During the last year, Ohio University, along with the other public universities in the state, engaged in a process to identify its centers of excellence. This process, which was requested by Ohio Board of Regents Chancellor Eric Fingerhut, is one part of the University System of Ohio’s strategic plan. The plan aims to raise the national profile of its higher education institutions, prioritize resources, and better meet student needs.

We identified three proposed centers of excellence at Ohio University for submission to the Ohio Board of Regents. Each has synergies with Vision Ohio, our comprehensive strategic plan. Each program enjoys sustained academic excellence that can be benchmarked nationally or internationally. Financial indicators and capital projects further informed our decision.

In October, Gov. Ted Strickland and Chancellor Fingerhut named Ohio University as one of nine Centers of Excellence in Energy and the Environment. The inclusion of Ohio University as one of the state’s Centers of Excellence in Energy and the Environment speaks to the research and scholarship achieved by our outstanding faculty and staff. Gov. Strickland and Chancellor Fingerhut recognize the talent, creativity and scholarship of Ohio University faculty on important issues focused on energy and the environment.

The Russ College of Engineering and Technology is integral in our energy and the environment work, which includes more than 30 faculty and researchers from the college as well as the College of Arts and Sciences, College of Health and Human Services, and the Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs. Current research focuses on the production and delivery of energy and fuels, as well as the monitoring and control of the air and water pollution that results from fuel production.

These researchers have received more than $28 million in total external funding for fiscal years 2004 through 2008. To date, Ohio University has submitted 38 invention disclosures, 96 patent applications, and nine patents related to energy and the environment – generating $745,000 in royalty fees from energy-related technologies since 2005.

In 2006, energy and the environment was found to be among Ohio University’s significant research strengths, according to a study of institution-based research core competencies commissioned by the Ohio Board of Regents and the Ohio Department of Development.

Ohio University stands as the first university in the state to recognize the need to integrate the multidisciplinary work of energy and its related environmental impacts through the establishment of the Consortium for Energy, Economics and the Environment (CE3) in 2005. Just this fall, the Gov. Strickland recognized the work of CE3 and the Russ College, in collaboration with the university’s Voinovich School, with a one-time discretionary grant of $100,000 to support energy efficiency and renewable energy services.

In addition, the university is located in the heart of Ohio’s coal and oil fields, and the Ohio River Valley is home to nearly 40 percent of the nation’s coal-generated electricity. The Russ College’s Center for Air Quality, Ohio Coal Research Center, and newly formed Center for Electrochemical Engineering Research Center are all key to these crucial research efforts.

The Russ College also deserves recognition for its external research awards garnered in fiscal year 2009, which helped bring the university’s total to $67.7 million. Awards to the Russ College reached more than $20 million, a 68 percent increase. In fact, The Ohio Coal Research Center enjoyed an increase of $6 million, thanks in large part to the Ohio Research Scholars program, which will bring to the Russ College an eminent scholar in coal syngas utilization. We believe that the work of the faculty and staff in the Russ College is significantly helping to enhance the university’s national prominence.