



The Ohio Urban University Program

# The State's Economic Development Resource

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## Voice for cities

**Eric Fingerhut has made many sound choices for higher education. One is not the proposed axing of the Ohio Urban University Program -- editorial.**

Eric Fingerhut faced squarely the hard choices in crafting a two-year budget plan for higher education in the state. The chancellor of the Ohio Board of Regents set appropriate priorities, placing affordability above all else, the state desperately in need of maintaining access to its colleges and universities. That emphasis on curbing costs for students and their families translated into a proposed tuition freeze for a third consecutive year, the freeze continuing for a fourth year at community colleges, universities permitted a 3.5 percent increase.

The decision also meant that Fingerhut had the job of finding savings elsewhere in the higher education budget. On Tuesday, he reiterated to an Ohio House subcommittee that the process involved close examination of "each and every line item." He measured the items against the goals of the 10-year strategic plan for colleges and universities and "the relationship between the particular program and the prosperity of the state."

Again, almost all of his choices were sound, and the chancellor deserves credit for managing thoughtfully a tough process.

That said, one choice should receive the attention of lawmakers. The chancellor has proposed eliminating the Urban University Program, a joint effort of the universities of Akron and Toledo, Cleveland State, Youngstown State, Kent State, Ohio State and Wright State. The Levin College of Urban Affairs at Cleveland State University serves as the headquarters and, frankly, plays a dominant role. The proposed savings of \$5 million is small change in view of the \$54 billion state budget plan.

Advocates of the program aren't seeking to protect every dollar. A case can be made that the program should receive the same treatment as the Voinovich center at Ohio University and the Glenn school at Ohio State, these public-affairs programs looking at a roughly 50 percent reduction. Thus, require the Urban University Program to take a substantial hit, yet keep its mission alive.

Why? It may seem at times that Northeast Ohio hardly would suffer if one, two, three or more organizations dedicated to talking about economic development disappeared from the scene. The Urban University Program serves as a vehicle for the state to elevate an essential discussion, generating analyses and statistics, inviting collaboration, reinforcing the shared perspective of larger cities, the true drivers of regional economies. If the program isn't as strong as the chancellor and others would like to see, then press to improve its work.

One partner in the urban program is the respected Bliss Institute of Applied Politics at the University of Akron. It doesn't play a large role, yet its presence reinforces that the urban program deserves better.



The Ohio UUP is a program of the University System of Ohio and the Ohio General Assembly.

### For more information:

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