Financial-aid cuts lock out Ohio students
Changes to need-based aid close doors for students at two-year colleges

Ohio has slashed aid for college students by a third over the past 10 years. As a result, it now invests less in need-based aid per full-time undergraduate than any Midwestern state and ranks 36th nationally, according to a new report by Policy Matters Ohio.

Ohio is one of only seven states that have reduced need-based aid over the past decade, and one of only four that cut total grant aid awarded. In addition to deep cuts, in 2009 the state changed how it awards aid from the Ohio College Opportunity Grant, eliminating assistance for students at two-year public institutions.

“The students hit hardest attend community colleges and branch campuses,” said Hannah Halbert, workforce researcher at Policy Matters. “These schools are critical workforce training partners – eliminating need-based aid for these students undermines our state’s ability to maintain a smart and adaptable workforce.”

Need-based aid is particularly important to students at community colleges and branch institutions because they are often older, independent, first-generation, and responsible for their own expenses. Because they have to cover household expenses and things like books, transportation and childcare, aid that covers only tuition can make it tough for these students to stay in school long enough to get a degree.

“Ohio is bucking the national trend of investment in education and training,” said Halbert. “We can afford to reform our financial aid system; we can’t afford not to.”

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*Policy Matters Ohio is a nonprofit, nonpartisan state policy research institute with offices in Cleveland and Columbus.*