

As a group students who attend community college are underrepresented in health care careers that require advanced degrees such as Physicians, Occupational Therapist, Medical Scientist, and Psychologist [1]. Among graduates of US based medical schools, students who attended community college were more likely to enter practice fields related to family medicine [2]. Graduates of community colleges are increasingly seen as a path toward diversifying such health care fields [3]. Lakeland has a robust Associate of Science degree program that offers a large number of natural science courses typically required for admissions to such programs. Lakeland offers a full year of organic chemistry, immunology, and abnormal psychology which are not available at every community college. This wide course offering allows students to build a strong foundation.

The associate of Science degree requires 61 credit hours to complete. Students must complete a minimum of 18 credits in Math and Natural Sciences. They have an additional 24 hours of electives that they can pick based on their future goals. These hours will allow them to tailor their program to accommodate whichever future healthcare path they are pursuing. Within the degree are specific pathways for Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Math, and Psychology. These are aligned with 4-year degree programs in their respective fields. These are among the most common pre-health majors at four-year institutions.

Statewide, the Ohio Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation include Physical Therapist, Occupational Therapist, Physician, Pediatrician, and Psychologist on the "Top Jobs" list. All of these areas are expected to see job growth. These are determined to be in demand jobs for the governor's office. Within the local region of Northeast Ohio, Healthcare providers make up a greater percentage of the workforce than nationwide. As the home to University Hospitals and the Cleveland Clinic there are numerous employment opportunities in the area. With local four-year institutions such as Cleveland State, the University of Akron, Kent State, Case Western, and other there are many opportunities for students to complete a bachelors degree. The region is also home to Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of Medicine, Northeast Ohio Medical University, and Case Western School of Medicine for advanced degrees in these fields.

The requested funds are for students pursuing Associate of Science degrees whose academic and career plans include pursuing advanced degrees that lead to careers in health care careers such as Physicians (of any specialty), Occupational Therapist, Medical Scientist, and Psychologist. These require students to transfer. Part of the larger college mission and vision is to build connections with other institutions in the region to provide students seamless pathways for transfer to continue their education. Funding will enable students to enroll as full-time students, this will accelerate their time to degree completion. Students who enroll full-time are more likely to persist and to graduate. These are also part of the college mission and vision.

Lakeland Community College is committed to the success of Choose Ohio First Scholars. Students will receive numerous support throughout their time at Lakeland. Students will receive academic support from the college navigator programs. The college's Mens and

Womens center will also provide support to students. There are numerous opportunities for students to engage with mental health through the college counselors. As part of the college's commitment, several staff will have time committed to the program match funding. This includes partial time from a career services professional to assist students with work-based learning. It also includes a faculty members time to be reassigned from teaching to support students and monitor their academic progress.

[1] Talamantes, Efrain, et al. "Community college pathways: improving the US physician workforce pipeline." *Academic Medicine* 89.12 (2014): 1649-1656.

[2] Talamantes, Efrain, et al. "Community college pathways to medical school and family medicine residency training." *The Annals of Family Medicine* 16.4 (2018): 302-307.

[3] Luo, Qian, et al. "Does community college attendance affect matriculation to a physician assistant program? A pathway to increase diversity in the health professions." *Academic Medicine* 97.1 (2022): 121-128.

Lorain County Community College

ODHE CHOOSE OHIO FIRST FY25, PART 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, August 2024

Rationale for selected populations recruitment: LCCC is a dynamic, student-centered college intentionally designed to support individuals with balancing multiple roles on their path to college completion. Nearly 90% work while attending college, with majority working at least half-time. The average age is 24, many bring life experiences including caring for dependents, serving in military, or completing some prior college. Over 80% receive financial assistance through grants & scholarships, and LCCC is nationally recognized for holistic, fully integrated services and commitment to student success.

In 2024, LCCC was featured in “America’s Hidden Economic Engines: How Community Colleges Can Drive Shared Prosperity,” exploring ways forward-thinking community colleges are designing and implementing solutions to adapt to critical needs in U.S. economy and create pathways to opportunity for diverse learners. Through 5 case studies of community colleges from Mississippi to Ohio to Arizona, LCCC’s strategies to grow regional economic growth & opportunity featured in Harvard’s new book:

- *Leading a comprehensive strategic visioning process built on community engagement to understand needs, opportunities and aspirations of the community.* LCCC’s Vision 2025 strategic plan (adopted in 2019, refreshed annually) engaged 1,500 stakeholders leading to bold goal of “10,000 degrees of impact” where the college would prepare 10,000 more individuals with credentials needed for in-demand jobs. As of May 2024, LCCC exceeded its goal of 10,000 individuals earning LCCC degree/credential by 2025. Goal completion occurred a year early and against a backdrop of declining enrollment across the country. The bold goal, foundational to Vision 2025 was set through extensive research including, regional workforce needs, state aspirational goals, and county population trends.
- *Forming long-standing relationships with business & industry, informs college’s launch of new programs & helps design innovative delivery models such as earn-and-learn programs.* LCCC works with 80 regional advanced manufacturing companies to deliver degree programs in microelectronics, which are critical to Ohio’s efforts to expand semiconductor industry domestically & nationally.
- *Emphasizing short-term training* by delivering 14 Fast-Track programs aligned to in-demand jobs to support the needs of career-switching adults. The college utilizes several different funding sources to offer these programs at little or no cost to students. Partnering with Team NEO, co-designing, and continuing to expand Career by Design a new approach to student advising that focuses on ensuring students’ education leads to careers with family-sustaining wages and align to talent needs within the Northeast Ohio region. (See also LCCC’s work in this area: <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/edcentral/a-fresh-take-on-community-college-workforce-certificates/>)
- *Expanding dual enrollment programs* aligned to in-demand jobs, creating early career pathways for first-generation college students.

- *As one of ten community colleges selected for Unlocking Opportunity network (Aspen Institute/ Community College Research Center (CCRC) initiative, LCCC has set a bold goal of increasing educational attainment within the county: 50% of individuals in every Lorain Co. community will attain a degree or credential of value and have a job that provides family-sustaining wage/benefits by age 35. Nearly all the highest opportunity careers leading to family-sustaining wage jobs are in STEM disciplines.*

An overview and rationale of the selected academic programs: For the newest (competitive) COF program opportunity, LCCC is targeting 45 STEM CIP-defined program areas which are key pathways that lead to in-demand careers with family-sustaining wage jobs within Northeast Ohio (see Attachment G re SOC codes & in-demand jobs). LCCC is seeking to enroll 35 new students into each year of the COF cohort (for certs and associates). LCCC has determined and validated their relationship to building critical workforce pipelines via EMSI, LightCast (formerly Burning Glass) and in collaboration with employer partnerships, advisory boards, and regional workforce development partners such as Team NEO. Program areas selected for inclusion include co-curricular and experiential learning components in alignment with COF requirements. Key Objectives for the LCCC COF program build on demonstrated institutional best practices and include the following components: Recruitment & Marketing (outreach & targeted populations), Work-Based Learning opportunities (co-ops, internships, & research experiences), Supportive Services for certificate/degree retention & completion, high-impact practices (HIPs) (within curriculum and co-curriculars), and COF Operating/Fiscal Management.

C) Plan synopsis: regional/statewide economic strengths for targeted academic programs: Northeast Ohio's economy is comprised of three core sectors: manufacturing, information technology, and healthcare, each of which heavily supported by STEM talent. LCCC leadership is actively engaged with regional and local workforce development organizations where higher education and industry integrate to build a sustainable STEM pipeline for the future. Partnerships include Team NEO, Greater Cleveland Partnership Regional IT Engagement (RITE), Lorain County Manufacturing Sector Partnership, MAGNET--Northeast Ohio's Manufacturing Sector Partnership, Workforce Connect Sector Partnerships and more. LCCC plans to address STEM-related workforce needs utilizing a variety of data analysis, economic-development, and program-specific employer engagement & staff acumen regarding career pathways/options (via advisory boards and the *Career by Design* program initiative) to drive program and pipeline growth and to develop & implement career pathways aligning with regional and statewide economic strengths & needs. This work operates through leadership in academic infrastructure supporting curriculum development and pedagogies, Business Growth Services (BGS) direct work with industry to understand talent needs and develop innovative programs, as well as individual academic programs offerings in Engineering, Business and IT.

D) How COF is part of institutional strategic plan, supports student achievement: LCCC's current strategic plan, *Vision 2025: 10,000 Degrees of Impact*, set forth a bold vision of impact across the college's region and local communities. It highlighted five areas of focus (student-focused, success-focused, future-focused, work-focused, and community focused) to increase the earning potential, economic mobility, and financial security of individuals, families, and communities. As of May 2024, LCCC has exceeded its strategic goal of 10,000 individuals earning

an LCCC degree/credential by 2025. Completion of this goal occurred a year early and against a backdrop of declining enrollment across the country. The bold goal, foundational to Vision 2025 was set through extensive research including, regional workforce needs, state aspirational goals, and county population trends.

LCCC is committed to increasing attainment level of all students, particularly first-generation, low-income, racial minority, and adult students through these efforts strengthening COF student experience:

- Building clear career pathways to certificates/degrees to reduce course overlap & time to completion, including dual enrollment (CCP) students who begin studies in high school.

- Creating student experience courses that provide early connections to career-focused work-based learning, experiential learning, and research opportunities.

- Structured academic advising that allows students to meet academic milestones as they advance through their educational program. Increased data analysis, tracking/sharing of academic/co-curricular student success.

- Integrating inclusive teaching pedagogies & high-impact practices in STEM program courses.

- As one of ten community colleges selected for Unlocking Opportunity network (Aspen Institute & Community College Research Center (CCRC) initiative), LCCC has set goal of increasing educational attainment within the county: 50% of individuals in every Lorain Co. Community will attain a degree or credential of value and have a job that provides a family-sustaining wage and benefits by age 35. Nearly all of the in-demand careers leading to family-sustaining wage jobs are in the STEM disciplines.

E) Institutional assistance it will receive that will lead to a successful implementation: LCCC utilizes assessment, research, and continuous improvement among its best practices in operating and advancing the COF program. Specific focus is on placing students together in STEM learning communities to foster a sense of belonging through LCCC CONNECT. COF students are supported by Career Services and TRAIN OH Earn & Learn as they are connected to work-based learning experiences like internships, clinicals, undergraduate research and more. LCCC will support scholars' attendance and participation at conferences, the COF Scholar Showcase and transfer events. Successful students, upon graduation, will transition into graduate school, the military, or the workforce.

COF at LCCC is led by the Dean of Accreditation & Assessment, the Director of Financial Aid, Director of School & Community Partnerships, Manager of Career Services, and Manager of K12 CTE Pathways & Programs. This ensures timely management, communication, employer engagement, fiscal oversight, and full reporting, per ODHE and State of Ohio guidelines.

To support scholars from recruitment through graduation and employment, LCCC utilizes a cross-functional, across-unit team to oversee, plan, and coordinate recruitment, programming, scholar support and persistence, academic program tracking, connection to program faculty, and program evaluation. The LCCC COF Team includes members from academic affairs (including each division supporting STEM programs), academic advising, accreditation & assessment,

career services, enrollment services, financial aid, institutional research, and school and community partnerships.

This proposal incorporates strategic institutional completion planning placing emphasis on leveraging existing & emerging recruitment pipelines, strategic enrollment management principles, inclusive teaching practices/curricular design, high impact practices, evidence-based practices transforming STEM education, co-curricular educational components enhancing student experience.

Malone University

Executive Summary for Malone University's Choose Ohio First Grant Proposal

Malone University is requesting Choose Ohio First (COF) funding to assist students' success in STEM fields of study. Our COF proposal seamlessly aligns with our institutional mission as it outlines our intention to actively recruit and educate students, in the STEM fields outlined by our selected CIP codes. These students will engage in work-based learning during their academic experience, thereby using their Malone educational experience to positively impact and serve workforce needs in Ohio. Over the past several years the number of low-income students has steadily increased in admissions with now 50% of the Malone student population federally qualifies as low-income. This growing financial need is a very real obstacle. COF funding for Malone's students has a direct impact for college affordability, completion, and employment possibilities. COF funding would be a tool for recruiting our underrepresented populations in the education majors with a STEM focus.

This funding opportunity also does not displace existing resources already allocated to fulfilling our institutional mission but rather provides needed financial support for students particularly the underrepresented student population that we are targeting. Malone's 1:1 match commitment with the COF funds will make STEM education more cost-effective as students will receive both the COF funds and matching institutional merit awards. This will provide more access and opportunity for underrepresented students in STEM fields and strengthen Ohio's economic capacity.

Malone will continue to proactively seek underrepresented students for STEM programming at Malone by partnering with local high schools and their students (see details in the proposal) and working closely with area and regional high school guidance counselors and partnership high schools to intentionally recruit from schools with diverse student populations.

The academic programs selected for this request include: Biochemistry (BA), Biology-Clinical Laboratory Science (BA), Biology (BA), Chemistry (BA), Computer Science (BA), Data Analytics (BA), Environmental Studies (secondary major), Exercise Science (BA), Life Science Education (BA), Life Science/Chemistry Education (BA), Mathematics (BA), Nursing (BSN), Zoo and Wildlife Biology (BA), Adult-Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner (MSN), Clinical Mental Health Counseling (MAEd), Family Nurse Practitioner (MSN), Graduate Certificate in Nursing Education, Family Nurse Practitioner, Post-Master's Certificate, Adult-Gerontology Acute Care Nurse, Post-Master's Certificate. All these STEM rich programs produce well prepared employment ready students.

Malone University engages in economic development initiatives with local, regional, and statewide organizations, businesses, and community leaders to strengthen their capacity to prepare STEM students to meet Ohio's current and future workforce needs. According to the Ohio Means Jobs Snapshot of Ohio Occupational Projections 2020-2030, Nursing, Mental Health, and Education have annual job openings of 23,941 confirming Malone's alignment with meeting Ohio workforce needs with the programs selected in this proposal.

Malone University representatives are actively engaged with our business and education leaders to ensure we align our coursework with skills needed for the workforce and evolve our course options and programs to ensure we meet the in-demand job needs in our community. We do that by hosting business advisory committees on our campus, by actively serving on regional committees like the Canton Regional Chamber of Commerce Education Committee and Strengthening Stark Task Force as well as by attending statewide forums to keep current regarding in-demand workforce needs and future forecasting. One of our local partners and largest Stark County employer, Aultman Health Foundation, has over 500 STEM positions open currently. The COF funds will help us fill those positions.

Malone's Center for Student Success (CSS) is designed to provide support systems to assist with retention and on-time completion. We have a *proactive, preventive, systematic approach* to engaging with and assisting every student throughout their Malone experience to achieve their goals. The Director of the CSS and the Career Advisor will ensure students have the support they need to stay on a successful pathway to graduation. COF students will receive academic advising, tutoring, testing services, and assistance for students who need academic accommodations. COF students will have a mentor from faculty and peers as well as access to the counseling center, student health center, the office of multicultural services, accessibility services and much more. CSS will maintain and monitor the progress of our COF scholars including GPAs to ensure that any student falling below a 3.0 will be scheduled for tutoring opportunities. CSS will include on the data spreadsheet the documentation of the site placements for clinicals/student teaching/internships and will connect with the faculty leaders who are advising these students to ensure their overall support and success. The Malone staff is fully committed to the COF initiative and to working toward a 100% success rate for our COF scholars.

Malone University is committed to ensuring that 100% of our COF students have authentic work-based learning experiences as a part of their pathway to graduation to impact Ohio's workforce needs. All students entering our Malone COF STEM programs are required to complete work-based learning experiences (internship, research lab experience, clinicals, education field experiences, student teaching, or other work-based learning activities) as a part of their course requirements in their specific fields of study. Connections, networks, and partnerships with business and support agencies for work-based learning are provided

predominantly through the specific programs, departments, and chairs/directors of the departments. Each department/program has a work-based learning supervisor who coordinates work-based experiences, tracks student progress, and documents completion at both the program and institution levels.

Malone University is committed to partnering with every COF student to ensure a successful transition to the Ohio workforce. Many of our students will already have job offers after their internship, clinical experiences and student teaching as these experiences give both the employer and the student the opportunity to evaluate the skills and workplace match. Malone staff and faculty have built strong relationships in the business community that give our Malone COF STEM students access to workforce needs more readily. Students are introduced to available career opportunities during our fall Calling and Career fair, a job board specifically for Malone students/alumni, and resume support through the Center for Student Success. The Center for Student Success and faculty advisors will mentor, coach and advise COF students and post-graduates through the employment-ready to job placement process. Additionally, career advising is embedded in the curriculum through internships and mentoring with faculty advisors. Our goal is 100% placement in STEM jobs to impact our workforce needs.

COF funding will be a game-changer for our recruited underrepresented students who will now have access to an affordable, high quality STEM education and help fill these in-demand positions. The COF funds will equip more Malone STEM students to meet local workforce needs and improve Ohio's economic outcomes.

Marietta College

Executive Summary – COF 2025

Marietta College is a small, private institution located in Southeast Ohio. The College provides a strong foundation for a lifetime of leadership, critical thinking, and problem solving. We achieve this mission by offering undergraduates a contemporary liberal arts education and graduate students an education grounded in advanced knowledge and professional practice. Our goal is to prepare students for the world of work, particularly in key in-demand industries in Ohio.

Marietta College proposes a Choose Ohio First (COF) Scholarship program that will help us to educate students for in-demand jobs related to STEM. According to the Bureau for Labor Statics employment in STEM occupations nationally is projected to grow at a rate of 8% between 2019-2026, which is more than twice the national average of non-STEM occupations in the same time. This trend matches employment projections for Ohio. According to the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services *2026 Ohio Job Outlook Employment Projections* Ohio is expected to add 253,000 new jobs between 2016-2026 with approximately 60% of those jobs being in STEM fields.

Even with the availability of career opportunities there are not enough college graduates to fill projected employment needs with employers reporting that qualified individuals in fields related to engineering, science, data analytics, computer/IT and healthcare being some of the most difficult for employers to find qualified applicants for. (Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2024) This means that we must actively work to recruit students into STEM majors which includes focusing on students from marginalized populations who tend to be underrepresented in STEM fields. We will actively work to recruit women and students of different races, ethnicities, gender identity, socioeconomic status, physical ability and even age.

Marietta College is committed to attracting and retaining high-achieving students in STEM disciplines, with a particular emphasis on underrepresented populations. We purposely target Ohio students who are interested in STEM through on-campus STEM events, targeted communications, and creating a welcoming and supportive environment for underrepresented populations with STEM fields. We aggressively enhance the visibility of the COF scholarship by offering workshops with our financial aid staff, COF website and social media presence, and one-on-one consultations with students who qualify for the scholarship.

According to Ohio Means Jobs the fastest growing in-demand jobs are in manufacturing, healthcare, information technology, and distribution and logistics, all of which need employees with STEM degrees/expertise. More than 45% of the jobs listed on the Ohio Top Jobs list require at least a bachelor's degree and many of them are STEM related. Marietta College proposes a program that specifically targets degrees that train students for the above-mentioned occupations and directly pipeline students into graduate programs and careers that are listed on the Ohio Top Jobs and Critical In-Demand Jobs lists. We have chosen the following degree programs for this COF opportunity: Geology, Computer Science, Information Systems, Petroleum Engineering, Biology, Biochemistry, Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics, Health Science, Actuarial Science, Neuroscience, Psychology (graduate), Physician Assistant, Industrial

Engineering, Environmental Studies and Planetary Science. These programs of study prepare undergraduates for challenging careers and/or admission to well-respected graduate and professional schools.

The STEM degree programs identified for our COF program are competitive in the region and are the most academically rigorous. Therefore, it is critical that we target and actively recruit qualified students who have the capacity to thrive in college and complete their degrees. Marietta College will specifically target high school students in Ohio who have shown an interest in STEM majors and meet qualifying GPA. Marietta College is currently admission test optional due to the stress of testing for students during the COVID-19 pandemic. And as previously stated, we will focus our efforts on recruiting women and students who are socially disadvantaged including targeting low-income, first generation, students from marginalized populations, and students with disabilities to our programs. One of the keys to diversifying higher education and STEM is removing the barriers facing disadvantaged and marginalized populations. Often, the biggest barrier for these potential students is financial. While there are very qualified candidates among these groups, they often do not have the financial resources to attend college, let alone a private college, making the COF opportunity an important recruitment and retention tool.

One of the biggest challenges for students in Ohio is affording the cost of college. The cost of attending Marietta College is \$52,948 per year. However, the median household income for Ohio residents is approximately \$67,520. However, the income of many students in Ohio has been negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. According to data from the Census Bureau's 2021 Household Pulse Survey, 29% of adults in Ohio reported having difficulty paying for usual household expenses and 8% of households with children reported often not having enough to eat. Most students will have to rely on financial aid, including student loans, to be able to attend Marietta College. Even with academic scholarships ranging from \$14,000 to \$24,000 per year, the cost of attending Marietta College may still be too high for some students who are interested in a computing degree. The COF scholarship will give us the leverage we need to attract the most qualified students to our STEM programs, regardless of their ability to afford a private college.

Miami University

PI: Dr. Chun Liang

Co-PIs: Dr. Jessica Sparks, Dr. Jennifer Blue, Dr. Muhammad Jahan, Dr. Tereza Jezkova

Executive Summary

Miami University, renowned for its commitment to undergraduate education excellence, proposes the Chose Ohio First - Bioinformatics Innovators in Related STEM Fields (COF-BIRST) program to address the increasing demand of STEM workforce with bioinformatics expertise in Ohio. This program requests \$1,000,832 in funding over a 5-year period and aims to cultivate the next generation of innovators and leaders with interdisciplinary skills by providing scholarships, mentoring, and work-based learning experience to a diverse cohort of 80 talented students.

Rationale for Recruitment and Targeted Academic Programs:

Bioinformatics, a dynamic field merging biology, computer science, and data science, is at the forefront of scientific discovery and innovation, facilitating research and development across diverse sectors. By harnessing the power of computational tools and techniques to process and analyze massive biological data, bioinformatics is revolutionizing fields like healthcare, biomedicine, biotechnology, agriculture, environmental conservation, criminal justice and more. It is accelerating the development of new drugs, vaccines, and therapies, enabling personalized medicine, and providing insights into complex diseases. In agriculture, bioinformatics plays a pivotal role in developing crops that are more resistant to diseases, pests, and environmental stresses, leading to increased productivity and sustainability. Crucially, bioinformatics is revolutionizing engineering by advancing the development of personalized medical devices and diagnostics, optimizing biological systems and processes for synthetic biology and biomaterial innovations, and tackling challenges in biofuel production, pharmaceutical development, and environmental remediation. Particularly, its integration with smart manufacturing technologies, such as 3D printing, is unlocking new possibilities for creating patient-specific tissues and artificial human organs.

As our current COF-Bioinformatics program (Award #16.34) concludes in summer 2024, it is critical for us to upgrade this successful program to ensure even greater impacts in the future. Given the growing integration of bioinformatics across diverse STEM fields, the program must broaden its reach to attract students from more STEM disciplines and diverse backgrounds. Different from the current program, the proposed COF-BIRST program will expand to include a broader range of STEM disciplines, such as Medical Laboratory Science, Public Health, Biochemistry, Data Science and Statistics, Data Analytics, Biomedical Engineering, Chemical Engineering, Clinical Engineering, and Smart Manufacturing Engineering.

The COF-BIRST program will actively seek to increase the participation of underrepresented groups in STEM, including women and minorities. The program will build a strong sense of community among scholars from various STEM disciplines through bioinformatics coursework, workshops, and seminar training. This common theme will unite students across disciplines, enhancing their interdisciplinary understanding and collaboration. Each scholar will be paired with a faculty mentor based on mutual interests, providing personalized guidance and support for their academic and professional development. Through faculty-mentored research, internships, and co-op experiences, which are key components of the program's work-based learning, scholars will gain invaluable hands-on experience, contribute to cutting-edge research, and engage in real-world projects across diverse STEM fields. This structured approach ensures our scholars get the support they need and gain versatile skills required to tackle complex challenges in the modern workforce.

Addressing Regional and Statewide Economic Needs:

Ohio is experiencing a significant demand for STEM professionals, particularly those with bioinformatics skills. Projections from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and the Ohio Job Outlook report indicate substantial growth in bioinformatics-related occupations, with numerous job openings in fields like software development, data analysis, biological sciences, chemical engineering, and biomedical engineering. By producing graduates proficient in bioinformatics and related STEM fields, the COF-BIRST program directly contributes to meeting these workforce demands, fostering economic growth and innovation within the state.

Alignment with Institutional Strategic Plan and Student Achievement:

The COF-BIRST program aligns seamlessly with Miami University's strategic plan, "Boldly Creative", which emphasizes data, analytics, and interdisciplinary programs to cultivate engaged citizens and workplace leaders. By providing scholarships, mentoring, and work-based learning experiences, the program supports student achievement, enhances the university's role in advancing scientific and medical research, and prepares graduates for successful careers in high-demand fields, ultimately contributing to the growth of the Ohio economy.

Institutional Commitments for Successful Implementation:

Miami University is deeply committed to the success of the COF-BIRST program. This commitment is evident through: (1) Dedicated Program Committee: Comprised of experienced faculty from relevant departments who are committed to inclusive practices and student success. They will oversee program implementation, scholar selection, and mentor matching and ensure close collaboration between departments and effective program management. (2) Campus-Wide Collaboration: The program will leverage the expertise and resources of the Office of Admission and Aid (OAA) for recruitment and the Center for Career Exploration & Success (CCES) for career development and internship placement. (3) Comprehensive Student Support: COF-BIRST scholars will benefit from Miami's strong support system, including academic advising, tutoring, and mental health services, all designed to foster their success. (4) Proven Track Record: Miami University's strong track record in recruiting and supporting

underrepresented students in STEM fields, along with its high graduation and job placement rates, demonstrates its capacity to effectively implement and manage the COF-BIRST program.

The COF-BIRST program represents a strategic investment in Ohio's future. By providing targeted scholarships, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, and offering robust work-based learning experiences, the program will cultivate a new generation of STEM professionals equipped with bioinformatics expertise. This program not only empowers students to achieve their academic and professional goals but also directly addresses the state's growing need for a highly skilled workforce in various growing sectors. By planting the seeds for future innovation from an interdisciplinary perspective, the COF-BIRST program will contribute to a more prosperous Ohio.

Mount St. Joseph University

Executive Summary

a. Recruitment Rationale

Technology is one of the most rapidly growing areas in the Ohio economy. In response, our program offers two distinct tracks: a traditional computer science track and a social computing track, the latter being a double major combining computer science with another discipline. This innovative approach is designed to attract non-traditional students, particularly women, rural residents, and underserved populations, who have historically been underrepresented in computer science. Our program aligns with market needs and successfully recruits individuals from these groups, equipping them with the tools and knowledge to make meaningful contributions both in their personal lives and to the Ohio economy. With women significantly underrepresented in computer science—one of the STEM fields with the lowest female participation rates—and rural populations often overlooked in higher education recruitment, our program addresses these critical gaps. As AI technologies continue to advance, the demand for individuals who can apply AI across various sectors is growing. By providing a structured pathway for underrepresented populations with diverse talents to enter the field of computer science, our program not only promotes social equity but also meets the economic demands of a rapidly expanding technology marketplace—we assert that inclusion that makes common-sense, measurable market-place sense is sound educational policy.

b. Program Overview of Selected Academic Programs

Mount St. Joseph University (MSJ) in Cincinnati, Ohio, has been successfully implementing the Choose Ohio First (COF) program since 2020, focusing on practical, hands-on education in computer science. The program, offered through the Center for IT Engagement (cITe), provides two distinctive tracks: a traditional Computer Science major in Application Development and a double major in Social Computing combined with another field of interest. Both tracks emphasize work-based learning partnerships, allowing students to apply their skills in real-world settings and expand their professional networks. Since its inception, the program has experienced significant growth, with COF cITe Scholars increasing in numbers from 5 in 2020 to approximately 130 students during the start of the 2024-2025 academic year. Notably, approximately 45 percent of these Scholars are women, far surpassing the national average for female representation in computer science.

The program's success is reflected in its high retention rates, timely graduations, and strong job placements. A key contributor to this success is our holistic approach to recruitment and support, particularly for underrepresented students. We do not just recruit these students; we design our curriculum and support systems to meet their unique needs. Our partnership with cITe Inc., a for-profit consulting arm, integrates real-world projects into the classroom and offers meaningful work-study and co-op opportunities, addressing the desires of underrepresented students to use computer science for human betterment in practical, and relevant ways in their

classrooms. Additionally, we provide extensive support, not just including traditional office hours but also in near-peer tutoring, to remove barriers to academic success.

MSJ's commitment to affordable education is evident through substantial merit-based scholarships and financial aid, ensuring the program remains accessible to high-achieving students from diverse financial backgrounds. With articulation agreements with two-year colleges and paid work-based learning opportunities on or near campus, the program enriches students' educational experiences while providing financial support. This approach effectively bridges the gap between academic learning and real-world application, with educational research and our own experience confirming that these applications serve as powerful motivators for non-traditional populations.

c. Alignment with Regional and Statewide Economic Needs and Strengths

The COF cTe Scholars program at MSJ is strategically aligned to meet the growing demand for skilled IT professionals in Southwest Ohio, a region experiencing rapid economic growth and a projected 10.2% increase in Computer and Mathematical Occupations. We maintain a strong marketplace focus and awareness because of the academic program's relationship with the university's for-profit IT consulting arm, the Center for IT Engagement. This marketplace involvement helps us offer relevant, hands-on skills to our students as well as co-ops and internship—we want to teach students the skills that are truly needed by paying customers right now.

The program not only offers a traditional computer science degree but also provides a unique double major in Social Computing alongside another discipline, with a particular focus on AI applications. This combination equips students with both technical expertise and interdisciplinary knowledge, highly valued in today's workforce. Through hands-on, work-based learning experiences and strong partnerships with local businesses, the program ensures that graduates are well-prepared to address critical workforce gaps and contribute immediately to Ohio's economy, supporting the state's broader economic development goals.

d. Alignment with Institutional Strategy and Student Success

The COF cTe Scholars program aligns closely with MSJ's mission, promoting academic excellence, respect for all individuals, and a strong commitment to service. The program emphasizes personalized education and support, reflecting the University's dedication to the success of historically underrepresented groups in STEM, including women, first-generation students, and minorities. Through interdisciplinary learning opportunities, hands-on experiences, and collaboration with our for-profit university IT consulting arm, the program prepares students for immediate workforce contributions while embodying the University's goal of integrating life and learning. This approach supports MSJ's strategic plan to expand computer science enrollment, enhance diversity, and make positive community impacts through education, exemplified by innovative projects like the Cicada Safari app.

e. Commitments to Student Success

Specifically, the COF program is anchored in a cohort model, fostering a strong sense of community among Scholars through orientation events and collaborative projects. The University's vibrant culture of student research encourages spontaneous, yet essential faculty-student interactions, offering further support.

Mount St. Joseph University demonstrates its commitment to student success through personalized advising, specialized tutoring, and tailored support for COF cITe Scholars. The University's innovative approach includes resources like student-generated guides, the Mount Cares campus resource navigation chatbot, informative videos, and the Lost Lions app, which streamlines campus navigation. To enhance students' academic journeys, programs like the Honors Program, Project EXCEL, and the Learning Center offer tutoring, academic progress tracking, and support for students with disabilities. Beyond academics, the Career and Experiential Learning Center, cooperative education opportunities, and the Health Professions Advising program provide additional support. Social support is fostered through events, the Mount Roar! engagement app, and the MOSAIC Cross Cultural and Inclusion Center. Additionally, resources like the Lions' Cupboard Food Pantry and the Wellness Center highlight the University's focus on holistic and timely student care. Collectively, these initiatives underscore MSJ's dynamic commitment to nurturing students' growth, success, and overall well-being.

Mount Vernon Nazarene University

Executive Summary

Rationale

The benefits of collaboration within a diverse workgroup are many. STEM professions especially benefit when people with unique backgrounds and perspectives are represented and work together to solve today's issues. However, it has been a long-standing challenge to promote gender equity and ethnic diversity in STEM areas. In addition to a known lack of gender and ethnic mix in STEM majors, rural representation is an often-overlooked underrepresented population in STEM programs. Rural students often do not have the same opportunities to attend college because they cannot afford to do so, they do not have access to college readiness programs, they are not recruited by colleges, and they live long distances from colleges. (Mowreader, A., 2024). An MVNU Choose Ohio First Scholarship Program partnership will help to remove some of the barriers rural students currently face. MVNU is committed to recruiting underrepresented students from a diverse population, focusing on minority, gender, and rural equity in MVNU STEM programs to promote a robust workforce for Ohio businesses. Special consideration will be given to first generation college students.

Academic Program Overview

MVNU has proven STEM programs in engineering, computer science, communication science disorders, and nursing. MVNU's continued commitment to STEM programs has resulted in the expansion of the facilities and resources for all four programs. We will be opening the HW Hub in downtown Mount Vernon in fall 2025, the new facility will include more than a million in state-of-the-art equipment to enhance student learning and research opportunities in computer science and in mechanical, electrical, and computer engineering. Hunter Hall, home to the nursing and the speech-language pathology and audiology programs, houses state-of-the-art nursing labs and life-like simulation mannequins with a Certified Simulation Educator. A fully equipped speech clinic serves the community as students gain experience before graduate school by working alongside a clinical faculty member to provide free therapy to families in the community.

Due to the investment in the infrastructure and in faculty development, MVNU can double or triple enrollment in each program. The skill sets taught in these programs are all in high demand and have a workforce growth projection. The Choose Ohio First Scholarship Program would enhance the recruitment of new talent into these programs. MVNU is a leading provider of STEM education and workforce training, contributing to the growth and sustainability of local, regional, and state economies.

Regional and Statewide Economic Plan

The four selected programs focus on addressing current and future regional and statewide employment needs. Completion of the New Albany Intel plant will lead to a significant increase in the demand for a STEM-educated workforce. Graduates of MVNU's computer science and engineering programs will be well equipped to pursue careers in this field. In addition, MVNU's

nursing program partners with 14 acute care hospitals, three long-term care facilities, eight schools, two public health departments, a hospice program, and five other community sites in the region. The result has been the employment of nursing students and recent graduates, which in turn helps alleviate the healthcare worker shortage in Ohio. Enhancing this commitment to healthcare for Ohioans, MVNU's Communication Sciences and Disorders graduates continue in graduate studies in response to the growing need for speech-language pathologists.

Institutional Strategic Plan

The plan is to actively recruit 17 COF scholars for the year one cohort. Current and new partnerships will be developed for recruitment of new students who show high promise in the STEM subjects and have interest in pursuing STEM careers. Special focus will include marketing to underrepresented students including those from rural areas, ethnic and gender diverse students, and first-generation college students. These underrepresented students often match more than one of these demographics. In addition, all applicants for admission into the four programs will be informed about the application process for the COF initiative. COF programming will support students' success in their chosen STEM programs.

Institutional Commitments

All COF scholar students will have a structured program that will include enrichment opportunities and academic support; further, each scholar will have access to additional university scholarships to support a match of 1:1 or greater. Students will be supported with job training, business partner presentations, research opportunities, shadowing, internships, and assistance with career placement after graduation.

Muskingum University

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Muskingum University's Choose Ohio First (COF) initiative, *Healthcare Workforce Preparation Pathways and Partnerships in Appalachian Ohio*, has been designed as part of the institution's Strategic Action Plan to leverage the university's capabilities for serving the educational and career development needs of our COF scholars with great effectiveness. The proposed program will contribute to the achievement of the institutional goal to serve educational and workforce development needs of our region through our academic and co-curricular programs. This initiative aligns directly with the Learning and Innovation, Transformative Growth, and Visibility and Distinction themes outlined in the plan.

Populations for COF Recruitment: The university serves a region in east central and southeastern Ohio composed largely of Appalachian counties where much of the population is socioeconomically disadvantaged. A significant gap exists between the projected workforce need for the southeastern Ohio region and the educational attainment of the population in this area, where on average only 15.0% of adults hold a bachelor's degree, with only 5.7% being in a STEM discipline. Over 50% of full-time undergraduate students currently enrolled at Muskingum University are from Appalachia, while 49% are eligible for the Pell Grant, and 36% are first-generation college students.

Healthcare Workforce Shortages in Appalachian Ohio. As of 2023, 100% of Ohio Appalachian counties were designated by the Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) as either full or partial health profession shortage areas (HPSAs) for primary care or dental services. Muskingum County is designated as one of the Ohio Governor's Certified Healthcare Shortage Areas (Ohio Office of Health Policy, 2022). In a 2022 study by the Ohio Hospital Association, hospitals and long-term care facilities in

Appalachian counties have reported vacancy rates for essential healthcare roles such as RN's that are 20% higher than the state average and that 40% of healthcare facilities in Appalachian Ohio had critical staffing shortages resulting in reduced services and longer patient wait times.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the RN workforce is expected to grow by 6% over the next decade creating the need for over 200,000 new RNs each year (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023). The current shortage is being exacerbated by the significantly aging U.S. population and the staggering number of aging RNs expected to retire within the next 10 years. It is reported by the AHA that in 2017 more than 50% of RNs were age 50 or older and 30% were age 60 or older with 1 million RNs anticipated to retire within the next 10 years (AHA, 2021).

The Institute of Medicine calls for an increase in the number of baccalaureate-prepared nurses to at least

80% to support patient safety. According to the most recent workforce survey by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, the current nurse workforce falls short of this with only

65.2% of RNs being prepared at the baccalaureate level. Nursing school enrollment is not growing fast enough to meet the projected demand (AACN 2022)

There are 4,526 licensed occupational therapy assistants (OTAs) who live in Ohio (Ohio OTPTAT Board,

2024). Of this number 593 (13.1%) with active licenses live in 28 of the counties identified by the Appalachian Regional Commission. Only 412 (9.1%) OTAs with active licenses live in the southeastern Ohio counties.

There are 6,717 licensed occupational therapists (OTs) who live in Ohio (Ohio OTPTAT Board, 2024). Of this number, only 364 (4.78%) OTs with active licenses live in 28 of the counties identified by Appalachian Regional Commission. Only 257 (3.37%) of OTs with active licenses live in the southeastern Ohio counties. The number of OTs in these areas represents 31.8% (28 of 88) of Ohio counties yet only 5.42% of licensed OTs in the state indicating a significant disparity in the availability of skilled occupational therapy services. In these areas, OTAs outnumber OTs 6 to 1. Without the OT to initiate the evaluation process, consumers cannot access the services. Therefore, they may not have the necessary occupational therapy services available to improve their safety, function, and engagement in the daily life activities they need and want to do.

In the 2023 American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) Workforce and Salary Survey only 7.8 % of occupational therapy practitioners identify as male, which is down from 9.8% in the 2019 survey. There is a strategic goal to increase diversity, including gender, in the profession. In Ohio, the male gender is similarly underrepresented in the occupational therapy profession.

Academic Programs for COF Initiative: As the only comprehensive four-year institution within a 35-mile radius of New Concord, Ohio and Zanesville, Ohio, Muskingum University is including in this proposal eight COF-eligible STEMM programs aligned with healthcare workforce preparation that span traditional undergraduate, adult non-traditional, and graduate student populations. For traditional undergraduates, the proposal will include biology, biochemistry, chemistry, and the pre-licensure nursing program. For students in our Muskingum Adult Program (MAP), the medical laboratory studies (MLS) program and RNBSN and accelerated Bachelor of Science in nursing (ABSBN) nursing degree options are included. The MLS and RNBSN programs have a fully online design created for working adults. The MLS program serves students with clinical experience providing them with career advancement through a bachelor's degree and all requirements needed to sit for the Medical Laboratory Science exam. The RN-to-BSN program serves current registered nurses looking for career advancement and for those looking to enter the nursing profession from another field the accelerated Bachelor of Science in nursing (ABSBN) program features in-person instruction supplemented by online learning. At

the graduate level, the Master of Occupational Therapy (MOT) program provides career advancement for occupational therapy assistants who desire to become occupational therapists. The program is a bridge formatted program with two admission pathways offering courses online and lab experiences face to face during 18 on-campus weekends during the 2 years of the program. There are only 21 schools nationwide (2 in Ohio) that have the designation of bridge program. Only 12 specifically target OTAs, and Muskingum University is the only program in Ohio that identifies OTAs as their primary target audience. *The Recruitment Strategy section of this proposal highlights new pathway and partnership initiatives undertaken to make the proposed programs more accessible to students, reducing barriers and enhancing recruitment opportunities.*

Plan to Address Regional and Statewide Economic Strengths and Needs: The innovative student supports described in this proposal are designed to meet the diverse needs of all students at Muskingum University helping them persist through to matriculation. University leadership and STEM faculty continue to leverage and expand relationships with regional business and industry leaders to strengthen partnerships supporting the workforce initiatives proposed. Letters of commitment and support from institutional and business partners document several of these ongoing partnerships while highlighting the institutional and regional support for this COF initiative. Muskingum has an active, productive grant seeking culture. Described in this proposal are several other funded grants that will continue to provide supports and opportunities for our COF scholars. Choose Ohio First scholarship funding will provide support for an anticipated 100 students to work on applied projects, explore careers through field placements, and experience the transformative power of on-site learning through internships.

Institutional Assistance for Successful Implementation: The university-wide COF leadership team for our current funding contributed to the design of the proposed project and will play an active role in its implementation. Included on this team are representatives from academic discipline areas, workforce development, enrollment, marketing, student finance, and institutional research. This team is well-equipped to provide and facilitate the delivery of all COF program support elements.

The affordability of a Muskingum University education is an important factor in student recruitment and matriculation given the economically disadvantaged region we serve. The university has awarded Science Division Scholarships to incoming STEM majors since 1995 with funding levels have grown in the number of recipients, total dollars allocated, and a percentage of overall enrollment since 2008, Muskingum's first year of COF funding. COF scholarship funding has enabled the institution to provide an increased number of awards at higher support levels per year to our traditional undergraduate students. Adult non-traditional (MAP) students and graduate students have not been eligible for science division scholarships or other institutional aid. COF funding has been allocated in the proposed budget to these students providing them with support that would not otherwise be available. To further enhance this financial support, an assistantship model is available to MAP and graduate COF scholars that will provide a 23% institutionally supported discount on the annual tuition for full-time students.

Ohio Northern University

Executive Summary:

Meeting the Demands of Ohio's Workforce: Supporting STEM Scholars at ONU

Ohio Northern University (ONU) has served the state of Ohio by providing quality undergraduate education integrating practice with theory for more than 150 years. As ONU is located in rural Ohio, strategic partnerships with employers and industries are vital to student success through experiential and work-based learning, including internships, co-ops, and community-based research. Ohio Northern has strong existing relationships with regional and local employers that reach into rural underserved areas and these companies recognize the quality education our students receive, as evidenced by ONU's 96% or higher first destination placement rate⁶ in each of the past 4 years. The purpose of this proposal is to increase, through Choose Ohio First scholarship funds, the enrollment of students at ONU in STEM and health professions, and prepare professionals for in-demand occupations in Ohio.

Specifically, the proposal aims to increase enrollment at Ohio Northern University in Computer Science (11.0701), Computer Engineering (14.0901), Biological Sciences (26.0101), Biochemistry (26.0202), Chemistry (40.0501), Molecular Biology (26.0204), Neuroscience (26.1501), Mathematics (27.0101), Medical Laboratory Sciences (51.1005), Pharmacy (51.2001), Pharmaceutical Biomedical Sciences (51.2010), Nursing (51.3801), and the pre-professional preparatory fields for medicine, occupational and physical therapy, and physician assistant occupations. All of these programs are included in the list of eligible academic programs for this RFP. The goal is to enroll 25 students per year into the Choose Ohio First STEM and health professions program at ONU with an average of \$3,400 scholarship per student. ONU will match each Choose Ohio First scholarship 1:1 with University-funded scholarship monies, and most students will receive significantly more scholarship funding from ONU than from Choose Ohio First.

Reorganization of the workforce is occurring in Ohio due to the impact of high-tech industry investment, an historic pandemic, significant investment in transportation electrification, and the continuing slow rate of growth of Ohio's population. As a result, there is increased demand for students trained in STEM-related research, health professions, and technology. Students with training in biology, molecular biology, chemistry, biochemistry, and medical laboratory science can use their skills in laboratories and testing facilities. Students skilled in pharmaceutical biosciences can aid research into new drug-related therapies to address needs in the post-pandemic environment. Students with training in the practice of nursing and pharmacy possess skills that are greatly needed in Ohio. Students skilled in computer science,

⁶ response rates of 95-99% of graduates each year, within 6 months of graduation

computer engineering and mathematics will be sought after in the coming years of electric vehicle and chip manufacturing growth, as well as with established employers in the state.

The opportunity presented by scholarships through Choose Ohio First will allow Ohio Northern University to continue to provide meaningful education and work-based experiences for Ohio students, creating a qualified and job-ready workforce for meeting our state's challenges. As outlined in the Ohio Job Outlook Employment Projections 2020-2030, strong long-term growth in "the service-providing sectors will be led by the health care and social assistance industry, which is expected to add more than 86,000 jobs, a 10.6% increase". Growth is expected in the following sectors: home health care services, specialty hospitals, residential mental health facilities; offices of other health practitioners, community care facilities for the elderly, and outpatient care centers. Growth is also expected in the Computer and Mathematical Occupations in industries such as computer systems design and management of companies and enterprises.

Specific science and health care occupations, noted in Appendix J of the Ohio Job Outlook, 2020-2030 report, that are expected to experience growth by 2030 include: physician assistants (28.6%), nurse practitioners (48.5%), genetic counselors (24.6%), respiratory therapists (21.3%), psychiatrists (11%), biological scientists (2.3%), medical scientists (15.4%), life scientists (15.2%), and epidemiologists (25.7%). Since 2020 and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, laboratory and health care opportunities have continued to abound. For example, open positions in nursing top the list of in-demand jobs in every part of Ohio.

Computer and mathematical occupations are projected to be in the top 10 fastest growing occupational groups in Ohio from 2020-2030 (see Figure 9, pg.12). These projections were made prior to the announcement of major technology investment in Ohio, and demand is projected to increase for the number of jobs in this fast-growing occupational group (2020-2030 Figure 10, pg. 13). Appendix J of the Ohio Job Outlook 2020-2030 notes growth in positions that require at least a Bachelor's degree: information security analyst (26.7%), data scientists and mathematical science occupations (26.6%), computer and information research scientists (17.8%), and computer and information systems manager (5.6%).

As growth is projected in the occupations listed above, Ohio will continue to see very little growth in population. "Ohio's total population is expected to grow 0.3% in 10 years, and the working-age population will see 0.5% growth", rates that are much lower than that of the US population (7.4% and 8.5%, respectively, Outlook 2020-2030, pg. 3). To meet the demands of workforce preparedness, mechanisms such as Choose Ohio First can attract college-going students to ONU to study these majors.

Ohio Northern University has a rich tradition of working with Choose Ohio First to bring students to campus, helping them successfully move through the college experience to graduation, and on to the workplace. Previous Choose Ohio First grants at ONU have been directed to STEM Education, Health Professions, Computer Science and Computer Engineering, Healthcare and Infrastructure majors. Ohio Northern University's collaboration with the State of Ohio has benefitted many of Ohio Northern University's students, and ultimately the general population of Ohio.

The current proposal builds on our past involvement with COF where 100% of awarded funds go to student scholarships matched by the University. Further, this proposal acknowledges that while the FY19 grant for supporting Computer Science and Computer Engineering students is in the completion phase, we see tremendous need to attract additional students to be trained in these areas. Lastly, this proposal seeks to continue the strong dedication of ONU's faculty and staff to providing education and work-based learning opportunities for the approximately one third of our new students entering majors in the STEM and health care fields.

The goals of the present proposal are well aligned with the contemporary needs of the state of Ohio and the mission of Ohio Northern University. ONU will strategically use Choose Ohio First scholarships to support recruitment and retention of students in STEM and health professions fields. Special attention in the recruitment process will be given to under-represented populations. ONU's retention and completion rates are built into this model. Prior Choose Ohio First awards have demonstrated success in enrollment in the University's programs. In sum, adding 25 students annually through a \$3,400 matched Choose Ohio First scholarship to the Ohio workforce pipeline is a tangible way for Ohio Northern to assist the state of Ohio to strengthen the workforce in STEM and health sciences by preparing the next cohort of scientists, laboratorians, computer scientists and engineers, and health care professionals.

The Ohio State University

State and Regional STEM (STARS)

The Ohio State University - Choose Ohio First (COF) Scholarship Executive Summary

This proposal targets further investment in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) degrees around industries that are timely and important in central Ohio and statewide. The program emphasizes workforce needs in actuarial science, biological sciences, biomaterials, aerospace, aviation, and defense. All of these are represented as significant contributors to Ohio's economic development. Choose Ohio First (COF) recruitment efforts are targeted to incoming freshman and transfer students who are first generation, low socio-economic status, and female at Ohio State Columbus campus. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Science and Engineering research jobs will grow up to 20% by 2026. A goal for Ohio State is to address the growing shortage of science and engineering graduates by expanding the pool of enrolling students, recruiting more women, low-socioeconomic, and first-generation students to these important and rewarding disciplines. Further, Ohio State is a major provider of educational opportunities to military connected students (active duty, reserves, national guard, veterans) and the proposal incorporates specific outreach to that population for participation in COF.

Ohio State University provides an exceptional learning environment, with a 2024 US News and World Report (USNWR) ranking of #43 among 439 National Universities, including #17 among top public universities and #25 among the best undergraduate engineering programs. These rankings consistently establish the university as the flagship institution in the state. The current proposal identifies degrees in 10 distinct CIP Codes that directly support workforce needs identified above. These include 5 degrees in the College of Engineering and 6 Science degrees in the College of Arts and Sciences. There are 2 aviation degrees (one in each college) under the 49.0101 CIP Code included in this proposal. Aviation and Geography represent an expansion of CIP Codes offered under the COF program at Ohio State and the addition of military connected students will reach a new population of STEM students.

The areas targeted for development include actuarial science, biotechnology, materials in aviation and aerospace, and defense. The proposal articulates how each of these economic sectors is growing in Ohio and facing strong needs for B.S. degreed workforce. Current Ohio Means Jobs postings in August 2024 requiring a B.S. degree include 133 Actuarial Sciences, 199 Biology, 83 Biotech, 399 Materials Science, 101 Aerospace Engineering, 104 Aviation, and 100 GIS within 20 miles of Columbus and 199 Actuarial Science, 457 Biology, 154 Biotech, 1,188 Materials Science, 1,062 Aerospace Engineering, 506 Aviation, and 221(GIS) within 100 miles. These data document the current need for more majors in all these jobs categories. Investment in educating students with majors aligned with these jobs categories is critical for Ohio to expand its economy. Support letters from major biotech employers and Ohio State laboratory partners with space ventures and defense are provided.

The strategic plans in both the College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Engineering are built upon providing a world-class undergraduate education. Further, we have a commitment to growing and developing students into budding young professionals beyond just the intellectual rigor of their studies. Our support services to ensure students succeed in their programs are included in our own strategic investments including transformative changes in STEM undergraduate education and state of the art student success and retention initiatives. The COF scholarship program aligns with these activities and promotes student development and success while decreasing student debt at graduation.

Ohio State is proud of its strong record with the COF scholarship program. Currently, we have six active award agreements (e.g., 16.41, 19.39, 21.36, 22.28, 23.36, and 24.34). Within the university, the Ohio House of Science and Engineering carries out our commitment to COF student success by implementing tutoring and mentoring programs to connect incoming freshman with current scholarship recipients; expanding our scholarship community by founding the COF Scholarship Student Council to provide students with a more robust network to have social events; coordinating additional workshops for students (e.g., mental health awareness, study skills, stress reduction, time management); and increasing the sense of belonging and camaraderie among students. These implementations have indicated that students are generally satisfied with our COF scholarship program at Ohio State, retention rates are above 90% overall and graduation rates are increasing as well as more students complete their program.

Ohio University

Executive Summary: Choose Ohio First for Energy Efficiency and Sustainability (Ohio University)

Ohio University (OHIO) is pleased to submit this proposal for the 2025-2030 Choose Ohio First (COF) funding opportunity to enhance the attraction, retention, and successful completion of students in engineering and technology disciplines with an interest in work in the fields of energy efficiency and sustainability. Aligning with COF's programmatic emphasis, OHIO's COF proposal will emphasize the recruitment and support of students from underrepresented populations who frequently overlook these fields of study as a result of systematic barriers. The funding requested through this program will support 21 students per annual cohort and 105 students throughout the award's period of performance. OHIO is requesting \$1.20M and pledges an additional \$1.20 M in matching funding to be used as additional scholarship awards to these cohorts of students. OHIO faculty and staff will be joined by industry partners in providing hands-on, work-based learning opportunities for all COF scholars. In return, Ohio University will teach and train students for the in-demand jobs of the future in the linked fields of energy efficiency and sustainability.

OHIO is located in the heart of Ohio's Appalachian Region. Individuals in Appalachia face multiple barriers to attending college and pursuing STEM careers, including economic, educational, cultural, and social challenges [1]. Economic hardship is widespread, making the cost of college prohibitive for many families, especially those with little knowledge of financial aid options. Schools in the region often lack adequate resources, with educators unprepared to guide students toward STEM pathways [2]. Cultural factors, such as a deep connection to local industries and geographic isolation, further deter students from leaving their communities to pursue higher education. Additionally, first-generation college students frequently encounter a lack of parental and community support, which is critical for navigating the complexities of college application and success in STEM fields [3]. OHIO's COF will make special efforts in its outreach and recruitment efforts on students from this region with an interest in pursuing careers in STEM disciplines.

The Russ College of Engineering and Technology will highlight a college strength: its academic and research offerings in the linked disciplines of energy efficiency and sustainability. OHIO recently received the prestigious Carnegie R1 classification for very high research activity, one of 142 such schools nationwide. The Russ College continues to attract significant research funding in energy efficiency and sustainability through its Institute for Sustainable Energy and the Environment; the Center for Air Quality Monitoring; the Institute for Corrosion and Multiphase Technology; and the Ohio Research Center for Transportation and the Environment. Collectively, these units provide students with access to faculty mentors who are at the forefront of the latest innovations in efficient manufacturing technologies and sustainable practices to mitigate the impacts of local and regional industrialization. The Russ College's research serves as a practical application of classroom instruction which is centralized in seven departments

including Civil, Chemical, Industrial and Systems, Mechanical, Energy Engineering co-located Mechanical Engineering, and Electrical Engineering which is co-located with Computer Science. Additionally, the college is home to the Engineering Technology and Management and Aviation departments. Collectively these departments provide eleven different major codes. All of the college's Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) codes are eligible for Choose Ohio First scholarships.

Ohio is rapidly establishing itself as a hub for advanced manufacturing and technology, with major investments in semiconductor and battery production, including Intel's new semiconductor fabrication facility near Columbus and Honda's battery plant in partnership with LG Energy Solution. These developments are further bolstered by significant investments in data centers, with companies like Amazon, Google, and Facebook expanding their infrastructure across the state. However, these industries are highly energy and resource-intensive, requiring substantial amounts of electricity, materials, and water for their operations. To ensure that this growth is both economically and environmentally sustainable, Ohio is focusing on developing a workforce skilled in energy-efficient technologies and sustainable practices. Through programs like COF, Ohio aims to educate, develop, and prepare nearly one hundred career-ready engineers to enhance the efficiency and sustainability of these new industry sectors while retaining this vital talent within the state.

This proposed COF program aligns with OHIO's Dynamic Strategy by advancing the institution's commitment to innovative teaching, research, and community engagement. By preparing students with the skills needed for sustainable practices and energy-efficient technologies, the program supports the university's goals of enhancing regional prosperity. The work will be supported by a number of units across the institution all unified in their mission to support student success and degree completion. Outreach and marketing will be coordinated through the Office of Undergraduate Admissions in close consultation with the Russ College's Associate Dean for Academics. Once enrolled, students will participate in career orientation courses, join a peer-mentor cohort and Learning Community, and be provided with professional academic advisors who will design a personalized course of study that will chart a path for on-time graduation. Professional career counselors in both the college and in Career Services will work together closely to provide students with access to professional development opportunities as well as internship and Co-op and job postings and interviews through Ohio University's Handshake portal which connects students to thousands of jobs and internship opportunities annually. Finally, the college's faculty will provide the technical and analytical knowledge that will prepare COF Scholars for the rigors of a career in engineering.

This proposal has the support of the senior leadership of the institution and brings together the entire breadth of OHIO administrative and academic units focused on the academic success of our students. From the moment they consider attending Ohio University to the moment they

graduate, COF Scholars will find supportive peers, staff members, and faculty all united in their desire to see them achieve their academic and career goals.

Executive Summary

Ohio Wesleyan University (OWU) is honored to partner with the Ohio Department of Higher Education to offer Choose Ohio First (COF) scholarships. Funding enables us to recruit and retain Ohio residents from underrepresented backgrounds and lessen financial barriers to obtaining a degree in STEM fields. We respectfully seek the opportunity to grow our partnership with the Ohio Department of Higher Education with an additional Choose Ohio First award. By expanding our COF program, OWU aims to further contribute to Ohio's economic growth while ensuring that talented Ohio students have the opportunity to pursue STEM careers regardless of their financial circumstances.

We propose a cohort of 10 students to ensure the quality of additional support and mentorship and align with OWU's 1:1 matching fund requirement. OWU will use COF funds as a part of the financial aid packages that make an OWU STEM degree accessible to qualified students.

Rationale for the Selected Populations for Recruitment

OWU's admissions team proudly offers the Choose Ohio First scholarship program to prospective students, parents, and high school counselors. Our growing success with the COF program and reputation for positive outcomes with STEM graduates has increased demand for COF assistance beyond our current capacity with previous COF awards. Additional funding would enable OWU to recruit and retain more Ohio residents in STEM fields while reducing financial barriers. In line with our strategic pillars, OWU's Office of Admission focuses on recruiting diverse students through our Diversity Recruitment plan. This plan guides our staff in inclusively recruiting, admitting, and enrolling Ohio STEM students from marginalized and historically underrepresented backgrounds. Fully 80% of our current COF scholars belong to underrepresented groups, surpassing OWU's overall demographics of 23% first-generation and 25% multicultural/BIPOC students.

Overview and Rationale of the Selected Academic Programs

OWU extends the advantages of a liberal arts education to all students to prepare them for work, life, global citizenship, and democracy. As it pertains to the COF opportunity, the transformational student experience builds on OWU's tradition of excellence in STEM education, informed by a holistic liberal arts perspective to ensure cross-disciplinary thinking instead of compartmentalization. The COF program has allowed OWU to expand upon its traditional

strength in the STEM fields and has seen strong results over the course of the five years of administering our COF awards, including an increase of 33% in the number of STEM degree students enrolled at the university during that time. Particular STEM programs have seen significant growth, with enrollment increases of 90% in Environmental Science, 86% in Astrophysics, and 118% in Pre-Medicine and Pre-Dentistry between AY2019 and AY2023.

OWU seeks to build on this momentum with the proposed FY25 cohort. The STEM curriculum in ten academic departments is the foundation for 20 majors at OWU that are supported by the Choose Ohio First program. The academic departments include: Astronomy, Botany & Microbiology, Chemistry, Data Analytics, Education, Environment and Sustainability, Neuroscience, Physics & Astronomy, and Zoology. Ohio Wesleyan has a long tradition of excellence in the STEM disciplines. OWU also has a long-standing reputation in academic disciplines that are unique for small liberal arts colleges, such as an integrated life sciences department. The focus on interdisciplinarity, as seen in majors like Neuroscience, is reflective of the selected majors for inclusion in COF. All of the selected COF majors allow our students to learn directly from faculty in hands-on lab and research opportunities. These departments and majors represent areas of strength for Ohio Wesleyan as well as alignment with growth areas in the economy.

We derived the number of students per cohort by examining two key data points: the number of current students enrolled in eligible majors and our most recent recruiting numbers of STEM students. Based on OWU's recruiting efforts for fall 2024, we have identified more students eligible and interested in COF scholarships than we are able to meet with current COF awards.

Plan to Address Regional and Statewide Economic Strengths and Needs

Central Ohio and Delaware county, in particular, continue to experience strong growth, notably among employers who hire STEM graduates. In 2022 research published by the Federal Reserve, "like the nation at large, the metropolitan areas of the Fourth Federal Reserve District—Ohio, and parts of Pennsylvania, Kentucky, and West Virginia—have seen growth in STEM and healthcare fields in recent years. A high and growing share of the District's labor force is employed in these occupations." Metropolitan areas in central Ohio have higher STEM and healthcare employment shares than the national average. OWU is prepared to lead the way in providing graduates for these growing fields. OWU's comprehensive liberal arts curriculum and exceptional STEM programs attract and equip students who possess the necessary qualifications and adeptness to seamlessly transition to central Ohio's multifaceted workforce. Nearly 66% of OWU's student body are Ohio residents and are poised to fill the estimated 1 million job openings requiring postsecondary credentials.

This workforce sustains essential industries, technology nuclei, cutting-edge computing services, biomedical and health sectors, aerospace development hubs, logistic management, manufacturing, agriculture, and various other professions. While the specific skill sets may vary among these diverse fields, the foundational proficiencies OWU instills in its graduates are

adaptable and universally applicable. The growing demand for our STEM graduates reinforces Ohio's economic competitiveness fostering a climate of progress, ingenuity, and burgeoning talent. OWU graduates are equipped to meet the 58% of Ohio's job growth expected in bachelor's degree-requiring professions.

Alignment with Institutional Priorities and Institutional Investment for Successful Implementation

The Choose Ohio First scholarship serves as a conduit for the university's broader commitment to underrepresented groups of students in the STEM disciplines by providing additional financial resources and cultivating a campus community characterized by diversity and inclusivity. OWU has significantly invested in experiential learning which will allow for continued success of the COF program. The OWU Connection has expanded and is an important component of our student success strategy. All incoming students must complete a Connection Experience as a requirement for every major. Connection Experiences can include research, internships, or other hands-on learning experiences, which dovetails with COF's commitment to work-based learning experiences.

Another critical area in which OWU has invested is the Career Connection Office, which plays a crucial role in developing students' readiness for internships, research, and employment as a complement to their classroom learning. Furthermore, the power of increased employer partnerships with the addition of a full-time STEM Career Catalyst has been integral to the success in growing our pipeline of successful STEM graduates. Among OWU's 2023 STEM graduates, 62% are working full-time in STEM fields and 27% are pursuing graduate STEM education.

OWU has convened a cross-divisional workgroup to plan, implement, and assess the COF program. This includes ten representatives from the Admissions, Financial Aid, Advancement, Career Connection, and faculty divisions to ensure robust partnership and a holistic approach to supporting our COF scholars.

OWU has unwavering dedication to fostering a sound liberal arts education and STEM programs to meet the growing needs of a dynamic field. Institutional strengths and strategic collaborations pave the way for enriched opportunities in research, travel, internships, and interdisciplinary learning. OWU's persistent focus on these foundational elements of undergraduate education has garnered national attention, as evident in the latest "Best Colleges" listing from *U.S. News and World Report*, along with accolades from the *Princeton Review*, *Fiske Guide to Colleges*, *Money Magazine* and others. The Choose Ohio First scholarship program is a natural extension of our collective resolve to provide life-changing experiences for our students and has allowed us to expand access to underrepresented STEM scholars.

Otterbein University

Cardinal STEM Scholars: Continuing to Build Ohio's STEM Pipeline EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Otterbein University—a nationally recognized, private, co-educational university in Westerville, Ohio —requests a Choose Ohio First (COF) grant to advance the Ohio Department of Education's goal of increasing the number of Ohio residents completing postsecondary studies in the fields of science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and medicine (STEM) and STEM education.

Otterbein's proposed "Cardinal STEM Scholars: Continuing to Build Ohio's STEM Pipeline" program will increase the enrollment, retention, and timely completion of students in Otterbein's chemistry, environmental science, physics, and engineering programs through scholarships and a comprehensive, cohort-based support system. Specifically, selected programs of study include Chemistry, Environmental Chemistry, Computer Science, Engineering (Systems Engineering & Mechanical Engineering), Mathematics and Actuarial Science as well as Physics (Physics and Engineering Physics). Each of these programs prepares graduates for occupations in fields in demand in Ohio. These programs were selected as a complement to our current COF grants, a focus on in-demand careers for Ohio's workforce needs and because of their alignment with eligible Ohio Department of Education STEM CIP codes. Among the 214 students, 94% are Ohio residents, 23% are female, 28% are URM, 77% have unmet financial needs, and 35% are low-income.

"Cardinal STEM Scholars: Continuing to Build Ohio's STEM Pipeline" is modeled after Otterbein's "Cardinal STEM Scholars: Building Ohio's STEM Pipeline" and our "Cardinal Science Scholars" program. Otterbein's "Cardinal Science Scholars" program is a National Science Foundation-funded program for low-income, academically talented students in biochemistry/molecular biology, chemistry, physics, engineering, math, or computer science majors. The Cardinal Science Scholars program included scholarships and student support services. The graduation rate of was double the university rate for STEM majors; students participated in research or internships at twice the rate of students not involved in the program.

Based on the financial needs of Ohio-based students in these majors, Otterbein plans to provide scholarships on a sliding scale to 75 unduplicated STEM undergraduate students, including students of diverse backgrounds, in five cohorts of 10–15 students over the five-year grant period. Aligned with Otterbein's strategic plans, the University will guarantee that all selected students will receive no less than the stated minimum of \$1,500 in Choose Ohio First scholarship dollars and no greater than the maximum award of \$9,081. The Choose Ohio First Scholarship will be reflected as such on their tuition bill. With dedicated matching funds, this equates to scholarships in the range of \$8,000-\$22,000 per student. The total amount of Otterbein's match is \$1,210,940, just over the 100% match to the requested Choose Ohio First scholarship amount of \$1,199,940.

COF scholarship amounts will be based on individual student needs and will supplement—not supplant—existing resources. Otterbein has a detailed recruitment plan to recruit, enroll, retain, and graduate students in these majors who are residents of Ohio and have unmet financial needs. Recruitment plans will leverage Otterbein’s longstanding partnership with Columbus State Community College.

Otterbein has exceptional capacity to strengthen the talent pipeline in these proposed STEM fields by ensuring that graduates of these programs secure employment or pursue graduate education in Ohio upon graduation. All COF scholars will be encouraged and guided to engage in work-based learning including internships, research projects, and community engagement opportunities. Otterbein has committed to engaging our full student body in work-based learning in a way that fosters career exploration and development from the first year on campus. Our commitment to work-based learning leverages strong partnerships with industries and institutions in Ohio.

Otterbein University is a current grantee with four Choose Ohio First awards for computer science, chemistry, environmental chemistry, environmental science, physics, engineering (STEM), math, math education, and nursing programs as well as our more recent allied health and equine scholarship program. Our recruiting and cohort models have proven successful with strong connections among the Otterbein offices of enrollment, marketing, and student success and career development to support the COF scholar.

These scholarships will ameliorate financial barriers for students with unmet financial needs while also fostering a supportive environment for STEM majors in Ohio’s high demand industries. COF scholars will form cohorts with annual orientations and monthly mentoring sessions. Students will receive individualized support from faculty and peer mentors in their majors. This support, in addition to the numerous clubs, organizations, academic services, and wellness support at Otterbein, will ensure that the University can attract, retain, and graduate the future STEM leaders of Ohio.

Otterbein has exceptional capacity to strengthen the talent pipeline in STEM fields by ensuring that graduates of these programs secure employment in Ohio in their fields of study upon graduation. Based on the internship placement rate with our current COF Scholarship Programs, it is a fair assumption that at least 75% of the proposed 75 COF scholars will be placed in internship positions or participate in research experiences, fostering their capacity to deepen Ohio’s economic strength as future STEM professionals.

Shawnee State University

Executive Summary

Rationale for the Selected Populations for Recruitment

Shawnee State University is Ohio's youngest public, state-controlled institution of higher education. Located in the heart of Appalachia in Scioto County, Ohio, SSU serves a primarily rural, low-income student population with significantly lower median incomes, poorer health outcomes, higher child poverty rates, and lower life expectancies than Ohio as a whole. Over 65% of the student population are residents of Scioto County and the five surrounding Ohio counties of Adams, Jackson, Lawrence, Pike, and Ross. The Appalachian Regional Commission has ranked Scioto County as a Distressed County, ranking in the worst 10% of counties nationally in measures of the three-year average unemployment rate, per capita market income, and poverty rate. Adams, Jackson, Lawrence, and Pike counties are classified as At-Risk counties, ranking between the worst 10% to 25% of counties nationally, and are in danger of becoming economically distressed. All six counties have one or more census tracts that have been designated as economically distressed.

The Mission of Shawnee State University is to prepare today's students to succeed in tomorrow's world. The Choose Ohio First program is one of the tools available to recruit and support underserved students through certificate and degree programs in the STEM fields and place them in high-paying, in-demand jobs in the region. Education and job placement in STEM fields including Health Care, Advanced Manufacturing, Information Technology, Game Design, Math, and Science will provide underserved students with opportunities that will have a positive, lasting economic impact at the individual, community, and regional levels and beyond.

Overview of Selected Academic Programs

The programs chosen for the Choose Ohio First program are a direct result of the collaborative effort between SSU and regional employers to identify skill and labor market gaps and to address those needs with targeted recruitment, relevant programming, student support that aids in retention and graduation, and post-graduation placement of career-ready graduates. Choose Ohio First program selections are also informed by regional, state, and national employment, labor market, demographics, and other relevant data as part of the University's overall Strategic Plan.

In furtherance of its Strategic Plan, Shawnee State University has recently reorganized into three colleges. The selected Choose Ohio First programs represent certificate and degree programs in STEM fields across all three colleges. The College of Business and Engineering Technology is home to SSU's high-tech, in-demand programs such as Computer Science, Plastics, Electromechanical Engineering Technology, Computer Aided Design, Computer Engineering Technology, Digital Simulation and Gaming Engineering Technologies, and Information Security. The College of Health and Human Services (CHHS) houses all Health Sciences, Nursing, and Rehabilitation Science Programs, all of which are in high demand in the region. SSU's College of Arts and Sciences offers quality programs such as the Game and Simulation Arts program, one

of SSU's nationally ranked gaming programs, as well as programs in Mathematical Sciences, Biology, and Chemistry, which can prepare students for careers as actuaries, scientists, teachers, physicians, pharmacists, and other in-demand occupations.

Synopsis of the Plan to Address Economic Strengths and Needs for these Targeted Academic Programs

Shawnee State University is committed to meeting the needs of our students and our region by offering in-demand, high-quality educational programming. In accordance with Goal 6 of SSU's Strategic Plan, we use evidence, data, and best practices to inform decisions, monitor progress, and communicate results to our stakeholders. The recent launch of SSU's College of Health and Human Services and its commitment to addressing the Health Professional Shortage Areas in the region is a recent example of how SSU is responding to the economic needs of our communities.

In addition to critical and in-demand occupations in the health industry, chosen programs of study for the Choose Ohio First Program also represent in-demand and critical Top Jobs from other sectors, including the Architecture and Engineering, Computer and Mathematical Operations, Education, and Science fields. These industries are also predicted to have significant numbers of job openings across Ohio through 2030. Through SSU's collaborative relationships with area partners including health providers, manufacturers, and educational institutions, employers in the region look to SSU to provide pipelines of qualified, career-ready graduates to fill open employment positions.

COF as a Component of the Strategic Plan that Supports Student Achievement

Shawnee State University's recruitment strategy for the Choose Ohio First scholarship program is highly interwoven with its institution-wide recruitment strategy. SSU offers the Choose Ohio First program as an additional tool to recruit underrepresented populations of potential students to specifically targeted educational pathways in high-demand STEM fields such as health care, advanced manufacturing, information security, game/simulation design, and math and science education. As part of its Mission to prepare today's students for success in tomorrow's world, SSU offers a variety of resources and support services to aid in persistence and program completion. In addition to the academic, career, and individual support services available to all SSU students, Choose Ohio First students also receive additional support and participate in a variety of cohort-based activities designed to further increase the likelihood of successful educational program completion and career placement upon graduation.

Commitments by the Institution Leading to Successful Implementation of the Program

Traditionally, Choose Ohio First scholarships have been offered to institutional merit award eligible students, with the combination of these scholarships and other eligible funding totaling at or near full-tuition. Recently, SSU created a "Paws Up" institutional scholarship for non-merit and non-Pell students and expanded Choose Ohio First scholarship eligibility to Paws Up recipients as well. Pairing institutional scholarships with Choose Ohio First Scholarship funding allows for the inclusion of more students in the cohort and allows for additional recruitment of students to certificate and degree programs leading to employment in high-demand industries.

Cohort activities led by SSU's Choose Ohio First Coordinator also represent a significant institutional commitment to the program. Each fall semester kicks off with a Welcome Event for COF students where upcoming events and activities for the year are discussed. COF students participate in a variety of networking and work-based learning events throughout the year. Ongoing communication, advising, and solicitation of feedback ensure a high level of student engagement and continuous improvement of the Choose Ohio First program.

Sinclair Community College

Executive Summary

Three strategic priorities – alignment, growth and equity – guide all policies and practices at Sinclair Community College. As a political subdivision of the state of Ohio, responsible to local, regional and statewide stakeholders, Sinclair serves citizens, communities and businesses with educational programs and services aligned to the economy and social needs of the region. Alignment means focusing on increasing both student enrollment and student success and connecting with more businesses and community organizations. Intrinsic to that alignment and growth is the commitment that Sinclair’s student body, faculty, and staff reflect the holistic diversity of the region and that every effort is made to eliminate achievement gaps between groups.

a. Rationale for Selected Populations for Recruitment

To strengthen the regional and statewide economy, Sinclair will seek to recruit talented first-time degree-seeking or certificate-seeking students from high schools around the Dayton region to the Choose Ohio First – STEM scholarship program, with an emphasis on reaching students disadvantaged due to race or socioeconomic status. In addition, Sinclair will promote the selected Choose Ohio First certificates and degrees to existing students as well as incumbent workers to encourage them to pursue careers in the selected in-demand jobs. Lastly, Sinclair will use this scholarship opportunity to form new or strengthen existing relationships with regional employers seeking well-trained employees.

b. Overview and Rationale for the Selected Academic Programs

There is a high demand by employers for graduates with certificates and degrees in Engineering Technology, Industrial and Manufacturing Technology, Mechanic and Repair Technology, Aviation, Civil Engineering and Construction, occupations. To meet this demand and assist Ohio employers in finding the talent they need to stay competitive and grow, Sinclair will promote a Choose Ohio First (COF) scholarship program for talented students pursuing credentials in these areas who wish to engage in work-based learning opportunities.

c. Synopsis of the Plan to Address Regional and Statewide Economic Strengths and Need

All COF programs to be offered were chosen because their graduates are in high demand by employers in the Dayton region. When COF scholars complete their programs, both the graduates and the employers benefit due to the close alignment between student and company needs. The highly skilled graduates will be the solution to employers’ workforce skill gaps. Graduates will benefit from entering middle skill jobs with a career pathway leading to increasing salaries and wages that support their families and allow them to support the communities where they reside.

d. How COF is Part of Sinclair’s Strategic Plan

Sinclair has participated in Choose Ohio First since its inception, and the approach to recruitment and promotion of the scholarship has morphed with the direction from ODHE. At

the core of Sinclair’s strategic plan is getting more students credentials that lead to in-demand jobs, as fast and at as low of a cost as possible. To that end, COF is perfectly aligned with Sinclair efforts.

e. Institutional Assistance Leading to Successful Implementation

Sinclair considers each Choose Ohio First project an “all hands on deck” scenario. Accordingly, as the letters of commitment from across Sinclair will attest to, leadership and staff in Advancement and Regional Strategy, Enrollment Operations and Student Development, and Admissions in addition to faculty members from two academic divisions will contribute time and effort to recruiting students and managing the project. In addition, traditionally Sinclair has matched seventy percent of COF funds with additional scholarships. Lastly, each COF project at Sinclair is paired with a \$15,000 cash match account for administration of the project, events, printing, postage, travel and incentives for student participation in, e.g., the COF Showcase.

Stark State College (SSC) proposes the following program in response to the Ohio Department of Higher Education's FY25 Choose Ohio First (COF) program request for proposals. Through this program, SSC will make strategic investments to support expanded opportunities for students in Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Medical (STEMM) fields; connect students to work-based learning experiences and careers in STEMM fields; and deepen Ohio's economic strength by increasing the available talent pipeline for STEMM-related industries.

SSC's proposal aligns directly with the COF initiative in its selected populations for recruitment, selected academic programs, its plan to address regional and statewide economic strengths and needs for these targeted academic programs, its alignment with the College's strategic plan and with other institutional assistance:

Selected populations for recruitment

Stark State intends to use this COF scholarship opportunity to recruit a large and diverse cohort of STEMM scholars. Recruitment efforts will focus on engaging academically talented students who completed rigorous programs while in high school. This will include students who have completed College Credit Plus (CCP) coursework, as well as those whose studies included STEMM-specific curriculum. Women, non-traditional students, and socially disadvantaged populations will be encouraged to apply for COF scholarships, as these populations are often underrepresented in STEMM fields.

Overview of selected academic programs

For this proposal, Stark State has identified 74 total programs corresponding to 44 different CIP codes. Of these, 21 CIPs correspond to 42 programs within the Business, Engineering and Information Technologies Division; 18 CIPs correspond to 29 programs within the Health and Public Services Division; and four CIPs correspond to five programs within the Arts and Sciences Division.

The programs/CIPs included in this proposal reflect a combination of both high- and lower-enrolled programs that lead to in-demand STEMM jobs and also meet all other Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) COF program guidelines. This two-fold approach will allow the College to attract students into majors that will lead to meaningful employment, but that currently lack enrollment for various reasons, and to maintain strong enrollment in other programs that also lead to in-demand STEMM careers or transfer, upon completion.

Summary of plan to address statewide economic strengths and educational needs

This proposal is data-informed and strongly integrated with the strengths of Ohio's economy. Healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and information technology (IT) are recognized as the top industries in the state, and they are also the industries with some of the greatest current workforce needs. Stark State stands ready to train students in the skills employers seek in qualified STEM job candidates. The College will use COF scholarships to increase the number of talented individuals completing in-demand certificates and degrees that lead to stable STEM careers. Increasing retention and completion of STEM scholars will create a pipeline of trained workers able to help bridge the existing workforce skills gap.

Alignment with the College's strategic plan

Stark State designed this proposal to allow populations that are traditionally underserved in STEM fields to receive the support needed to cost-effectively develop the skills required to fill critical STEM-industry workforce needs across Northeast Ohio. Stark State College's strategic plan is strongly aligned with the goals of ODHE's Choose Ohio First program, as demonstrated by the College's four strategic priorities: *student access; student success; career success and workforce; and our people*. The COF initiative aligns with each of these strategic priorities, as outlined in the project rationale section of the project narrative.

Institutional commitments

This program is a cross-department/Collegewide effort that will receive full support from areas including, but not limited to, Enrollment Management (admissions, registration, Gateway advising, and financial aid), Academic Affairs, Learning and Engagement (student support), and Career Services and Workforce Development.

Furthermore, the College commits to providing the required 1:1 match for all Choose Ohio First funding distributed to students. Through this request, Stark State College is requesting a total of \$1,012,000 over a five-year period to support Choose Ohio First scholarships. Further details related to this match commitment are included in the project narrative section of this proposal.

This institutional assistance will help facilitate the successful implementation of the FY25 Choose Ohio First funding awarded.

University of Akron

Award Request Rationale

As a comprehensive urban research campus, The University of Akron (UA) aspires to become a leading institution in Northeast Ohio as it remains dedicated to student success through support and engagement. Training undergraduate and graduate students in STEM areas that directly affect the economic competitiveness of Ohio is a strength of our university. The overarching goal of the UA's Choose Ohio First (UACOF) program is to recruit underrepresented students into STEM programs, keep the STEM talent in Ohio and connect that talent with Ohio employers. The UACOF program aims to serve the following populations: • Ohio Residents • Students who would normally go out of state for a STEM degree • Non-traditional students looking to enhance or change their career • Former and current military personnel • Women, BIPOC and First-Generation students underrepresented in STEM fields • Rural, Urban, and Appalachian populations • Current students struggling to continue in STEM due to financial or academic hardships.

UACOF is requesting an award amount of \$1,199,800 for the FY25 proposal. Building upon our UACOF FY21, FY 22, and FY23 proposals, this award will allow us to increase our goal from 150 to 185 STEM graduates by 2030 and enable us to continue serving underrepresented populations and to support undergraduate education and skilled workforce development in the STEM fields.

Overview of Selected Academic Programs

After strategic review of the eligible CIP codes and pertinent information on the university and workforce demand, UACOF has selected 45 CIP codes to include in this proposal as eligible programs for funding. To maintain continuity of previously eligible programs, UACOF has historically worked to include programs on grants no longer in their recruitment periods. UACOF reviewed the current CIP eligible programs and included all 6 eligible programs covered only by the 19.11 agreement for which the last cohort will be recruited for the academic year 2024-2025. The chosen CIP Codes create pathways directly to 23 certificates, 11 associate's degrees, and 51 bachelor's degree offerings at UA which contributed to 45% of enrollment in the 2023-2024 academic year. The programs chosen are housed in the following highly successful colleges with dedicated staff and award-winning faculty: UA's College of Engineering and Polymer Sciences, Buchtel College of Arts and Sciences, and College of Health and Human Sciences.

Addressing Regional and Statewide Economics

The UACOF program has conducted an in-depth analysis of the regional and statewide economic landscape, developing a strategic plan to leverage the institution's qualifying academic programs to address both the strengths and needs of Ohio and the Northeast Ohio region. Key economic strengths include robust confidence in the state's labor market, with Summit County boasting the 5th largest labor market in Ohio, a rise in healthcare job openings, and an overall increase in statewide wages. However, several challenges and gaps have been identified: a

growing demand for occupations requiring postsecondary degrees or credentials, an increasing number of job openings driven by both new job creation and replacement positions, declining population growth, the ongoing retirement of the Baby Boomer generation, and a higher unemployment rate in Akron compared to state and national averages. Occupations in fields such as healthcare, engineering, computer science, mathematics, and the life, physical, and social sciences are on the rise, offering solutions to these economic needs. The UACOF program has carefully selected academic programs for this proposal to align with these growing fields, capitalize on current economic strengths, and provide students with pathways to success that meet both statewide and regional economic demands.

Institutional Alignment with Strategic Plan

UA is dedicated to creating innovative pathways for students. Our mission includes offering education and sharing knowledge with those who seek it, as well as connecting with and serving our community. As a predominantly commuter school, these pathways primarily support a significant number of Ohio residents. Consistent with ODHE initiatives, we seek to provide students with an efficient and cost-effective pathway to degree completion. With our vision and ongoing commitment to build community and provide superb academic programs in STEM fields relevant to the future, UACOF Scholars will be challenged and prepared for a STEM workforce requiring advanced skill sets and degrees.

Institutional Commitment Leading to Successful COF Program Implementation

UA has committed institutional funding, UACOF dedicated staff and physical office and student space, to ensure the successful completion of COF Program Implementation. Furthermore, UA has implemented initiatives that will support successful implementation of UACOF initiatives. Akron Early College High School (AECBS), situated on the campus of UA, is a collaborative initiative between Akron Public Schools and the University. AECBS is specifically designed to support first-generation college students. Through the use of small learning communities, peer mentors, and tutors, we empower students to develop the skills and confidence needed to excel in rigorous coursework. Upon successfully completing their high school diploma, students who have earned 60 or more college credit hours will also receive an Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degree. This approach increases college access, reduces the cost and time to degree completion, and improves high school retention and graduation rates. Notably, 85-90% of early college high school seniors who earn their associate's degrees continue to pursue a bachelor's degree, with 80-85% choosing to remain at UA.

Additionally, UA is actively engaged in efforts to close identified gaps in the regional STEM workforce. UA is a member of the TeamNEO, Talent Development Council (TDC) which seeks to close the talent gap in workforce development, by aligning partnerships among stakeholders in higher education and industry. This council has active and engaged partnerships throughout the Northeast Ohio region that are currently working to clearly define local strategies to impact regional outcomes that build deeper and more responsive talent pools. Currently the TDC is strategically focused on high school graduates/adults and college students. With the TDC helping to drive a regional agenda that aligns higher education with business requirements, an ecosystem-wide, needs-based, all-inclusive workforce is highly achievable.

University of Cincinnati

Executive Summary

The goal of the InnovateUC: Advancing STEM Excellence project is to increase, retain, and graduate greater numbers of underrepresented, ethnic, economically disadvantaged, and first-generation STEM students at the University of Cincinnati (UC). The rationale for identifying and supporting students from these demographic backgrounds is historical in nature. Underrepresented, ethnic, economically disadvantaged, and first-generation students experience significant challenges enrolling, retaining and graduating from the STEM fields at UC. Addressing these challenges through this Choose Ohio First funded project will directly benefit participating students as well as creating process improvements that will assist similar students in future periods of enrollment.

UC has identified academic programs from our College of Nursing, the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences, College of Arts and Sciences, and School of Information Technology programs. These programs have been selected to participate in this project because of their academic quality, their commitment to diversifying and improving student support programming, significant career opportunities for graduates and their roles in meeting UC's "Next Lives Here" strategic plan for our campus and greater Cincinnati community.

This project looks slightly different in each of the participating colleges, but all are committed to developing graduates that will fulfill the workforce needs of the State of Ohio with a focus on Southwestern Ohio and the Cincinnati areas. Employment projections for these academic programs are all expected to grow between 5% and 12% over the next several years. Additionally, all participating academic programs will be reinforcing and bridging our human and technological resources to proactively assist students in creating a personalized path to achieving success under our Bearcat Promise framework. Our goal is to have participating students graduate with a degree in one hand and a plan for their career and professional development in the other with the skills and competencies to successfully navigate a lifetime of career choices in an ever-changing, technical, global market.

UC's InnovateUC: Advancing STEM Excellence project addresses several key aspects of our "Next Lives Here" strategic plan. Student support programming established as part of this project will facilitate the academic excellence goals UC has established. Relationships between UC and employers under the project will expand our innovation agenda already established through the 1819 Innovation Hub and our Co-Op 2.0 programs. UC's well-being is inherently linked with the physical, social, and economic health of our community and city. Cincinnati, and its business, civic, education, and cultural offerings, provides us an opportunity to reach beyond

our campuses to lead real-world learning, problem-based research and scholarship, and creative endeavors that address the multifaceted challenges affecting individuals and communities in our increasingly urbanized society. Our participation in this Choose Ohio First project will only serve to further improve UC's and Southwestern Ohio's communities.

The entire Bearcat and Southwestern Ohio community is committed to the success of this and all Choose Ohio First funded projects at UC. Our administration, academic colleges, enrollment, student affairs and campus service organizations have come together to develop and support the project and the participating students completely. Additionally, relationships with local and statewide employers will grow stronger because of UC's participation in this project. Employers have committed to providing the real-world opportunities and interactions that allowed UC's cooperative education programs to be ranked number one among public universities nationally and ahead of privates like Duke University, Stanford University and Carnegie Mellon University.

University of Dayton

Executive Summary

The University of Dayton (UD) is a top-tier Catholic research university committed to building a diverse, inclusive learning environment. We recruit, educate and graduate students with practical, hands-on learning experiences and prepare our students for lives of learning, leadership, and service that will benefit the Ohio economy and its communities. Our recruitment and admission strategy helps students interested in pursuing a STEM major understand the value of a UD education and describe the benefits of the Choose Ohio First (COF) Scholarship program. Our recruitment strategy aims to expand opportunities for students to access a UD degree with support from the COF Scholarship.

To select our 25 eligible programs of study, we identified initiatives that expand access to a University of Dayton degree. Three key institutional initiatives expand access to UD and include the UD Sinclair Academy, Women in Science and Engineering Program (WISE) and the STEM Summer Bridge Program. Each of these is a strategic mission-centric institutional initiative that provides programming and support available to all students, focusing on promoting success strategies for those historically underrepresented in STEM fields. The UD Sinclair Academy is a partnership between the University of Dayton and Sinclair Community College designed to ease the pathway to a four-year degree. Students are members of both campus communities from day one, and they have access to UD advising, research opportunities, facilities and amenities while taking classes at Sinclair. The Women in Science and Engineering (WISE) is a community of learners that creates a strong support system to foster success and academic curiosity. The Multi-Ethnic STEM Summer Bridge Program allows entering STEM majors the opportunity to acclimate to campus and preview specific coursework prior to their first semester at the University of Dayton.

We intend to award COF Scholarship funding to students who have significant financial need as determined by the FAFSA. Further, students participating in these institutional initiatives will be given preference when awarding the COF Scholarship. The additional source of funding for students strengthens our efforts to expand access to UD. The University of Dayton provides over \$230 million per year in scholarship and grant assistance to our students, and we are committed to matching the COF funding dollar for dollar; UD will exceed a dollar-for-dollar match with our institutional investment in financial aid.

Implementation will be accomplished collaboratively with faculty and staff leadership from the College of Arts and Sciences and the School of Engineering, as well as leadership from the Office of Recruitment and Admission, Financial Aid, Career Services, the Cooperative Education Office, the Office of Experiential Learning and the Integrative Science and Engineering Center. The University of Dayton creates intentional connections with employers and students to expand

opportunities for internships, undergraduate research and employment in these in-demand occupations. STEM industrial and organizational partners frequently visit campus to engage with students regarding employment opportunities. Further, UD frequently consults with Ohio partner organizations regarding curriculum development, talent, and recruiting needs. Many of these organizational partners serve on advisory councils supporting the College of Arts and Sciences, the School of Engineering, and the Office of Career Services.

COF Scholars will experience integrated student learning, both inside and outside the classroom, to fulfill our mission to educate the whole person. Our strong completion rates and employment outcomes in the identified programs of study reflect the success of our approach and our ability to meet the workforce needs in identified STEM fields in Ohio.

Our eligible programs of study have at least one in-demand occupation based on data from Ohio Means Jobs. Graduates of the identified programs go on to make contributions to our regional and statewide STEM-affiliated industries such as advanced manufacturing, aerospace, automotive, bioscience, and medical, construction, energy, healthcare, as well as new and innovative technology development. With this proposed funding, we will integrate the strengths of our strategic institutional initiatives that expand access to a UD degree and provide opportunities for students to explore career opportunities in Ohio. The University actively supports these initiatives to ensure students succeed and graduate ready to contribute effectively to their employers and their communities.

University of Findlay

Executive Summary

The University of Findlay (UF), the largest private four-year institution in Northwest Ohio, is well-positioned to meet the region's workforce demands. By partnering with government, economic development organizations, non-profits, and regional industry sectors, UF is implementing a workforce development initiative designed to reduce the region's workforce gap through a relevant talent pipeline. UF aims for its students to not only graduate with a degree but also to secure employment in their desired careers, providing regional employers with access to top talent. Through its Choose Ohio First (COF) initiative, UF is committed to recruiting, training, and graduating students in programs that align closely with the workforce needs of the region and the state.

Findlay-Hancock County's annual workforce needs are driven by an aging workforce, technological advancements—particularly in manufacturing and healthcare—and growing healthcare demands. The county has experienced significant economic growth in recent years, establishing itself as a dynamic region in Northwest Ohio. Contributing factors include its foreign trade zone, the 500-acre CSX intermodal terminal located 10 miles north of Findlay, major distribution centers like Amazon, Menards, and Ryder System, Inc., a robust manufacturing sector encompassing automotive parts, industrial equipment, plastics, and consumer goods, and 20 public school districts. Local workforce needs reflect Ohio Means Jobs' (OMJ) 2030 Jobs Outlook data for licensure-, bachelor's, and graduate-level positions in the healthcare, technology, manufacturing, energy, and financial industries. Specifically, for Northwest Ohio, OMJ projects that the regional healthcare industry is set to see over 5,000 openings by 2030, creating a pressing need for nurses, pharmacists, and physician assistants. These professionals will be key in addressing healthcare challenges, including access to care in rural areas.

The state and region also face a critical shortage of science and math educators, exacerbated by high teacher attrition rates and a lack of substitute teachers. Addressing this shortage is essential for maintaining educational quality and supporting future workforce needs.

To strengthen the pipeline of talented STEM professionals in Ohio, UF's proposed COF program targets the following academic areas: 1) health professions; 2) STEM education; 3) pharmacy; 4) computer science; 5) biology; 6) mathematics; 7) chemistry; 8) biochemistry; 9) environment, health, safety, and sustainability (EHSS); 10) animal science and pre-veterinary studies; and 11) business analytics. UF will strategically recruit high school students, transfer students, and graduate students from northwest Ohio. As part of UF's strategic plan to "embrace professional, cultural, and intellectual diversity," the University is particularly focused on recruiting a high number of students from traditionally underrepresented populations.

Selected scholars will receive between \$1,500 and \$9,081 per academic year in COF scholarship aid until graduation, contingent upon meeting specific academic and co-curricular expectations. Additionally, UF's COF scholars will be eligible for institutional merit aid ranging from \$12,000 to \$21,000 for undergraduate students, \$15,000 to \$19,000 for transfer students,

and \$1,500 to \$8,000 for graduate students. Awarded COF scholars will benefit from a comprehensive package of institutional support and resources designed to enhance their academic and professional development and ensure timely degree completion. This includes access to industry and faculty mentors, consistent interaction with academic advisors, and ongoing retention tracking and support. Scholars will also have multiple opportunities to cultivate essential soft skills through networking events with regional industry and business leaders, off-campus service-learning experiences, and opportunities to present their research and scholarship.

During this five-year COF grant period, UF's program will:

Recruit and enroll 25 qualified scholars in one of the designated COF programs to fill critical workforce gaps in Ohio.

Provide scholars with financial, academic, and co-curricular support that will enable 100% to persist to degree completion with minimal financial burden.

Prepare scholars to excel in their careers through academic and professional development opportunities, benefiting the region and state.

University of Mount Union

Choose Ohio First Grant Proposal – FY 2025

Executive Summary

The University of Mount Union's Choose Ohio First Scholars Program – Building a STEM Pipeline To, Through, and Beyond the University – is focused on recruiting local students to study local and stay local. We aim to meet this goal by recruiting our own CCP students, those who take our CCP courses at one of our partner high schools and those who choose to come to campus to take courses.

We value our CCP partnerships and the ways in which Ohio's CCP program is helping to make higher education more affordable for Ohio students. We are focusing our recruitment efforts on CCP students for several reasons. First, students who have strong college-ready math and/or science skills are more likely to declare a STEM major and persist through graduation. Many of Mount Union's CCP students take at least one math course and/or one science course. Not all of these students are interested in pursuing a STEM degree, but those who are will be prepared to succeed in their STEM college coursework. In addition, because they have taken Mount Union CCP courses, our CCP students can be confident that their courses will transfer in and apply directly to their chosen curriculum, which decreases the time to degree completion for these students.

Our COF Scholars proposal, once implemented, will have long-term effects on the STEM pipeline. Knowing that they can apply for fill-the-gap funding throughout Mount Union's COF Scholars Program, we are cautiously optimistic that more area students interested in STEM careers will take advantage of CCP courses. We also know that Ohio's high school population is getting more diverse. By providing STEM scholarship opportunities to this more diverse student population, we will increase diversity in our STEM programs and, in turn, be contributing to increased diversity in the regional STEM workforce.

Mount Union's eligible STEM programs include environmental science, computer science, multi-platform software development, information systems, biomedical engineering, civil engineering, computer engineering, mechanical engineering, biology, biochemistry, neuroscience, mathematics, data science and analytics, chemistry, physics, and nursing. These are all strong academic programs that offer a wide array of high-impact and work-based learning opportunities. In addition, each aligns with multiple high-demand STEM careers.

Here in Northeast Ohio, we are seeing an increase in healthcare and biotechnology fields, and there are many job opportunities available for graduates in these specific STEM areas. However, along with the specific healthcare and biotechnology fields, there has been an increase in those STEM fields that provide support to these industries, such as cybersecurity, database management, manufacturing, and research and development. We continue to see the need for a STEM-prepared workforce here in our own backyard with Mount Union graduates securing job placements in our area healthcare facilities, manufacturing industry, and engineering firms. Specifically, our STEM graduates are prepared to enter some of the area's

fastest-growing occupations such as data scientists, statisticians, and information security analysts as well as continuing into graduate work to become physician assistants, physical therapists, nurse practitioners, and occupational therapists. No matter what their career plans, our STEM students are finding a variety of job opportunities in Ohio's workforce.

Mount Union's COF Scholars Program significantly aligns with our current strategic plan, "Putting Students First." Of the five strategic initiatives in the plan, our COF Program directly supports the following four:

Grow Enrollment Strategically

Bolster Student Retention

Develop Strategic Partnerships

Enhance Belonging and Campus Culture

President Greg King is supportive of our proposal and our ongoing COF Scholars Program. The Mount Union campus community understands the value of the program and looks forward to continued collaborations in support of our COF Scholars.

As mentioned, the University continues to be committed to the COF Scholars Program. To support program administration, we have historically utilized a STEM faculty member as program director. However, our COF cohorts have grown to the point that we will be bringing on a second STEM faculty member to serve as a co-director. Also, our CCP partnerships continue to grow, and we are in the process of hiring a CCP Director, a new position at the institution. Because this COF proposal focuses on CCP student recruitment, the CCP Director will be allocating time to COF Program outreach. The Center for Student Success continues to be an important resource for COF Scholars, and we anticipate developing more proactive, intentional STEM career development programming with our Director of Career Services. Finally, we will continue to provide COF Scholars institutional financial support in the form of Merit Scholarships and other scholarships, thus ensuring that their degree is financially accessible. Our commitment to the COF Program is multifaceted and growing with each new COF Scholar cohort.

Our COF proposal includes our project narrative with references. In addition, we have included an appendix with supporting documentation for each section of the narrative. We have also included the required excel spreadsheet with contact information, CIP codes and corresponding careers, and the budget table.

Mount Union's mission is to prepare students for fulfilling lives, meaningful work, and responsible citizenship. The COF Scholars Program is an important element of meeting this mission for our STEM students. A strong STEM pipeline that moves from area high schools, through the University of Mount Union, and into the regional workforce will not only benefit Northeast Ohio but the state as a whole.

University of Toledo

Mental and General Health (COF-MGH)

Executive Summary

Employers in Northwest Ohio and throughout Ohio are seeking college-educated graduates in disciplines related to physical and mental health at an increasing rate. Much of this growth is related to an aging population, the mental health issues associated with the COVID pandemic and youth peer pressure brought on by social media. According to the Ohio Department of Health, Ohio exceeds the national average in the number of deaths that could have been avoided with the appropriate healthcare.

Ohio's statistics indicate that mental and general health-related issues expand across all demographics:

An estimated 21.6% of Ohio's high school students have seriously considered attempting suicide—with female students twice as likely as males

The prevalence of heart disease, cancer, COPD, and arthritis is significantly higher among white adults compared with Black, Hispanic, and other races

The prevalence of diabetes and asthma is significantly higher among Black adults compared with white adults

These statistics reinforce the need for more highly educated and trained practitioners and support professionals. To help address these critical needs and in agreement with its stated mission to "Improve the human condition," the University of Toledo is pleased to submit this Choose Ohio First—Mental and General Health (COF-MGH) proposal.

Rationale for Selected Populations

The rationale for the programs chosen to be included in COF-MGH is to attract additional enrollment, increase the number of graduates, and to meet the demand of employers in the careers associated with these areas of study. Local and regional employers are having difficulty filling positions in the growing healthcare industry, as well as in K-12 counseling and school psychology. The degree programs of focus for the COF-MGH proposal are:

Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Bachelor of Science in Medical Laboratory Science (MLS)

Health and Human Services (HHS)

Master of Arts in Counselor Education

Master of Arts in School Psychology

Education Specialists Degree in School Psychology

College of Nursing (CON)

Bachelor of Science in Pre-Nursing

Bachelor of Science in Nursing

RN to BSN

Master of Science in Nursing

Doctor of Nursing Practice

Doctor of Nursing Practice in Family Nurse Practitioner

Doctor of Nursing Practice in Nurse Executive

Doctor of Nursing Practice in Psychiatric Mental Health

The Ohio Board of Nursing's 2021 Ohio Workforce Data Summary Report showed that the nursing profession does not accurately reflect the demographics of the population. The COF-MGH project will seek to recruit a more diverse student population to all of the programs. This can be achieved by focused recruitment and assisted by the appeal of the reduction of cost offered by participation in the COF.

Overview of Selected Academic Programs

The programs will be highlighted in more detail later in the proposal, but as an overview, the Bachelor of Science in Medical Laboratory Science prepares students for employment as Medical Laboratory Scientists with the ultimate goal of becoming certified by the Board of Certification of the American Society of Clinical Pathologists (ASCP).

The HHS programs (listed above) are designed to train students to fulfill the critical roles of school counselors and psychologists. The Ohio Department of Education and Workforce data indicate that one-in-three K-12 students report challenges with anxiety, and the number of high-school aged young people with major depressive episodes has nearly doubled over the past decade. These statistics reinforce the importance of Ohio universities preparing students for careers as counselors and psychologists.

The CON programs (listed above) offer the full range of nursing degrees—from Pre-Nursing to BSN to master’s and doctor’s degrees. The degrees are also offered in a variety of modalities (on-campus, online, competency-based education) which provide learning options for a wide-range of student demographics and work situations.

Synopsis to Address Statewide Economic Strengths and Needs for the Academic Programs

With such nationally recognized healthcare entities as the Cleveland Clinic, Ohioans are able to take advantage of superior healthcare facilities. But along with that strength comes the responsibility to staff the hospitals, clinics, etc. The Ohio Nurses Association issued a “Code Red” in 2023 due to the ongoing nursing shortage. Across the Country, approximately 100 thousand nurses left the workforce due to the COVID pandemic, and thousands more are expected to do the same within the next five years. The impact on Ohio hospitals and healthcare facilities is and will continue to be significant.

The recruitment of students for the CON programs included in the University of Toledo’s COF proposal, as well as laboratory professionals, and mental health providers is important—not just to bridge the human resource gap—but to prepare students to become educators to teach future professionals.

Describe How the COF Initiative Is Part of the Institutional Strategic Plan

The COF-MGH proposal specifically addresses the University Toledo’s stated mission is to “Improve the human condition.” This project will also offer populations typically underrepresented in the healthcare arena valuable training and preparation for rewarding careers. This echoes the institution’s Value to “Foster belonging, equity, and respect for all as part of our commitment to valuing diversity of people and ideas.”

Describe Institutional Commitments to the COF Program

As indicated by the letters of support from University constituencies included in this proposal, the University of Toledo intends to invest all necessary resources to make this COF-MGH experience a success for the selected students. The Provost Office will also play an active role in the coordination of this project. This will serve the purposes of providing training that will lead to productive careers, as well as supplying Ohio healthcare systems and schools with exemplary professionals.

Ursuline College

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ursuline College is seeking the Choose Ohio First grant for \$1,170,000 over the next four years (2025-2029) to continue our successful initiative aimed at increasing the enrollment and retention of women and students of color in STEMM degree programs. This renewed funding will support a diverse pipeline of students entering high-demand careers, focusing on first-time full-time undergraduate students in Nursing (CIP-513801), Art Therapy (CIP-512301), Biology (CIP 260101), Biochemistry (CIP 260202), and Chemistry (CIP400501) recruited from the Northeast Ohio community.

a. Rationale for Selected Populations for Recruitment

Ursuline College's commitment to diversity and inclusion is central to our recruitment strategy, particularly in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), and education majors with a STEM focus. The selected populations for recruitment include underrepresented groups, specifically women and students of color. Our rationale is based on the following considerations:

Addressing Gender Disparity: STEM fields have historically seen lower female representation. As a women-focused institution, Ursuline College aims to bridge this gap by empowering and encouraging women to pursue careers in STEM.

Promoting Diversity: With 33% of our undergraduates being students of color, we are dedicated to fostering a diverse academic environment. Recruiting underrepresented populations ensures a wide range of perspectives and experiences that enrich the learning environment.

Economic Mobility: Recognized nationally for our role in promoting upward mobility, we focus on populations that would benefit significantly from enhanced educational opportunities and support systems, thereby transforming their economic situations.

b. Overview of Selected Academic Programs

Ursuline College offers several robust academic programs supported by the Choose Ohio First (COF) initiative:

Nursing: CIP - 513801 Constituting about 50% of our enrollment, the nursing program is ranked #2 in Ohio and ensures a 100% employment rate post-licensure. This program prepares students for high-demand careers in healthcare.

Art Therapy: CIP- 512301 Addressing the growing need for mental health professionals, this program uniquely bridges to a Master's in Counseling and Art Therapy, essential for practice.

Biology, Biochemistry, and Chemistry: CIP – 260101, 260202, 400501 These programs, which currently have 100% female enrollment, offer mentorship and research opportunities with female faculty, fostering a supportive and empowering academic environment.

c. Synopsis of the Plan to Address Regional and Statewide Economic Strengths and Needs

Our strategic plan addresses both regional and statewide economic strengths and needs through targeted academic programs:

Healthcare Sector: By producing highly qualified nursing graduates, we directly contribute to the regional and statewide demand for healthcare professionals.

Mental Health Services: The Art Therapy program responds to the increasing need for mental health professionals, preparing students to meet this critical demand.

STEMM Careers: Our Biology, Biochemistry, and Chemistry programs are designed to inspire and prepare students for careers in STEMM fields, addressing the skills gap and supporting the local and state economy.

d. Integration of COF Initiative with Institutional Strategic Plan

The COF initiative is integral to Ursuline College's strategic plan, which prioritizes student achievement and support:

Tailored Support: COF scholars benefit from a cohort-model approach, comprehensive advising, and wrap-around resources, ensuring personalized support for academic and professional success.

Leadership and Professional Development: Through structured programs in their academic journey, COF scholars receive training in leadership, resilience, socialization to profession, research, and work-based experiences, culminating in successful transitions to practice.

Accessibility and Financial Support: Scholarships ranging from \$1,500 to \$8,200 per student annually, based on financial need, make education accessible to underrepresented and economically disadvantaged students.

e. Institutional Commitments for Successful Implementation of COF Program

Ursuline College is committed to the successful implementation of the COF program through the following actions:

Enhanced Outreach: We will bolster outreach efforts to attract diverse students, streamline the application process, and prominently feature the COF program in our marketing materials.

Scholarship Funding and Work-Based Learning: Increased scholarship funding and expanded work-based learning opportunities will prepare students for careers or further education.

Community Partnerships: We will forge targeted community partnerships to inspire high school students to pursue STEMM careers, thus ensuring a pipeline of motivated and prepared students.

Consistent Support and Resources: COF scholars will receive consistent support through comprehensive advising, group models, and tailored resources, designed to ensure their academic and professional success.

By integrating these strategies and commitments, Ursuline College is dedicated to fostering an inclusive and supportive environment that enhances student achievement and addresses regional and statewide economic needs.

Walsh University

Choose Ohio First grant

Executive summary

The Choose Ohio First program will increase the number of STEM graduates entering a graduate program and/or the STEM workforce, and thereby help to meet the growing demand for STEM workers in northeast Ohio and the broader region. Moreover, the efforts to recruit and support a more diverse population of STEM students will add to the diversity of the STEM workforce. The Choose Ohio First program will help students to afford a Walsh University education and will reduce their dependence on loans or employment outside of school. This will allow students to focus on their education and increase their academic success.

Walsh University will recruit talented students to the STEM majors: biology, chemistry, pre-engineering, clinical lab science, computer science and aviation. Recruitment will take advantage of relationships with local schools and campus events such as the Science and Technology Summit. The recruitment plan was developed based on the successes of the NSF STEM grant which increased the number of chemistry majors.

Strategies have been chosen to retain the students through academic support services from across campus. Career seminar courses and cohort building are key aspects of the program. The career seminars will begin freshman year with STEM career exploration. In subsequent years, the activities will focus on internship selection and preparation. Finally, the senior career seminar will focus on 'soft skills', resume building and interview skills and help them prepare for STEM careers. Altogether, the project activities will address the increasing need for well-trained STEM workers and will establish a recruiting pipeline to grow the STEM programs well into the future.

An essential factor for growing the STEM workforce is the work-related experiences. This has been a priority for Walsh University in fact the university requires internships for all students. The Alumni and Career Connections office in combination with the STEM faculty ensure that the students are prepared for their internship by incorporating career exploration and 'soft skills' into the curriculum. The career exploration will highlight those careers that are projected to be in high demand in the area.

Washington State College of Ohio

Executive Summary

Rationale for Selected Populations

The economic growth in Ohio's southeast region has increased the demand for skilled workers in STEM and STEM-focused education fields. To meet this demand, WSCO targets traditionally underserved populations, including students in poverty, parents, first-generation students, Pell-eligible students, and adults. These groups make up over 80% of WSCO's student body. Additionally, although the racial minority population in the Appalachian region is only 4%, WSCO's minority enrollment stands at 9% and is gradually increasing. By recruiting underrepresented populations in STEM fields, WSCO aims to address the regional workforce gap and provide equitable access to career-specific education and skills training.

Overview of Selected Academic Programs

WSCO offers 44 certificate and degree programs across four academic divisions: Health; Engineering and Industrial Technology; Business and IT; and Law/Public Safety. The Choose Ohio First Scholarship Program includes:

Help Desk Certificate

Respiratory Therapy

Electrical Engineering

Radiology

Advanced Manufacturing & Automation Certificate

Chemical Dependency

Process Technician & Chemical Operator Certificate

Massage Therapy

Cyber Security & Cyber Security Certificate

ADN & BSN Nursing

Automotive Service & Automotive Certificate

Practical Nursing

Diesel Truck & Truck Certificate

Medical Laboratory

Health Information Management & Medical Billing Certificate

Associate of Science (with supporting documentation)

These programs are designed to align with local and state economic needs, particularly in manufacturing and healthcare, and prepare students for high-demand careers.

Synopsis of the Plan

WSCO's plan focuses on connecting students with in-demand careers to address regional and statewide economic strengths and needs. The IMPACT initiative involves three key activities:

Marketing Plan: Heighten community awareness of the COF and WSCO-eligible programs and invite eligible students to participate.

Guided Career Pathways: Expand the Rural Guided Pathways concept to include career pathways for every student, ensuring a seamless transition from education to employment.

Career-Informed Academic Enrichment: Increase work-based learning opportunities for all students, integrating academic and career initiatives into cohesive pathways that foster lifelong success.

Institutional Strategic Plan Alignment

WSCO's institutional strategic plan directly aligns with the COF initiative, emphasizing student achievement and regional economic development through the following seven goals:

Student Access: Implement innovative delivery models and recruitment strategies, including developing high-impact career pathways to support the region's vital industry sectors.

Expand Business Sector Partnerships: Engage business leaders to align curricula with workforce needs and provide work-based learning opportunities.

Strengthen Career Services: Raise awareness of in-demand careers, help students develop career pathways, and support graduates in securing employment.

Student Success: Provide an affordable, student-centered environment that empowers students to fulfill their educational and career goals.

Strengthen Guided Pathways Strategies: Improve onboarding, advising, student support, transfer, and co-curricular activities to increase student persistence, retention, and completion.

Increase Graduates: Expand the 8-week course delivery model to provide a manageable schedule and reduce time to degree completion.

Impact Quality of Life: Expand partnerships and develop programs to attract and support underrepresented community members, promoting engagement in cultural and civic activities.

Institutional Commitments

WSCO is deeply committed to the successful implementation of the COF program through:

Recruiting and Retaining Faculty and Staff: Attracting highly skilled faculty and staff to engage effectively with students.

Promoting STEM Programs: Heightening the awareness and promotion of STEM-related programs through daily marketing and recruitment efforts.

Streamlining Admissions: Making the admissions process seamless to reduce anxiety for prospective students.

Providing Support: Connecting students with Success Coaches for academic and career planning, registration, and holistic support.

Embedding Work-Based Learning: Integrating work-based learning opportunities into the curriculum.

Professional Development: Supporting continuous professional development for faculty and staff.

Encouraging Collaboration: Fostering inter-division collaboration to achieve strategic goals.

Ensuring Accountability: Utilizing the Four Disciplines of Execution (4DX) system for focused outcome monitoring and reporting.

WSCO faculty and staff are dedicated to helping students reach their full potential, ensuring a significant positive impact on their lives and the community. This commitment underpins the successful execution of the COF program and its alignment with the college's strategic goals.

Wilberforce University

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Wilberforce University is a four-year accredited liberal arts institution, and is the nation's oldest private, historically black University owned and operated by African Americans. Its founding in 1856 represented a bold, audacious and visionary example of what could happen when men and women of goodwill transcended race and the prevailing social and cultural constructs and norms to pursue a noble purpose. The University was named for the great eighteenth century abolitionist, William Wilberforce whose "can-do" spirit infused the institution with strength to persevere and achieve early success through 1862. Throughout its 168-year history, Wilberforce University has demonstrated a formidable spirit of resilience and triumph and has never wavered from its sacred duty to educate and enrich its students. Currently, the University offers 21 academic concentrations in business, communications, computing and engineering sciences, humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences.

ACCREDITATION

Wilberforce University is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission. Its original date of accreditation

is June 1, 1961. Its last review was April 22, 2024. The next review will be September 15, 2025.

MISSION STATEMENT

Wilberforce University's mission is to engage, support, and assist students in identifying and preparing for their respective purposes in life as social change agents, social justice activists, entrepreneurs, thought leaders and global citizens by imparting knowledge through rigorous intellectual inquiry and critical thinking. The mission is most effectively accomplished by instilling pride, discipline and inspiring life-long learning, personal and spiritual development and the practical application of the knowledge obtained, and the skills developed.

Within the vast landscape of higher education, organizational structure is the framework that defines how colleges and universities operate. As we work on preparing a new Organizational chart, the current version is contained within the Appendix within the Faculty Handbook. It outlines the relationships and interactions between governing bodies, departments, faculty, students and external organizations.

ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP—PROGRAM – ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The University houses majors related to STEM. The degrees offered to students in this area allows students the flexibility to go directly into the workforce as competent and competitive scientists, computer scientists and engineers or into graduate studies related to medicine, engineering, computer sciences or other STEM field-focused areas. As the university has a value proposition of a liberal arts focus with an entrepreneurial intent, all students will find the ability to translate themselves and their own personal branding and to creative and strategic methods of career preparedness through coursework offered at Wilberforce University.

Wilberforce University, where these STEM degrees will be sponsored, is staffed by qualified faculty and Department Chairs. The degrees in Biology, Computer Engineering, Computer Science, Computer Information Systems, Electrical Engineering, and Nuclear Engineering will provide students with the education that they need through clear, complete, and timely information. Wilberforce University will provide course and degree requirements, nature of faculty/student interaction, assumptions about technology competence and skills, technical equipment requirements, Learning Management System, availability of academic support services and financial aid resources, and costs and payment policies.

Curriculum, course and degree information will be available on the university website and via e-mail as well as regular mail (by request). The expectations for faculty/student interaction are available to students during open house events, literature, website, etc. In addition, this information is part of the material distributed for each course. Students receive guidance on proper behavior/interaction with their Department Chair and faculty members to facilitate a high-level experience. Technology competence and skills and technical equipment requirements are part of the material distributed for each course. The technical equipment requirements are also listed on our website and provided to students in the welcome package.

The University's academic support services, financial aid resources, costs and payment policies, and Learning Management System are covered in the University Open Houses, the application process, the Welcome Aboard process, Orientation, Student Town Halls, and individual counseling.

The constituents of the STEM programs include students, faculty, alumni, employers, and STEM Advisory Committee (STEMAC) comprised of local industry and employers. Employers include large and small firms and federal, state, and local government agencies.

The committees established to support the STEM Programs will be led by the Department Chairs with Academic Affairs support and will comprise several departmental faculties across all programs which include Biology, Computer Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Computer Science, Computer Information Systems, and Nuclear Engineering. Faculty are integral to the success of the program and will comprise review committees both at the departmental and

University level. Program goals and outcomes will be reviewed regularly by the department's curriculum committee. The committee solicits opinions from students, faculty, administration, and employers through informal discussions, surveys, advisory committee meetings, and student feedback. The departmental curriculum committee regularly reviews and seeks curriculum improvements to reflect program goals and outcomes.

The STEM Programs are offered on-ground in a traditional classroom environment. The result is the convenience required by the 21st Century learner and provides interaction with faculty and fellow students that is critical to the high-level learning experience. The curriculum gives the student the necessary learning tools the University believes critical to be successful in STEM. The degree is also consistent with the interdisciplinary nature of the University.

Across the county many leaders in the STEM industry realize the problem of not having enough STEM professionals to perform the infrastructure work planned or underway in the U.S. This is especially true following the recent influx of hundreds of billions of dollars in federal funding over the next several years from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act.

In Ohio, based on the [Ohio Job Outlook](#) the Professional and Technical industry is expected to grow by more than 15,000 jobs through 2028 with a 4% increase in architectural and engineering jobs throughout this time specifically.

SECTION 5: STUDENT SERVICES

The STEM programs will benefit from student academic services that are currently in place at Wilberforce University. The University has in place services and learning tools to guide students to successful degree completion. Programs such as Early Alert provide the University's faculty and staff opportunities for early student intervention on the pathway to graduation. Wilberforce University is committed to the success and well-being of our students.

Wilmington College

Executive Summary

Wilmington College is proud to submit this application for the Choose Ohio First program, aligning our mission with both Ohio Department of Higher Education and state of Ohio goals to strengthen the state's economic growth through STEM talent development. This grant will enable us to recruit and retain underrepresented populations—including women, minority students, and first-generation college students from rural and Appalachian regions—into our chemistry, environmental science, and pre-veterinary programs, addressing critical workforce needs while enhancing diversity in these fields.

Central to this proposal is our commitment to hands-on, experiential learning, which ensures that students are not only academically prepared but also equipped with the practical skills necessary for success in the workforce. Our students benefit from a range of work-based learning opportunities, including internships with Hikma Pharmaceuticals, Conservation Contracting, area Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and local veterinary medical clinics. These experiences provide real-world applications of classroom knowledge, giving our students a competitive edge as they transition into Ohio's high-demand STEM fields.

This initiative will directly support economic and job growth in key STEM areas, particularly throughout southwest Ohio. By equipping students with the skills needed in critical industries like pharmaceuticals, agriculture, environmental science, and veterinary medicine, we are helping to fill regional labor shortages with well-prepared, highly skilled graduates. The partnerships we have forged with local businesses and organizations ensure that Wilmington College students have a direct pipeline into Ohio's workforce, addressing the immediate needs of employers and contributing to the state's economic vitality.

To ensure the success and retention of these students, Wilmington College offers a comprehensive support system that extends beyond the classroom. Programs like First-Year Connections help students acclimate to college life by focusing on critical thinking, time management, and community engagement. Our Office of Diversity and Inclusion offers peer mentoring to foster strong connections among students, particularly those from underrepresented groups, enhancing their sense of belonging and increasing retention rates. Additionally, the Student Resource Center provides tailored academic support, including tutoring, supplemental instruction, and career services, ensuring that students have the resources they need to thrive both academically and personally.

The Choose Ohio First Scholarships, combined with our institutional scholarships, will significantly reduce financial barriers, allowing more students to pursue STEM education

without the burden of financial strain. This increased funding will also allow us to expand opportunities for co-curricular activities, internships, and participation in professional conferences, further enhancing students' career readiness.

Through this partnership with the Choose Ohio First program, Wilmington College will not only increase access to high-quality STEM education for underrepresented students but also ensure their success through a holistic support system and commitment to hands-on learning. By developing a diverse and innovative STEM workforce, Wilmington College will play a pivotal role in supporting economic and job growth throughout southwest Ohio and beyond, helping to secure the region's position as a leader in key STEM industries.

Wright State University

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Wright State Choose Ohio First Scholars Program

Wright State University supports the Ohio Department of Higher Education's (ODHE) goal of expanding opportunities for students in Science (including health professions), Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields and recognizes the importance of higher education revitalizing the regional and state economies.

The largest single-site employer in the state is Wright Patterson Air Force Base, situated adjacent to Wright State University, which is home to the Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL). Accompanying this economic engine are the offices of a variety of private engineering and science firms that support the research and development sponsored by AFRL. The second largest industry in the Dayton region is health care led by Premier Health, Kettering Health and Dayton Children's Hospital. As Wright State University has formalized an affiliation agreement with Premier Health and a strategic partnership with WPAFB, you will see a new focus on these partners within this proposal.

While Wright State's Choose Ohio First Scholars program has always sought to support the economic growth of Dayton, the Miami Valley, and Southwest Ohio regions by enhancing the production of graduates from traditional and underrepresented populations in the critical Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Medicine (STEM) areas needed by these industries and employers, we hope a more focused lens within this proposal will lead to greater work-based learning opportunities for the scholars as well as premier job opportunities once the students graduate.

Wright State has participated in the Choose Ohio First Scholarship program since its inception through scholarship programs and has developed several strategic support services for Choose Ohio First Scholars including academic support and career-related services. In the current academic year, the Choose Ohio First program is supporting over 200 students majoring in STEM programs. These scholars receive full support from the departments of enrollment management, financial aid and student success. A dedicated and instrumental program administrator within the Career Services center will highlight additional opportunities for scholars. The newly created Health Professions Center, affiliated with Premier Health, will be a keystone for COF Scholars seeking a degree in the health professions. By offering students direct assistance aligned with their career goals, we hope to continue our increase on retention and graduation.

The proposed enhanced Wright State Choose Ohio First (COF) Scholars program will continue to support students in the engineering, science, information science, and health disciplines that have been identified by Ohio Means Jobs as in-demand occupations or by JobsOhio as key industries for the State of Ohio. In addition, this proposal includes STEM education majors to support our regional schools. The Wright State COF Scholars program focuses on STEM occupations including engineering disciplines, biology, chemistry, mathematics & statistics, neuroscience, physics, information systems, medical lab science, public health, STEM education, supply chain management, and nursing. Wright State completed an institution-wide program prioritization focusing on academic efficiency and effectiveness and assigned all academic programs to four categories; enhancement, maintenance, improvement, and closure. All eligible programs for COF Scholars are marked within the first three categories and have necessary support for growth and continued focus. Part of the program review included market analysis and aligning with career opportunities, which is of utmost importance for all students.

The proposed program consists of three complementary components that combine to 1) attract and enroll students, 2) provide work-based experience that facilitates career selection, and 3) support students' academic progress. COF Scholars will have a dedicated advisor to facilitate career development and academic support in the Student Success Center.

Xavier University

Executive Summary

Xavier University would like to offer a yearly cohort of 23 talented students a \$3,682 per year Choose Ohio First scholarship, matched by Xavier, to attend Xavier in one of our high-quality STEM programs that provide our regional and state employers the strong talent they need to succeed.

Selected Populations for Recruitment

We seek to make a Xavier education available for highly qualified Ohio students who apply and are admitted but cannot enroll due to financial need. Within this group of students, we seek those who enhance our programs by increasing our campus' diversity. Increasing diversity allows students to discover the power of diversity to create better solutions as they work together.

Xavier's mission is to educate students intellectually, morally, and spiritually in an inclusive environment. We prepare students for a diverse, complex world by fostering reflection, compassion, and informed action. Our commitment to holistic education, the common good, and service is especially valuable in healthcare, natural sciences, technology, analytics, and STEM fields, where ethical and value-based issues are increasingly important.

Overview of the selected academic programs

The Choose Ohio First academic programs represent areas with strong outcomes for majors clustered roughly as health (Nursing, Health Services Administration, Biomedical Sciences, Pharmaceutical Science, Pre-Pharmacy, Pre-MSN), technology and analytics (Data Science, Computer Science, Cybersecurity, Artificial Intelligence, Mathematics, Biological Sciences for Business, Business Analytics and Information Systems, Actuarial Science), natural sciences (Biology, Environmental Science, Applied Physics, Biophysics, Engineering Physics, Physics, Chemistry, Chemical Science, Biochemistry, Genetics, Microbiology, Neuroscience), and STEM education (Teaching Integrated Sciences).

This set of programs provides Choose Ohio First scholars a broad range of undergraduate majors. It is intentionally broad to facilitate career discernment which is an essential part of a Xavier education.

Addressing regional and statewide economic strengths and needs

The Choose Ohio First Scholars program aligns with regional economic needs, focusing on health care, technology, and analytics. Many students from these programs pursue careers in these areas. For instance, Q Labs needs STEM-savvy, creative professionals for R&D. Mercy

Health, a leading provider in Cincinnati, hires Xavier graduates in various roles. Makino requires skilled engineers for their precision machines, while Spectra-Tech Manufacturing offers engineering and manufacturing services for printed circuit boards.

Xavier is dedicated to training leaders for these in-demand fields, with about 70% of STEM graduates staying local. We're focusing on recruiting Ohio residents to strengthen our regional economy.

How Choose Ohio First is part of institutional strategic plan

Xavier's Board of Trustees approved Strategic Themes and Priorities for Xavier University in September

2022. The priorities described in this plan include several directly relevant to our Choose Ohio First (COF) @ Xavier project:

Deepen our academic excellence through bold leadership in health and biomedical sciences

Expand our commitment to immersive, high-impact, experiential learning

Redefine teaching excellence through inclusive pedagogy

Implement a comprehensive, transformative first year experience

Set the national bar for innovative, comprehensive holistic collegiate health

Achieve excellence across Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Accessibility and Belonging

(DEIAB) innovation, outcomes, and impact

Reimagine a radical model of integrated vocational discernment

The Choose Ohio First program at Xavier emphasizes experiential learning, uses a cohort model to help

provide excellence in outcomes that are transformative for students, and integrates vocational discernment through its activities.

How Choose Ohio First supports student achievement

COF @ Xavier supports student achievement by providing funding to make Xavier accessible to students who benefit from a personalized liberal arts education and providing these students a cohort to help ensure their success.

Half of the students in our STEM programs are now from out-of-state. Our surveys of the STEM students who apply, are admitted, but do not enroll indicates finances as the reason half do not enroll. Data on the unmet financial need of these students suggests that the additional funding provided by this grant could make Xavier feasible for at least an additional 23 students per year. This project primarily targets students who are Ohio residents admitted to Xavier with interest in one of our STEM programs and who have unmet financial need that can be met with this scholarship.

While leveraging Xavier's already-extensive support systems, students will experience an intentional process of discernment, professional mentorship, and work-based experiential opportunities. These experiences, combined with Xavier's rigorous education, will lead to student achievement.

Assistance to achieve successful implementation

Xavier's institutional assistance to successfully implement the proposal includes

Strategic enrollment management

Admissions Counselors (recruiting)

Financial Aid Counselors (scholarship crediting and counseling)

Success coaches (college success)

Career Development

Career Coaches (career discernment, mock interviews, resume prep)

Professional Mentoring (career discernment, networking, professionalism)

Academic Programs

Academic Advisors (academic success)

Project Director (cohort mentoring and management)

Xavier's project team involves faculty and staff from across the above areas. Students are provided an easy one-stop Canvas course location to find information on the program and to record their progress through the Choose Ohio First Scholars Program. Xavier University will ensure that the Choose Ohio First students participate in a co-op, internship, or research laboratory experience by working with each student individually to explore opportunities that align with their professional goals. Students in the cohort are provided with a complete four-year engagement plan that enables them to successfully prepare and earn an internship and a job with an Ohio company in their field. The team meets with the cohort as a whole group each

semester and provides appointments throughout the semester for one-on-one assistance in each of the support areas. The project team checks in on the cohort throughout the semester and reaches out to those who are not successfully progressing.

Youngstown State University

Executive Summary

YSU Research, Education, and Experiential Learning COF

YSU-COF's 2025 proposal, YSU Research, Education, and Experiential Learning Choose Ohio First (YSU-REEL COF), promotes research experiences and workforce development opportunities for YSU students. We request \$1,120,000 over five program years to fund an estimated \$4,000 per student for 20 students per new cohort who are pursuing undergraduate degrees, graduate degrees, and/or certificates, targeting those in the natural and physical sciences and/or pre-professional programs. As an institution, YSU is committed to meet this funding through an in-kind match consisting of non-public scholarships and support from the Office of Academic Affairs. Our proposal supports STEMM majors at YSU, complements our mission to provide students with experiential learning, and includes collaboration with regional high schools. The proposed COF program builds upon the successes of our four existing COF programs but also includes new components to better support students and to achieve targeted goals for the program.

Rationale for Targeted Population

Our target population consists of STEMM-interested Ohio students with an emphasis upon STEMM underrepresented groups. We will give preference to applicants who participated in our Summer Mathematics Bridge or Summer Research Experience for high school students. To further the University's mission to serve the region and the need to train and retain a diverse workforce equipped with the skills required for employment within the region, YSU-REEL COF partners with high schools in the Youngstown-Warren area to promote the program and recruit students.

Targeted Academic Programs

While all STEMM-related majors and programs are eligible for YSU-REEL COF, we specifically target programs from which students often go into professional school or graduate school before entering the workforce, primarily the natural and physical sciences. Past COF grants have taught us the tremendous value of hands-on learning experiences both through research and co-ops and internships. This is our first proposal where we intentionally integrate both into one program. During their sophomore year, students will have the unique opportunity to gain research experience through a COF organized research program, as well as to develop important soft skills such as collaborating in teams, communicating scientific results, and networking effectively. In their junior year, students will participate in continued research or a transcribed co-op or internship. Wrap-around support will focus on career exploration and planning and

professional and career development to ensure students are well-equipped for next steps upon graduation.

Regional/State Strengths and Targeted Academic Programs

All STEM programs included in this proposal are strongly linked to the Northeastern Ohio region and work-based learning. If awarded, this funding enables us to train and to provide a qualified workforce for employers in the region and the State.

Relationship to Institutional Strategic Plan and Support of Student Achievement

The YSU strategic plan consists of three emphases: Student Futures and Lifelong Learning, Academic Distinction and Discovery of Knowledge, and Collective Impact with the Region. The COF initiative promotes and enhances our efforts in all three of these areas.

Our focus on Student Futures and Lifelong Learning challenges us to develop academic programs to train a workforce of students realizing their individual aspirations. We identify areas of research, service, and scholarship that focus upon life-long learning and mutually beneficial community engagement in alignment with community partners. The COF initiative clearly aligns and promotes this goal. The COF focus on student work-based learning promotes this initiative at YSU and provides us the support necessary to promote these opportunities to Ohio students.

Academic Distinction and Discovery of Knowledge includes the goal to “develop internships, service, experiential and applied learning projects with local businesses and organizations that provide opportunities for students to apply their knowledge in scholarly activity.” The COF initiative, especially in the targeted academic programs, enables us to foster greater connection to regional employers and allows us to design programs to train the local workforce to meet employers’ needs.

The third area, Collective Impact with the Region, challenges us to ensure our partnerships are inclusive, equitable, and accessible. The COF initiative supports our efforts to target populations underrepresented in STEM for opportunities within the region. We will listen to the needs of employers and address those needs through training and academic programs to strengthen the regional workforce.

Institutional Assistance

The COF program is highly valued at YSU and receives institutional assistance to promote the initiatives outlined in the RFP. YSU will support YSU-REEL COF through the support of faculty research mentors, the annual STEM internship and career expos, services provided by the Office of STEM Careers, Internships & Co-ops, and the support of personnel in the development and offering of programs and resources to encourage work-based learning. Letters of support attest to the broad assistance provided by the institution, including from the Office of STEM Careers, Internships, and Co-Ops and the Mathematics Achievement Center.

Program Components

YSU-REEL COF scholars will be required to adhere to the following:

maintain at least a 3.00 GPA during the award year;

make timely progress in their STEMM program or major;

attend all cohort meetings (unless meeting times conflict with a class);

participate actively in their assigned student research team and participate fully in their team's presentation of results at *QUEST* (peer-reviewed YSU student research conference), *NE Ohio COF Student Research Symposium*, and YSU STEM Showcase;

work with the YSU-REEL COF Coordinator and the Office of STEM Careers, Internships & Co-ops to secure a transcribed research experience, professional practice experience, or REU;

participate in the STEM Expo and/or other career and internship fairs on campus (if applicable);

complete all required surveys and exit interviews; and

comply with all recommendations of the COF Coordinator concerning academic progress, including the acceptance of, and working with, any private tutors.