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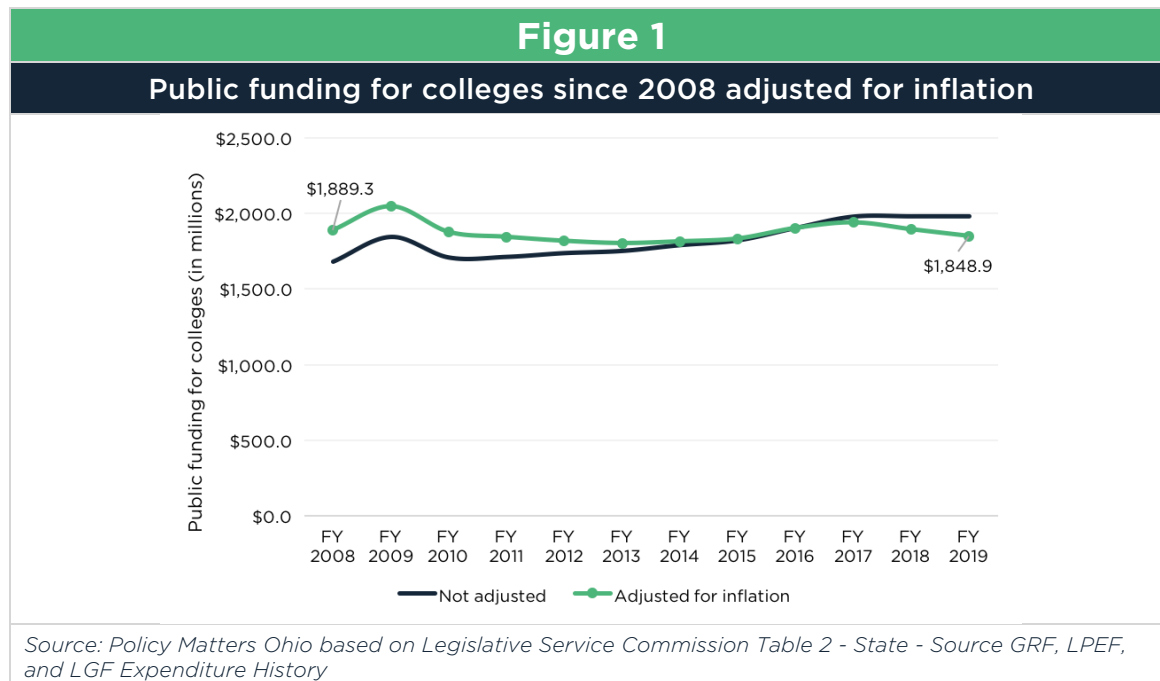
BUDGET BITE: Public Higher Education
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Post-secondary education prepares students to meet future challenges and to be productive members of society. In the 2018-2019 state budget, Ohio policymakers continue to starve public colleges and universities. State Share of Instruction (SSI), the main state funding for public colleges, is practically flat funded. SSI funding is directly tied to the cost of tuition, which means when funding is down tuition is up. Many employers say that workers should get more education, yet lawmakers are making it harder for Ohioans to do so.

Policy makers increased funding for Ohio’s 14 public universities, 24 regional branch campuses, and 23 community colleges [by only 2 percent from the 2016-17 budget to the 2018-19 budget](#). Annual increases are miniscule. Funding was increased .11 percent from 2017 to 2018 (the following years are fiscal years). There is no increase from 2018 to 2019.

Funding for public colleges is diminishing overtime

Since the recession, funding for public colleges increased slightly but did not keep pace with inflation. Subpar funding for colleges means less money for classes and educational supports that help people graduate in on time and with less debt. An analysis by the Center on budget and Policy Priorities found from 2008 to 2017, adjusted for inflation [Ohio spent \\$1,073 less, or 15.2 percent](#), per college student. Policy makers slashed funding for higher education after the recession. Instead of investing in the future by supporting higher education, the state cut taxes for the wealthy and corporations.



When they lose state funding, colleges shift costs to students. For fiscal year 2017, students paid an [average tuition of \\$9,745 at main campuses](#), \$5,787 at branch campuses and \$4,224 at community colleges, all of which were higher than the [national average](#). The average cost of room and board at main campuses is \$10,470.

This budget also [freezes undergraduate tuition](#) for public universities and regional campuses at the 2017 level for 2018 and 2019. Tuition freezes temporarily keep costs lower for students but don't address why the costs are so high: reduced state funding for public colleges. Tuition freezes coupled with flat funding means public universities will struggle to do more with less.

Community and technical colleges can increase tuition up to \$10 per credit hour in 2019. Colleges that implement tuition guarantees, a set tuition for incoming freshmen guaranteed for four years, can increase tuition by 6 percent.

The Inter-University Council of Ohio, an association of public universities, requested lawmakers increase SSI funding by [4.5 percent, or \\$180 million a year, in the two-year budget](#). Instead, lawmakers increased it by .11 percent, or \$2 million over the budget period — well below what Ohio universities need to maintain current quality and services. Increased funding for SSI goes directly to public colleges and would make them more affordable for all students. Unlike SSI, the Ohio College Opportunity Grant, Ohio's only need-based grant, goes to low-income students to help pay for college. The increase in OCOG funding was greater than SSI but less than what the Inter-University Council of Ohio requested.

College is unaffordable

High tuition and poorly funded need-based aid contribute to Ohio ranking 45th in college affordability. The Institute for Research on Higher Education found on average the lowest income families (\$30,000 or less) would need to spend 81 percent of their income for one year of the net price of a public university (tuition, fees, room and board minus financial aid); and 38 percent for community college. Families with incomes between 48,000 and \$75,000 would spend 31 and 15 percent, respectively. As a result, 64 percent of Ohio's class of 2016 with bachelor's degrees has student debt, which [averages \\$30,351](#).

Recommendations

Ohio aims to have [65 percent college attainment by 2025](#), but the state's insufficient funding for higher education does not align with this goal. High tuition deters students from college and makes it difficult to complete, especially for low-income students. The state can raise the revenue to invest in higher education by reversing tax cuts for the wealthiest and closing unproductive tax loopholes. At a minimum, state policymakers should consider funding higher education at \$180 million more for 2018 and 2019. Higher education attainment greatly benefits students and our communities, so the state should make funding for public colleges and universities a priority.