

Building on our Legacy, Charting our Future

The Ohio State University at Newark

Strategic Plan

2025 – 2030

Introduction

Our history

Ohio State Newark, the largest of Ohio State's regional campuses, has proudly served students and the community since 1957. Classes began at the old Newark High School, but the community's dedication and vision led to the purchase of 155 acres and over \$1 million in funding, culminating in the campus opening at its current location in 1968.

Today, Ohio State Newark offers a full-service campus experience, providing students with open access to higher education in alignment with the university's land-grant mission. The campus welcomes students seeking a smaller learning environment or a pathway to the Columbus campus.

Ohio State Newark is also home to the Newark Earthworks Center, the state's only academic research center focused on Ohio's ancient earthworks. In partnership with The Works: Ohio Center for History, Arts & Technology, the campus operates the SciDome planetarium in downtown Newark.

Trends shaping our strategies

Ohio State Newark operates within a complex and evolving external environment shaped by demographic, economic and societal trends. A significant challenge is the "demographic cliff," a sharp decline in the number of high school graduates caused by lower birth rates over the past two decades, which reduces the pool of traditionally aged college students. In central Ohio, the unique dynamics of rapid regional growth create both opportunities and competition as industries attract new residents, but not all are inclined toward higher education.

Compounding these challenges is a widespread decline in public confidence in the value of a college degree, with increasing scrutiny on the cost of education and its return on investment. Many students face financial instability which can make balancing academic and personal responsibilities difficult. Meanwhile, an increasingly complex legislative environment influences funding, operational priorities and institutional autonomy.

Current status of our campus

Ohio State Newark merges the advantages of a small campus with the extensive resources of a major university. Located in Newark, Ohio, the campus is recognized for its supportive environment, where students receive personalized attention from dedicated faculty and staff. The

well-maintained grounds and modern facilities provide an ideal setting for academic pursuits and relaxation. Its proximity to Columbus offers the benefits of a smaller campus while granting access to the vibrant city life and opportunities of a major metropolitan area.

Ohio State Newark offers the flexibility for students to complete all four years in select majors or to begin any of Ohio State's 200+ majors. The campus's average class size is 25, making the learning experience more engaging and personalized. While the composition of tenure-track faculty has expertise in a variety of liberal arts disciplines, student interest has grown in fields such as engineering, health sciences and business, leading to a mismatch between faculty specializations and the programs students are pursuing.

Faculty and staff are deeply committed to student success, with professors serving as both experts in their fields and mentors who take a genuine interest in their students' well-being. Ohio State offers competitive benefits, but compensation disparities and staff turnover are concerns.

Comprehensive support services, from advising and tutoring to accessibility resources, help students navigate their academic journeys. These student success measures are particularly valuable for student populations including first-generation, Pell-eligible, non-traditional, and those balancing work and family commitments.

Ohio State Newark offers affordable, high-quality education at a fraction of the cost of many other institutions, ensuring that higher education is accessible to a broad range of students. The student body is diverse, with 42% of students identifying as minorities. Eighty-two percent of enrolled students attend full-time, and approximately 310 students reside on campus, benefiting from a close-knit community and convenient access to campus resources. However, there is a critical need for more residential housing and improved transportation options for students.

The campus's positive presence in Newark underscores its role as a vital community asset, bolstered by strong community support that enhances scholarships and capital campaigns. Recent renovations and new projects have significantly improved campus facilities. However, challenges such as deferred maintenance and rising costs remain.

The campus has a balanced budget due to enrollment growth and controlled spending; however, financial pressures remain due to inflation and volatility in state funding. Sufficient reserves are available for future initiatives and deferred maintenance, but careful management is needed.

Ohio State Newark shares its campus with Central Ohio Technical College (COTC), and the two institutions partner and share facilities, administrative staff and student support services, resulting in substantial cost savings and operational efficiencies.

The Ohio State brand adds significant value to the Newark campus, with students benefiting from the prestige and recognition associated with the university. Ohio State Newark benefits from the centralized services provided by key departments on the Columbus campus, such as strategic enrollment management, technology and digital innovation, human resources, and government relations. We are committed to collaborating with these partners to maximize the advantages and efficiencies for our campus. This connection to the broader OSU system enhances the opportunities available to students and bolsters the campus's commitment to excellence.

By the numbers

STUDENTS – 2,543

Full-time – 82%; Part-time – 18%

Students living on campus – 310

Student body diversity – 42%

FACULTY AND STAFF

Tenured/tenure-track – 46

Clinical – 5

Associated – 84

Shared staff (with COTC) – 79

Non-shared staff – 75

PHILANTHROPY

For the 2024-2025 academic year, nearly \$1.6 million in scholarships was awarded to 352 students.

Unique donors in 2024 – 655

Donors who have committed an estate gift - 23

The numbers above are correct as of December 2024

Prior Plan

As we embark on our new strategic plan, it is essential to recognize and appreciate the significant progress and achievements made under the "On Seas of Care" strategic plan, which guided our efforts from 2018 to 2025. This plan focused on improving student success, enhancing academic programming, increasing access and affordability, and strengthening our commitment to social justice. The dedication and hard work of our faculty, staff and students have led to remarkable advancements in these areas, setting a strong foundation for our future endeavors.

The strategic initiatives implemented over the past seven years have yielded notable improvements in key performance indicators (KPIs) related to student success.

- The first-to-second-year retention rate increased from a baseline of 68% in 2018 to 74% in 2024, bringing us within 1% of our 2025 goal of 75%.
- The four-year graduation rate also improved, rising from 17% in 2018 to 23% in 2024, although further efforts are needed to reach our 2025 target of 30%.
- Efforts to close the retention rate gap for underrepresented students have been fruitful, with the gap decreasing from 16% in 2018 to 12% in 2024.

Although we made great progress in student success as noted above, we lost ground in one area. The gap in graduation rates for underrepresented students has increased from 12% in 2018 to 14% in 2024, indicating a need for more targeted interventions.

Highlights of Accomplishments:

- Successfully completed a \$27M renovation of Founders Hall and reopened the newly renovated facility as Louella Hodges Reese Hall.
- Completed the \$30M construction of the John and Mary Alford Center for Science and Technology.
- Launched the Bachelor of Science in Engineering Technology (BSET) program with strong initial enrollment and partnerships with local manufacturers. Added second-year courses in sciences and engineering to support students changing to the Columbus campus.
- Increased financial support for students to include implementing first-semester eligibility for the Buckeye Opportunity Grant and raising more than \$19M in donor support to enhance student success.
- Increased the use of high-quality Open Educational Resources (OERs) to reduce the cost of attendance.
- Provided targeted programs to support underrepresented student populations.
- Partnered with local transit to pilot a bus line, improving transportation options for students.

These accomplishments reflect our collective commitment to fostering an inclusive, supportive and academically rigorous environment. As we move forward, we will build on these successes to further enhance the educational experience and outcomes for all students.

Planning Process

Shortly after arriving on campus on August 1, 2024, Dr. Matt Smith initiated the strategic planning process by engaging with a broad group of constituents to learn about Ohio State Newark. He quickly recognized the campus's distinctive characteristics, such as its commitment to student success, its efficient cost-shared relationship with COTC, and its strong support from Newark, Licking County, and the greater region. Recognizing the many positive aspects of our campus, Dr. Smith emphasized that our work would focus on strengthening our legacy rather than creating something entirely new.

The development of the Ohio State Newark strategic plan utilized the resources and expertise of a wide range of stakeholders, including faculty, staff, administrators, students, business and educational representatives, alumni, community partners and other stakeholders. An ad hoc planning team was established, consisting of the Dean's Council members and additional faculty, totaling 23 members representing all areas of the campus. Foundational to the planning process was a comprehensive constituent survey and an environmental assessment of internal and external issues, trends and factors likely to impact the campus. Over 700 responses were received from the constituent survey, providing valuable insights that played a foundational role in identifying priorities and guiding decisions. Additionally, Dr. Smith conducted a focus group with current students to hear their thoughts directly.

Armed with input from these efforts, the planning team gathered during the Fall 2024 and Spring 2025 semesters for a series of half-day planning sessions. Faculty and staff from across the campus were kept aware of the work and provided opportunities to give input. The process for arriving at this strategic plan was intentionally iterative, ensuring that feedback was continuously incorporated to refine and enhance the plan.

The collaborative and inclusive approach to developing the strategic plan has ensured that it reflects the diverse perspectives and needs of our campus community. As we move forward, this plan will serve as a roadmap to guide our efforts in strengthening our legacy and achieving our vision for the future. We are excited about the opportunities ahead and are committed to working together to realize our shared goals.

Mission, Vision and Values

Mission

The Newark campus furthers The Ohio State University's land-grant mission by providing access to higher education, preparing citizen leaders, conducting research and engaging with its communities.

Vision

To be a leader in regional higher education, where students are empowered to achieve their academic and professional goals with the combined support of the faculty, staff and community.

Values

Ohio State Newark aligns with and upholds the values established by the university.

Through Lines

Consistent themes or principles emphasizing core, enduring priorities that underpin all initiatives and guide decision making.

- **Student Success.** Maintaining a steadfast focus on students and the successful completion of their academic goals.
- **Sustainability.** Ensuring the long-term viability of the campus through environmentally responsible practices, resource conservation and strategic planning that meets the needs of the present without compromising future generations.
- **Fiscal Responsibility.** Committing to sound financial management practices to ensure the effective use of resources and aligning budget decisions with strategic priorities.
- **Belonging and Inclusion.** Fostering a campus environment where all students, faculty and staff feel seen, heard and valued.
- **Community Engagement.** Strengthening relationships with local communities, employers and partners to enhance educational access, workforce development and regional impact.
- **Innovation and Adaptability.** Continuously improving institutional processes and systems that support the campus enterprise and operate at the highest levels of effectiveness and efficiency.
- **Accountability and Transparency.** Holding ourselves accountable to the campus community and stakeholders by sharing progress, decisions and outcomes openly and honestly.
- **Global and Cultural Awareness.** Preparing students to succeed in an interconnected world by integrating global and cultural perspectives into the curriculum and campus life.

Goals and Initiatives

Goal #1: Transformative Academic Excellence.

Delivering high-quality, affordable and accessible education that empowers students to meet future challenges with confidence and competence.

Initiatives:

- Deliver rigorous, robust and relevant academic programs as the foundation of the Buckeye Experience, which will position graduates for lifelong professional success while preparing them to lead purposeful lives and make significant contributions to society.
- Provide comprehensive, high-quality career development programming that complements students' academic experiences and supports successful career entry and lifelong professional growth.
- Recognize the value of research by increasing student participation in faculty-led research to strengthen learning and career readiness.
- Develop a balanced faculty composition to capitalize upon individual faculty talents and strengths and empower faculty to maximize their contributions to the campus's mission.

Goal #2: The Buckeye Student Experience.

Offering an authentic Ohio State experience through robust support services and a vibrant campus life, fostering student success both academically and personally.

Initiatives:

- Address the significant need for additional on-campus student housing.
- Ensure proactive and consistent academic advising for all students to promote academic progress, retention and achievement.
- Provide an extensive array of high-quality student success services and programs that are signature contributors to the Buckeye Experience.
- Continue to build and enhance a co-curricular program that fosters student engagement, community building and personal growth by expanding opportunities in student leadership, intramural sports and campus activities, enriching student development and strengthening campus life.

Goal #3: Responsible Resource Stewardship.

Enhancing our effectiveness and efficiency through prudent and forward-thinking stewardship of our resources.

Initiatives:

- Maintain Ohio State Newark as a competitively affordable campus.
- Provide students with high-quality facilities that encourage connections to campus and help define an overarching Ohio State Experience.
- Expand and diversify our donor base by cultivating and engaging the next generation of donors through personalized outreach, meaningful engagement opportunities, and innovative giving strategies that foster long-term relationships and support for the campus mission.
- Increase marketing efforts to promote the campus, ensuring greater visibility and engagement with prospective students, families and the broader community.

Goal #4: Strategic Collaborations and Partnerships.

Strengthening our community support and building strong, dynamic relationships with local organizations, including COTC, to enrich the educational experience and expand opportunities for our students.

Initiatives:

- Enhance collaboration with central Ohio State University offices, including the Alumni Association, Business and Finance, Dining Services, Government Affairs, Human Resources, Marketing and Public Relations, the Office of Technology and Digital Innovation, and Strategic Enrollment Management, to advance initiatives that address campus priorities such as equitable funding, sustainable enrollment growth, pay equity, advocacy for higher education, dining options and technology innovation.
- Leverage our relationships with the Newark Earthworks, the SciDome, and Dawes Arboretum, among others, to provide greater co-curricular experiences for our students.
- Deepen Ohio State Newark's partnership with COTC to further collaboration and create new academic pathway programs.
- Capitalize on existing and develop new partnerships with public and private entities, including our peer institutions in Lima, Mansfield, and Marion, to create opportunities for

students to engage in experiences that support their academic outcomes and career success.

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