

The Ohio Student Education Policy Institute



Ohio Education Policy Student Institute

The Ohio College Access Network (OCAN) is the first and leading statewide coordinating body for college access programs in the nation. OCAN member college access programs across Ohio help students pursue and complete education beyond high school, with particular focus on low-income students and aspiring first generation college students. As a voice for college access, OCAN provides advocacy through a three-tiered approach by:

- (1) Educating Ohio legislators to influence public policy
- (2) Creating public awareness of available college access and success services
- (3) Building partnerships with like-minded organizations to advance a college-going culture

OCAN has fervently worked to be the voice for those students who are oftentimes not heard. Our work includes: developing the nation's first and only College Access and Economic Opportunity Caucus within the Ohio legislature; hosting annual Partners in College Access and Success Policy Breakfasts; conducting one-on-one legislative meetings; connecting legislators with programs serving their constituency; conducting the KnowHow2GO social media campaign; fostering collaborations with national college access organizations; circulating industry-related literature; and publishing monthly issues of The Collegium. Experience has taught us that it is also important that the students are given the opportunity to speak on their own behalf regarding issues that affect them.

Conceptualized over a conversation with Florida's ENLACE (ENgaging Latino, African-American, and other Communities for Education) program, OCAN's leadership visualized a student institute that culminates in a two-day education policy summit in which students debate the issues affecting their education and economic success and create an advocacy action plan to take their policy analyses and recommendations to policy makers. The goals of this student education policy institute are three-fold:

- (1) To increase engagement and participation of students in the policy making process;
- (2) To influence the education debate through student-passed policy resolutions, specifically, issues of Preparation, Access, Success, and Economic Opportunity;
- (3) To coordinate policymaking efforts between community organizations, colleges, students, and Legislators.

The institute will begin its initial work by selecting students from colleges and universities with active public policy, public affairs, civic engagement and leadership programs. Those schools in Ohio that have been identified are: The Ohio State University John Glenn School of Public Affairs, Ohio University's Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs, The University of Akron Bliss Institute, the University of Cincinnati Educational Leadership Program, and Cleveland State University's Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs. For the 2011 Ohio Education Policy Student Institute, students will be selected through a competitive application process by faculty leaders at the participating universities. These students will study, analyze, and develop policy recommendations on four critically important policy issues:

- (1) High school curriculum rigor
- (2) Financial aid and college accessibility
- (3) Persistence to degree and college retention
- (4) Economic opportunities from postsecondary completion

From February to April, the students, with guidance from faculty, staff, graduate students, legislators, and other interested entities, will be guided through the policymaking process, ultimately debating recommendations as to how these policies will enhance the quality of education for students in Ohio. On the initial day of the summit, students will convene in Columbus, Ohio, to meet their fellow Institute peers at a dinner and opening ceremony. On the second day, the teams who studied similar policy issues will collaborate to develop a set of common policy recommendations. The teams will then choose two to three representatives to present their policy issue to the entire group of students, as well as other education policy stakeholders that may attend. On the third day of the summit, students will convene at the Ohio State House for the Ohio Student Education Policy Summit in which they will discuss their issues with Ohio legislators and display their policy information in the Capitol Rotunda. This will allow legislators and stakeholders to further interact with each group. Later in the day, the students will be given the opportunity to visit key legislators' offices to discuss their policy issues as well as present their findings at committee or caucus meetings, depending on the legislative agenda for the day.

Quantitative and qualitative data will be gathered at the culmination of the conference and a complete program evaluation will be conducted.