



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Ohio's Public Universities Launch Statewide Communication Campaign**

*Forward Ohio highlights higher ed's role in economy and society*

Columbus (May 14, 2018) – Ohio's 14 public universities are launching a statewide communication campaign designed to raise awareness of the value of public higher education and spur efforts to close the state's increasingly alarming higher education attainment gap. To accomplish this goal, the effort, called Forward Ohio, seeks to mobilize public support for enhanced investment in public higher education and ensure that it is a public policy imperative for state government.

"Ohio's well-documented 'talent gap' is more than just the latest workforce challenge. It's a looming crisis," says Bruce Johnson, president of the Inter-University Council of Ohio (IUC). "Our ability to attract and retain jobs is the key to Ohio's economic future and hinges to a large degree on the educational attainment levels of our citizens. In addition, higher education is the key to creating economic opportunity for Ohioans seeking to start a career or transition to a new career."

Studies indicate that about 66 percent of jobs in Ohio in 2025 will require postsecondary certificates or above. Currently, just 44 percent of working age Ohioans have these credentials. Given the fact that Ohio public universities produce the majority of skilled workers in the state, maintaining a strong system of public higher education is essential to closing this gap and meeting the economic and workforce needs of Ohio employers.

Campaign activities will emphasize five critical ways in which Ohio's public universities provide value to the state. These include: helping Ohioans prosper, developing Ohio's workforce, spurring the state's economy, tackling society's toughest issues, and keeping college affordable.

[Forward Ohio's information portal](#) illustrates how all of Ohio's public universities are addressing the attainment gap and providing significant value to the state. It also provides evidence on the critical need for more skilled workers and how enhanced state investment and policy reforms can further assist public universities in closing the attainment gap. Furthermore, it provides opportunities for citizens to advocate for enhanced governmental support of higher education.

“According to a recent poll, 85 percent of Ohioans agree that a four-year degree from a public university in Ohio prepares students for a good job in today’s economy,” adds Jay Gershen, president of the Northeast Ohio Medical University and Chair of the IUC. “I urge this large majority of citizens to stand with me and my fellow public university presidents to advocate for a strong and productive system of public higher education in Ohio, for the benefit of our students, our economy and our state as a whole.”

For more information about Forward Ohio, see [www.forwardohio.org](http://www.forwardohio.org).

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*The IUC was established as a voluntary educational association of Ohio’s public universities. Today, the association represents Ohio’s 14 public universities.*