The New and Expanded Academic Programs Workgroup was charged by President Nellis to confirm markets for expanded programming, identify immediate workforce development needs, and prioritize through the Strategic Executive Enrollment Committee with projected enrollment and net revenue details. Our report summarizes our process and assumptions for addressing this charge and makes recommendations concerning broad curricular changes, specific program changes, and process changes. In doing so, we have attempted to balance comprehensiveness with specific actions we believe Ohio University can implement to improve our offerings for students.

Process and Assumptions

Initially, our committee divided this work into two parts. During the fall semester, members focused on generating a wide range of ideas on how Ohio University can expand current academic programs and create new ones. During the spring semester, members determined which of these ideas seem more viable considering the current and near future educational market and Ohio University’s resources. We also factored in the potential limitations and opportunities created by the global pandemic. Two sources of data were of particular value to our work:

- Ohio Labor Market Information
- Economic Development and Employer Planning System

Together these sites provide data on expected occupational growth by industry and occupational title. These sites also provide information about median wages, typical education requirements, and the level of competition for providing educational credentials for each occupation.

Our initial intent was to use data from the above sources to recommend new and expanded program areas for Ohio University, but we now recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic disrupts our ability to use this data to anticipate future economic and job growth accurately. Both the initial and the long-term impact of this crisis will almost certainly reshape the higher education landscape in ways that cannot be fully predicted now.

Consequently, our recommendations are informed by, but draw less heavily on, data concerning specific occupation growth in Ohio than we had originally intended. Instead, our recommendations focus more predominantly on what we perceive as Ohio University’s strengths as well as our expectations concerning how the current pandemic might reshape higher education over the next several years. We have also considered the University’s current financial situation, which we assume will be seriously impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. On the one hand, the current crisis will likely result in lower enrollments and decreased state subsidy for higher education in the short term. On the other hand, if we invest wisely and reposition our institution strategically, we could strengthen our market position substantially over the next few years.
Our recommendations also assume the full implementation of the One OHIO initiative: fully integrating the regional campuses into a University-wide strategy for program delivery across all modalities. Such an implementation should allow us to free up instructional resources in areas that are in less demand or in which increased competition has diminished our return on investment so that the University can invest in new and expanded programs across multiple modalities and locations. One lesson we should learn from the current health crisis is that, in a reality in which all programs and courses are being delivered remotely, the choice between face to face, online, blended, and other remote methods of delivering instruction is a false one. When the current crisis abates students should be able to access courses and support services through multiple modalities and from multiple locations. The opportunities to improve student learning via multiple modalities and, potentially, to “reimagine our university’s footprint” (strategic initiative number nine) and to relieve some pressure on our building infrastructure are more manifold than ever before. Faculty teaching face to face classes, for example, should continue to incorporate Teams, lecture capturing, and Blackboard into their courses to maximize student learning across the university system, while considering efficient usage of our limited classroom, lab, and other instructional spaces. The second lesson learned from the pandemic is that local issues are global issues of universal concern no matter where one lives or what discipline or sector in which we are engaged. Cooperation, inclusion, communication and compassion are central tenets of academic programming for students to graduate with the competence and confidence to pursue their professions and interests wherever they reside.

Curricular Recommendations

Ohio University should immediately prioritize creating and expanding programs that utilize existing instructional resources, facilities, and systems, including pipeline programs with high schools and community colleges, corporate support for workforce development programs, and public agency collaborations to support worker training. Marketing and branding efforts should focus on the following broad curricular areas that promote interdisciplinary and global (local, national and international) programs that combine courses, faculty, and expertise from multiple colleges and locations:

- **Health and Wellness Programs.** Before the advent of the current pandemic, jobs in health and wellness were among the fastest growing occupations in our state with predicted growth averaging between 10% and 20% over the next five years. Ohio University is well positioned to provide top-tier and interdisciplinary health and wellness programs via our locations and online.

- **Digital and Data Focused Programs.** Experts have long predicted the transformation of higher education due to trends in automation, digitization, and the gig economy. The COVID-19 pandemic will likely accelerate that transformation. Academic programs that provide students with greater knowledge of and skills in coding, graphic and web design; data analytics and visualization; cybersecurity and surveillance; social media; and artificial intelligence are more likely to appeal to students and make them more employable. In addition, we have faculty across a number of disciplines that specialize in the intersections of data and digital initiatives with society, politics, and the economy.
• **Energy, Environmental and Community Sustainable Programs.** Southeast Ohio has a long, complex history of energy production and its environmental impact as well as issues of community, creativity and environmental sustainability. Our region also has an emerging rural economy with strengths in alternative and renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, the arts and food systems, inequality, social justice, and interdisciplinary waste to wealth enterprises. Ohio University should maximize its existing partnerships in Athens County, Southeast Ohio, and around the world to create interdisciplinary programs that equip students to create new opportunities and solve the world’s energy, environmental, and community sustainability problems.

To further draw upon Ohio University’s existing strengths, we recommend programs in the above areas be grounded in the following interdisciplinary themes:

• **Innovation and entrepreneurship.** As communities address change brought about by disruptive technologies, economic dislocation, and the impact of COVID-19 and its economic effects, entrepreneurship and innovation will become more important. An imperative is to shift from a focus on innovation only to innovation for the sustainability of all. Nowhere is this more evident than in Appalachia Ohio where the generation of new jobs through venture creation, small business management and innovation will be essential for economic development across the region and an imperative for creating sustainable communities. Ohio University has a long history of leadership in innovation, interdisciplinarity, entrepreneurship, small business management, and regional development; these assets will become increasingly important for program development as our communities face disruptive change.

• **Global and regional engagement for economic and community development and sustainability.** The imperative to strengthen the breadth and scope of academic programming in interdisciplinary global studies has been underscored by the recent pandemic and with looming climate change. This is now coupled with a heightened level population insecurity across the globe, which all countries and communities like Appalachia are experiencing now in ways not witnessed in many years. Global issues are truly recognized as global and not solely the problems of countries and communities outside of North America and the western world. Areas in which OHIO has both interest and capacity to lead and which OHIO can leverage the engagement of its extensive interdisciplinary academic community and its partners in Appalachia, the USA, and spanning around the world are current and new programs that are truly global in nature, such as Global Health; Area studies (domestically, nationally and internationally); War and Peace; Social justice, inclusion, and equity; Food systems and Security; Environmental Sciences; Energy; and Sustainability. OHIO has both interdisciplinary strengths and a history of education, experiential, and study away learning, research and creative activity, innovation and business creation in these program areas. It also has a depth of academic experience in inclusive excellence leveraging existing programs, faculty scholarly work and institutional programming. Its unique community situated in Appalachia and its rich connections across the country and in countries such as Kenya, Japan, India, Malaysia, Germany and Ecuador to mention a few, offers an opportunity to advance global undergraduate, graduate and experiential learning, technology development and systems and project
management opportunities in these established and emerging fields of global insecurity. Accordingly, it is uniquely positioned to train leaders to help tackle these looming issues and to do so through an integrated model.

- **Educational innovation and instructional design.** COVID-19 stay at home orders and enforced online instruction have accelerated ongoing trends in education towards new innovations in instructional methods and learning design. Increasingly, new technologies and new learning habits are changing how we instruct and potentially impacting the traditional residential education model of education. Ohio University has a deep pool of talent in educational innovation research in multiple colleges. Program development, both new programs and new delivery modalities, could be a focus for future university multidisciplinary efforts.

**Program Recommendations**

In addition to the broad curricular areas and interdisciplinary themes described above, we recommend the University create, expand, or refocus several specific degree programs, listed here. *All of these recommendations assume the deployment of programs across modalities using instructional and marketing resources at all locations.*

1. Invest further in Social Work programs:

   a) Social Work faculty on all campuses should be credentialled to teach undergraduate and master’s level courses, especially as the Department of Social Work moves its master’s program online.

   b) The curricular use of expertise across the University should be distributed across the system to make sure all Ohio University social work students have access to specializations in the following areas, since (pre-pandemic) demand for them is predicted to grow over the next five years:

   - Substance abuse and behavioral disorders counseling
   - Mental health counseling
   - Rehabilitation counseling
   - Medical and public health Social Work
   - Interdisciplinary approaches to Social Work (e.g., expressive arts therapies and social work, humanities and social work)

2. Develop data analytics and visualization programs across the colleges. If other institutions across the country are an indicator, programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels could be developed. While some of these programs might be college-specific, such as health informatics or business analytics, all colleges and locations should be involved in delivering courses and programs in data analytics and visualization via multiple modalities.

3. Develop a Digital Humanities program that could draw upon faculty expertise from all locations and multiple colleges and could be delivered in multiple modalities. Digital Humanities programs blend traditional Humanities coursework in areas such
as literature, history, art history, theater history, philosophy, classics and world religions, and rhetoric with digital skills in areas such as visual design and visualization, web development, and big data computation and analysis. Such a degree should be seen as the new liberal arts degree for the 21st century and could include embedded certificates that connect students to career opportunities (for example: social media certificate; graphic design certificate; digital media certificate, etc.).\textsuperscript{1} Graduates with a bachelor’s degree in Digital Humanities often pursue jobs in web design, game design, digital communications, arts management, public relations and marketing, law, and user experience and interface design or go on to pursue graduate study in the Humanities, Digital Communication, or other related fields.

4. Develop a program in supply chain and logistics, since Ohio is becoming an important supply chain and logistics hub for the Midwest US and we are seeing increasing numbers of jobs move to the State and many new jobs generated in these industries. Ohio University has supply chain and logistics expertise in multiple colleges (for example, Engineering and Business) and is well positioned to serve these important workforce development needs. Throughout our region there is particular interest in combining supply and logistics programs with drone and artificial intelligence technologies.

5. Create assertive, multi-campus promotional campaigns for degrees that are fully available (Communication, History, Social Work, Human Biology, Sport and Lifestyle Studies, Early Childhood and Elementary Education, Middle Childhood Education, and Specialized Studies) or mostly available (English, Fine Art, and Psychology) on the regional campuses. Expand programming and scheduling for low-residency instruction in major-level coursework that would allow place-bound students to begin these degrees face-to-face on a regional campus and then to transition to hybrid or online learning for completion.

6. Expand the Bachelor of Specialized Studies degree, new Interdisciplinary Arts BFA and/or develop an Interdisciplinary Humanities BA degree. The Specialized Studies degree is underpromoted, especially on the regional campuses, but offers an endless set of opportunities for (especially, but not exclusively) place-bound students, on the one hand, and for the University to pilot new programs, on the other. This could be a small but significant source of sustained revenue.

7. Expand the Master of Arts / Master of Science in Individualized Studies online and at all locations. Wright State and Marshall University offer successful specialized studies MA degrees on their regional campuses. These degrees would be of particular interest to teachers searching for a master’s degree tailored to their own classes and

\textsuperscript{1} For more information see:
- \texttt{https://www.iit.edu/academics/programs/digital-humanities-bs}
- \texttt{https://www.bethel.edu/undergrad/academics/history/majors-minors/digital-humanities}
students’ needs. Explore the offering of other broad master’s programs at the university on the regionals through hybrid learning (Media Arts and Studies MA, new Interdisciplinary Arts MA, Arts Administration, etc.).

8. Expand online master’s degrees in the sciences that target teachers and science professionals who want to progress further in their fields. This might include investing in the development of science virtual labs, including chemistry, biology, physics, engineering, and nursing, to help programs in these areas run during periods of shutdown. The University could further use these labs as part of workforce development and instructional innovation programs.

9. As support for the macro recommendation of creating and expanding Data Focused Programs, the institution would be well served to expand the Mathematical Statistics and Actuarial Sciences degrees. Both fields are high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand for our state according to the Economic Development and Employer Planning System. The Mathematics Department website already markets the “mathematical statistician” job title as one that carries a larger average salary than “statistician.”

**Process Recommendations**

Our committee recommends the following process-oriented items that are currently being addressed by other University or One Ohio work groups:

1. Streamline curricular processes, especially those that take place after programs have been approved by the University Curriculum Council. We agree that current processes prevent us from being nimble and lead to delayed action by the state and federal governments as well as the Higher Learning Commission. Ohio University should set a standard of program approvals that completes the entire process within nine months.

2. Develop a curricular structure that facilitates communication and collaboration across locations, including post-university processes. We especially recommend that the University invest in tracking curricular proposals to make each step of the process more transparent. Responsibility and resources for tracking curriculum proposals from idea to completion should reside in the Office of Instructional Innovation.

3. Improve curricular processes for interdisciplinary programs, especially ones that transect departments, schools, and/or colleges. This should include creating a structure for continuing to develop innovative program ideas outside of what the University has done before.

4. Address institutional factors that impede Ohio University’s ability to adopt these recommendations, including devoting additional resources for compressed microwave systems or online conference software; reconciling incongruous time blocks between Athens and the regional campuses; and removing disincentives for sharing courses, programs, and faculty across colleges and locations. The University’s budget model should promote collaborative work and programs rather than inhibit them.
Conclusion

We submit this report in the hope that it will help guide Ohio University in meeting students’ needs over the next decade. We must build upon our institution’s strengths and academic resources by developing new interdisciplinary programs that relate to broad themes and opportunities that interest students and help them develop vital knowledge and skills necessary for lifelong learning and professional success. We must also remove or revise processes that create barriers for students and for our institution to serve them best. By drawing upon all of Ohio University’s educational resources, locations, and modalities our institution will be fearlessly first in providing the best student-centered education in Ohio.

Debra Benton, University Registrar, Committee Co-Chair
Jeremy Webster, Dean, Zanesville, and Interim Dean, Eastern, Committee Co-Chair
Shadi Abu-Baker, Associate Professor of Chemistry, Zanesville
Brad Cohen, Chief Strategy and Innovation Officer
Sam Dodd, Director, Ohio Valley Center for Collaborative Arts
Haley Duschinski, Associate Professor of Anthropology
L.J. Edmonds, Vice Provost for Global Affairs and International Studies
John Hoag, Associate Professor of Information and Telecommunication Systems
Zaki Kuruppalil, Professor of Engineering Technology and Management
Randy Leite, Dean, Health Science and Professions
Sarah Mahan-Hays, Associate Professor of Communication Studies, Eastern
Don Moore, Associate Professor of Electronic Media, Southern
Michele Morrone, Professor of Social and Public Health
Dywayne Nicely, Dean, Ohio University Chillicothe
Luke Pittaway, Associate Dean, Business
Sarah Poggione, Associate Dean, Arts and Sciences
Matthew Shaftel, Dean, Fine Arts
James Smith, Dean, Ohio University Lancaster
Tony Vinci, Associate Professor of English, Chillicothe