RHE Feedback

Summary
About RHE
RHE fulfills an access and affordability mission. Faculty and staff are dedicated experts at working with at risk students who are traditional and non-traditional students, many of whom are working adults with many competing responsibilities, limited ability to fund their education, and unique readiness challenges. For these students, RHE is often the only pathway to a university degree. These students need and experience a personalized, caring, high-touch, small class environment, that nonetheless maintains high quality standards and appropriately challenges students to grow providing a foundation for development; fostering resilience, and grit; and respecting diversities. Though a commuter campus environment, students have and participate in co-curricular options that offer leadership and broader development opportunities that are essential to pursuit of their goals. And, because of the location of some campuses, students come from multi-state locations. Faculty have heavy teaching and service loads, but they remain professionally active in their disciplines. Staff wear many hats, and work as a team to accomplish as much as they can with severely limited resources. RHE is an important community resource and partner. The campuses aim to be responsive to community needs with academic programs, the campuses host events for the community, and the campus facilities—libraries, access to computers and high speed internet, and more—are valued aspects of OHIO’s presence. The relationship between RHE campuses themselves, and between RHE and Athens is uneven. There are models of high collaboration and mutual respect, but tensions over how rules are established, decision-making around curriculum and course offerings, and more, make clear that there is an opportunity in this effort to improve operations across the system.

Concerns about the committee work
There are many concerns about our work, including the composition of the committee and the timeline. Concerns about the former are directly related to a further set of concerns, including that the decision will be Athens-centric and imposed from Athens in ways that do not appreciate realities on the ground in RHE (e.g., going digital with processes in pursuit of efficiency fails to consider the digital divide), and/or that the decision in fact has already been made and our committee work is just for show. Further concerns surround the framing of the problem as a an RHE problem when it is in reality a system problem (since decisions in Athens in fact impact RHE bottom line, e.g., control over course and program offerings). Many expressed concern over the success of implementation, and the barriers to change that are endemic to our culture. There concerns, too, about too much focus on cutting costs without consideration of strategic investment and a reliance on centralization and efficiency without clear benefits or attention to impact on students and the community. Additionally, there are concerns about loss—loss of autonomy, jobs, people, uniqueness of campus identity, mission, leadership.
What does success for this committee look like?
There is significant interest in recommendations that unite the system, enabling seamless coordination across campuses to meet student need in nimble, flexible, fast-paced, responsive programs and services that integrate liberal arts and workforce development. At the same time, there is a desire for autonomy and local decision-making and trust, as opposed to heavy process and central oversight. More than anything, there is a desire for durable solutions that go beyond short term survival to create a flourishing university system, a desire for solutions that reenergize, create hope, unite us behind a compelling and achievable vision that has political support, one that is supported through shared governance and that sustains mutual respect and understanding across the system.

What does transparency mean to you?
There is a desire for radical transparency and continuous engagement of the community, and assurance that there are no shenanigans (e.g., decision already made, problem framed with solution in mind, opaque budget data). This can be accomplished through frequent communication, open meetings (and/or meeting notes), regular opportunity for input and clarity regarding how that input is considered, clear explanation of the problem, sharing of data and work in progress (i.e., draft recommendations), active solicitation of feedback, and more. Once the recommendations are finalized, there is a desire to understand the next steps: what will President Nellis do after receiving the recommendations?

What is the most significant risk to implementing our recommendations, to RHE flourishing?
In addition to reinforcing many of the concerns expressed above, this prompt identified additional risks such as recommendations that do not receive the necessary resources for successful implementation; shifts in policy at the institutional, state, or federal level that undermine successful implementation (e.g., further damage from college credit plus); misalignment with efforts already underway at the college or campus level; and lack of advocacy (perhaps due to leadership transitions) or buy in from faculty and staff across the system who need to be engaged in implementation.

What are some guiding principles or foundational commitments that we should lean on for hard choices that can help us all accept the outcome (e.g., student impact should have priority)?
A number of principles were recommended for consideration, but a few were heard across the campuses:
  - The impact on students must be prioritized above other considerations.
  - Quality and access must be maintained with a business model that works.
  - We are one university, and we need to move forward together. The past informs, but we need to embrace change and work together to support access and success. This includes shared governance, but also personal and collective responsibility to call out those who are not living these principles (e.g., engaging in territorialism, or resisting change for personal interest).
  - A principle of fairness, or equity, should guide implementation.
• Local autonomy and ability to move with pace should be maximized to the degree possible given the need to create a sustainable future.
• We have to be willing to do the difficult things, like eliminating programs, if it leads to a greater good.
• Treat faculty and staff with dignity, particularly in the face of any dramatic change recommended by the committee.

Do you have ideas about how to create a more sustainable future for RHE?
Many ideas were expressed and a just a few are highlighted here:
• Expand offerings in response to market demand, including extending course access across the system, developing new programs and new credential structures (e.g., certificates, competency badges).
• Greater coordination across system, especially regarding administrative functions (e.g., marketing, enrollment, student support services). Consider in this context a shared services model.
• Pursue a digital first strategy for operations, enabling virtual service delivery and flex work place models.
• Empower local leadership, and hold them accountable for sustaining operations.
• Consider alignment at the academic unit level in addition to the consideration of a college model. There are models of excellence here, including nursing, communications, and social work.
• Invest in innovation support, development of rapid response programming.
• Consider land use opportunities that might yield significant revenue, new partnership opportunities.

Notes from all campus conversations
Pre-meeting chatter
• Too much competition between campuses—turf protection, inefficient, not student friendly, advertising to one another’s student population
• Entrepreneurial DNA
• Communication breakdowns
• Cross-campus disciplinary unity (e.g., pan-campus department)
• Campus deans as directors of disciplinary areas that span campuses
• Administrative consolidation and focus on multi-campus operation (e.g., one marketing team for all campus communication)
• Structure that enables and supports tuning program to local demand (e.g., subcommittee of regional curriculum committee)
• Faculty locked to single campus is a problem
• Pop up cohort programming on campuses (e.g., Social work, education)
• Dublin and Cleveland—are they part of this conversation, a model?
• Access mission, geographic impact,
• OSU Model
• Importance of place, ties to community, shapes experience of campus, stakeholder influencers
• Rural community essential resource, access and place intimately connected—scale and proximity to kin matter
• how to manage student life, co-curricular experience
• Athens vs. RHE or OHIO?
• Program portfolio for RHE that flattens out economic cycle impact
• Admissions letter that enrolls students like OSU—you’ve been accepted, first year at Lancaster...

What should the committee know about RHE?
• Faculty excellence
• Student attention/care
• Community engagement/reputation
• Affordability
• Convenience
• Responsive to community needs
• Access mission
• Bridge to university education
• Creates opportunity—“only option”
• Partnership opportunities (e.g., colocation)
• Small class size
• Support services (advising, retention)
• There are some good relationships between Athens and RHE, models to know about (COMS, NURS, ), but a lot of conflict and negative perceptions
• Need better coordination, collaboration across system
• Connection to place
• Students want to stay local
• Serve a niche student, providing access point to 4 yr degree, only option for some, first generation, working adults with families)
• CC+ is killing us financially and students are coming with credits but not ability
• We are political asset for OHIO, affordability solution
• Focus on teaching excellence
• Do more with less
• Access mission
• Without us, students wouldn’t pursue 4 year degree
• Community connections
• Value to community
• Small class sizes—faculty know students
• Price—student affordability
• Small, cohesive, visible, and available staff
• Creative, flexible course delivery
• University brand matters to community
• Affordable
• Close students and community relationships, partners
• Access—students only option
• Amazing, dedicated faculty committed to student success, professionally active in disciplines
• Spoke/wheel opportunity to increase visibility and reputation of OHIO, OHIO for Ohio
• Ingrained in community
• Affordable
• Nontraditional students
• Comfort of small classes
• Convenient
• Access to degree (only option for some)
• Access to support staff
• Open enrollment (additional needs) requires policy and process sensitivity
• Business relationships (support change process)
• No admission deadline
• Faculty and staff commitment to excellence
• Student swirl (working adults)
• Community resource—campus facilities, library, computer and network access, programming/events
• Student attention, personalized
• CC+ resource
• Unique student population served, non traditional, many other commitments
• Academically unprepared (special talent of faculty to succeed with these students)
• Large female single mother population
• Associate degree production
• Unique programs/campuses
• Robust extra curricular programming—opportunities to lead, culture, arts, some athletics
• Commuter population
• Smaller classes, personalized attention
• Trad and non trad students
• Collaborate, serve community
• Administrative coordination, teamwork—we get it done
• Facilities that say college, not high school
• Students have many commitments
• Only chance to get a degree
• Fewer resources—excel at maximizing value of investment
• Affordable, accessible
• Familial, caring
• Connections to OHIO
• Quality education
• Safe campus
• Multi-state enrollments
• Student experience
• Open admission
• Non residential
• Working families, commuters, struggle to finance education
• Unique student needs
• Readiness challenge
• Access mission
• Hunger to learn
• Need personalized attention and hand holding
• Serve heavy, teaching heavy faculty load with advising, yet scholarly activity exists across group categories
• Group workload is unique in RHE, even within group classification (Athens group 2 not the same as RHE group 2)
• Alienation across the system
• Balance challenging students and supporting them
• Student aspirations may differ from typical Athens student
• Cannot lean on GAs in RHE (assessment rules set in Athens don’t take this into consideration)

What concerns do you have about this effort?
• Community response to committee recommendations
• Transparency
• Culture as barrier to implementation
• Implementation may be half-hearted, feet dragging
• Decision already made?
• Loss of autonomy, over-centralization
• Stability of solution—people leave, relationships change
• Competition trumps collaboration
• Attitude/perception of RHE by Athens—incompetent, lesser quality, financial threat
• Perceived as RHE problem, but it is an OHIO problem
• Need to tell our story better
• Rigging the game (how the problem is framed, e.g., why 8 year data instead of 50 year trend)
• Loss of autonomy
• Imposed solutions without input
• Loss of focus on teaching excellence, teaching brand
• Loss of jobs, change in nature of work (e.g., forced to teach online against judgment that it does not serve these students, or the discipline)
• Will I be forced to travel all the time between campuses?
• Loss of personal touch, which is necessary for these students
• Timeline is too short, summer prevents faculty input
• Leadership structure
• What does this mean for me?
• Loss of unique campus identity
• Impact on students (loss of personal touch)
• Loss of community impact, connections
• Campus closing
• Change is hard
• Loss of unique campus culture
• Committee composition (more pre-tenure faculty, too many high level people close to retirement)
• University problem or RHE problem?
• Misconceptions/perceptions of lower quality by Athens
• Overcome us/them
• One university
• RHE sacrifice for Athens?
• Nothing changes, splinter groups persist and resist
• More centralization and administrative bloat
• Loss of campus dean
• RHE will be ignored in process
• RHE representation on committee
• Athens dictates operation
• Centralization without efficiency
• Loss of autonomy, more micromanagement
• Focus on budget at expense of quality and student success
• Wrong frame (current downturn vs. long view)
• All RHE fault
• Layoffs
• More management layers, process heavy operation
• Barriers to student success (e.g., has to go to Athens for completing degree)
• Cut cut cut
• Loss of targeted risk (need strategic investment)
• Loss of vision in focus on efficiency
• Nonstrategic cutting
• Avoidance of hard choices (e.g., differential cutting/investment)
• Campus advocacy trumps quality and progress
• Barriers overwhelm implementation
• Fait accompli
• Athens dictates outcome
• Nothing changes
• Half measures
• Job loss
• Consolidation of positions
• Athens centric (ignorant) recommendations
• Loss of mission, identity
• Unique campus identity loss (RHE is like one family, unique individuals)
• Position not the same as a person—we wear many hats
• Loss of personal touch
• Impact on student success
• Athens rules dominate
• Tenure impact
• Workload impact
• Competition for $
• Program loss
• Downsizing
• Loss of individuality of campus, unique identity
• Damage to access mission
• Enrollment impact on position stability
• Impact on community, families
• Bad centralization (e.g., purchasing rules that hurt local economy, raise costs)
• Stupid procedures
• Workload increase that impacts student personal touch
• Imposed draconian recommendations
• Concern about hierarchy, impact on deans, campus leadership, communication

What does success for this committee look like?
• Increased enrollment, sustainably
• Financial stability
• More academic opportunity for students
• Thriving, not just surviving
• Innovative model, processes
• System wide collaboration rather than competition—One university
• Departmental alignment, working better together
• Best practices, data driven recommendations
• Measure as we go
• Happy faculty and students
• Sense of optimism, hope
• Reenergized, morale boost
• Autonomy and empowerment
- Recognition of excellence, kudos
- More students (but maybe sustainable enrollment is more realistic)
- Better scaffolding, student success, readiness strategies
- Reduce barriers (e.g., high GPA requirements for some pathways) and create clear pathways
- Reestablish trust with administration
- Preserve small class size, focus on student success (online isn’t for all students)
- Quality, and not just efficiency, is focus of recommendations
- More all faculty meetings
- Unified marketing, effective message to students
- Focus on students and community
- Preserve liberal arts and workforce development
- Invest in marketing to drive enrollment and deeper community support
- Enable flexibility, nimbleness, pace to adapt to evolving community needs
- Can’t lose commitment to quality
- Durable solutions
- A lot more collaboration across system
- Consistency across system (websites, scheduling...)
- More majors drawing on system resources
- Growth, or at least sustainability
- More recognition of RHE value and contribution to OHIO
- Better Athens-RHE collaboration
- Overcome us/them
- Collaboration not competition across system
- Seamless collaboration
- Hope, breathing room, flourishing
- Growth, not just efficiency
- More innovative programming
- Integrate liberal arts and workforce development
- Increased engagement with all students by all faculty across system
- Expand access to MA programs with better revenue model
- Clarity regarding limits of academic freedom
- Political support
- Clear understanding of barriers to sustainability
- RHE becomes more competitive (cc’s eating our lunch now)
- Internal equity (across system)
- Responsive to opportunity, nimble, pace
- Responsive to student need
- Clarity re faculty appointments (resource strategy)
- Improved retention rates
- Better coordination/collaboration with Athens
- Focus on student success, mission, rather than profit
- Swirl solution (one OHIO vs. credit based “location” of home campus)
- Scheduling for students
- New business model
- Better coordination and collaboration across system
- Inviting management perspective (less reactionary)
- Better student, staff, faculty experience and outcomes
- More group 1 faculty
- Stronger shared governance
- Broader student centered curriculum
- No Athens imposed limits/rules
- Context sensitivity to curriculum decisions
- Meeting needs of regions more effectively
- Long term viability of RHE
- Better perception of RHE by Athens
- Expanded programming
- Stability of funding/finances
- Sense of unity, sharing resources, cooperative not competitive
- Consistent services across system
- Broader, exciting vision, not just efficiency: what we could be
- Objectively unbiased consideration of input
- Morale is high
- We’re still here!
- OHIO university degree—system unity
- Thriving, renewed hope
- Not just status quo—new opportunities
- Morale boosting
- We all understand our work better—we know what’s happening across the system
- Pace, fewer barriers and more support for change
- Trust and removal of unnecessary oversight
- Balance toward local autonomy
- Mutual respect

What does transparency mean to you?
- No ulterior motive
- Open process
- Regular communication
- Notes from committee meetings
- Opportunities to respond
- Active listening, reflect back what we hear
- Who are the benchmark institutions?
- Documentation of problem
- Ask for specific feedback specific issues
- Open notes from committee
- Feedback is incorporated, reflected, considered
- Credit source of good ideas
- Clarity in recommendations (not vague, open to interpretation)
- Regular updates (email)
- Decision details (meeting notes)
- Grounded data, budget clarity—no shenanigans
- Frequent opportunity for input, results shared back
- Clear, specific, not vague in recommendations
- Clear budget model
- Voices reflected in recommendations
- Meeting notes
- Open meetings, OULN
- Avoid anonymity to greatest degree
- Meaningful, worthwhile engagement
- Minutes of meetings
- Drafts for review
- Response from president
- Member reports to campus
- Instant feedback from community
- Shared governance
- Communication
- Follow up
- Link that is visible, available
- Data
- Committee minutes
- Why is this happening?
- More tech for closing distance
- Active reaching out to all for input
- Open communication
- Plain communication, not vague
- Honest communication
- Work in progress, opportunities to raise questions, provide input
- Access to docs in progress
- Communication plan, notification of activity, expectation setting
- Classified members on committee
- Data, research
- Ready access to material
- Proactive communication
- Authentic and honest communication
- Address rumors
- Direct communication to members of committee
• As much face to face as possible

What is the most significant risk to implementing our recommendations, to RHE flourishing?

• Enrollment trends
• CC+
• CCs offering 4 year degrees
• Inability to innovate, time to launch new programs
• Appearance of high price point
• Faculty engagement, inflexibility
• Athens barriers (department dictates policy that handcuffs regional campus)
• Inability to meet expected level of service (failure to manage expectations of students, community partners)
• State politics
• Short sighted recommendations
• Ignoring small changes that add up
• Policy problems contribute to problem (e.g., purchasing rules force us to buy something we can get cheaper through other means)
• Political winds favor Community Colleges
• Lack of flexibility, nimbleness
• Changing leadership, lack of advocacy
• Administrative decisions that cause harm
• Missing student need
• CC+ is killing us
• Neglect of RHE (lack of investment)
• Overlooking value of loss leader (sustaining vs. self sustaining)
• Focus on efficiency only
• Loss of autonomy, local need and opportunity
• Consider residential model
• CC+ killing us
• Pace vs quality in time to degree
• Forced to take credits
• TAG System
• Need better advocacy for mission
• Lumped in with CCs
• Language (regional vs. branch or…)
• Campus solvency, subvention
• Negativity, fear, barrier to collaboration and forward motion
• Over-centralization
• Loss of autonomy
• Dead end report in drawer
• Forgetting what is right and good about RHE
• Resources necessary for recommendations
• CC+ is killing us
• Need to draw students of choice
• Change for its own sake, or out of desperation
• Clear follow through, implementation plan
• Intra and inter campus dialogue
• Vague recommendations
• Reduction of tenure
• Impact on tenure, clarity re faculty status
• Lack of buy in
• Change resistance
• Lack of understanding, support
• Political support at state level
• CC+ is killing us
• Community buy in
• Negativity
• Internal competition
• Athens ignorance
• Exploitation of RHE
• Lack of buy in
• Feet dragging
• Legislative interference
• Refusal to share, relinquish control
• RHE is not one thing
• Irrational fear (won’t see win-win)
• Financial misalignment with recommendations
• Alignment to ongoing college efforts

What are some guiding principles or foundational commitments that we should lean on for hard choices that can help us all accept the outcome (e.g., student impact should have priority)?
• Mission is to educate
• Students are THE priority
• Student success is on all of us, together
• Financial sustainability
• Accept that we are a business, and we need a business model that works
• Must embrace a cultural shift
• Focus on what’s best for the whole
• Need to move on from the past
• Personal relationship, concern for student success
• Flexibility for student access
• Preservation of full time faculty
• Quality education
• Trust local innovation
- As much autonomy as possible
- Preserve adaptability of local site (campus autonomy)
- Structures matter (Q to S killed us)
- Use OULN
- Faculty light committee is a concern
- Do with, not to (no more policy announcements from Athens)
- Expand opportunity to teach higher level courses across system
- Use RHE as 2+2
- Reset marketing from RHE to One OHIO, reshape experience to live it (e.g., marching 110 on campuses)
- Invest in visibility, value to community
- Market OHIO
- Outreach and access mission
- Student impact most important
- Context sensitivity in implementation (e.g., e-billing is hard for students here)
- Equality of campuses (nobody superior or inferior)
- Uniqueness of mission (so one solution may not serve all students)
- Student impact/access is priority
- We are one institution
- Academic quality matters (how is this determined?)
- Don’t prioritize efficiency over quality
- Flexibility and pace to innovate
- Administrative caps
- Students first
- Student services/success
- Willingness to eliminate programs
- Quality over efficiency
- Access mission is core value
- OHIO degree, one institution
- [Branding, marketing, Identity]
- student perception of campus needs to be preserved—university experience and degree
- can’t abandon value of tradition—integrated liberal arts
- shared governance
- preserve local leadership/voice
- opportunity to experiment, student discovery
- student empowerment
- good before fast (get extension if necessary for committee to succeed)
- student impact most important
- sustainability balanced with humanity
- equity across system
- align to mission
- long term model
• equity
• unified, one university—no us/them
• language matters
• student first
• preserve uniqueness of campuses
• abandon territorialism
• greatest good principle

Do you have ideas about how to create a more sustainable future for RHE?
• Develop new credentials (certificates)
• Connect programming to workforce needs
• Work-aligned degrees, with meaningful liberal arts integration
• Shared services model
• Digital work place model for university operations
• Virtualize what we can
• Attainable, immediate, measurable gains
• Project initiation should focus on end user experience
• Administrative consolidation
• Develop shorter terms (7 week, split semester)
• Rolling admissions
• Stability in leadership
• Empower deans
• Clarify role of campus leader
• Expand offerings, options for students
• Smart investment strategy—not just cuts
• Coordination, partnership between Athens and RHE, rather than dictatorship
• Better connection across regional campuses
• Departmental alignment across system
• Merge departments, multidisciplinary—BSS program faculty, e.g.
• Flexibility in program offerings (workforce trends, e.g., manufacturing)
• Strategic investment
• Efficient career services
• Partnerships – we are too slow here
• Articulation agreements across state lines
• Embrace oil and gas $, property
• Make it easier to access expertise
• Don’t just cut
• Deferred maintenance solution
• Land use
• Centralize services (shared marketing, advising, recruiting...)
• Clear voice from RHE as one voice (exec dean, college model?)
• Central advocacy, decentralized decision making
• Calibration of autonomy and coordination
• Healthy, shared governance, successful communication
• RHE at table, e.g., departmental decision-making in Athens
• Float on your own bottom
• Support innovation
• Program coordination support and engagement (role of coordinators)
• Expand major support and student access to programs (e.g., pre-prof advising)
• Eliminate completion barriers (e.g., have to go to Athens)
• Coordinate first, $ solution follows
• Invest in student services focused on success (e.g., career counseling)
• Access and use of student data for success
• Tune programming to local workforce needs—differential programming on campuses
• Foreground existing programs that have national movement
• BSS expansion
• Innovation focus (e.g., 2 experiments/year) highly visible maybe with governance
• Leverage affordability
• RHE under UC (concerns about negative student perception)
• Dublin, beaver creek as models? Part of RHE?
• Program innovation (responsive to market)
• Remove Athens imposed limits
• Service delivery model, improved student services
• Shared services, resources
• Nursing faculty, coms, social work as models
• Clear choices among models
• Diversification, innovation, meet new needs
• Coordination across admin systems (e.g., enrollment)
• Fix ecampus