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Still Smarting from the Recession

State support for higher education awaits recovery, shortchanging students and our economy

Recent increases in state support of higher education are not enough to restore Ohio to pre-recession levels of funding. State support for higher education is down more than 18 percent from 2008 levels, a loss of nearly \$480 million in inflation-adjusted dollars. That loss translates into a decrease of \$1,570 per student, according to a new report from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

The report also finds that average tuition at Ohio's public, four-year schools increased about 4.5 percent since 2008. This gives the state the third-lowest increase in the nation since that time. Ohio ranks among the best in the nation in terms of slowing increases in tuition, but higher education in the state was already pricey. Tuition and fees at Ohio's two-year public institutions are the 12th highest in the nation. The state is the 16th most expensive state for four-year public colleges and universities.

"Sticker-shock keeps too many low-income students and workers looking to up-skill from enrolling in post-secondary programs," said Hannah Halbert, researcher with Policy Matters Ohio. "State support of public colleges and universities is the key to keeping costs down."

In response to the drop in tax revenue from the 2008 recession, Ohio dramatically cut spending instead of taking a more measured approach that would have included increases in tax revenue. The state slashed funding to higher education and eliminated state funded, need-based aid to students at community colleges and branch campuses. Ohio has restored some of this funding and the pending budget bill would bring need-based aid back to summer students at the two-year institutions, but we have not fully recovered.

"States that are cutting taxes rather than investing in their colleges and universities are making the wrong choice," said Michael Mitchell, policy analyst at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and author of the report. "States should focus on providing access to quality higher education that will prepare students to become the highly-skilled workers that tomorrow's economy will demand."

The Center's full report can be found [here](#).

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