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Contacts: Jamie Abel, Assistant Director of Communications
Office: 614-644-1988, cell: 614-3711-9454, email: jabel@regents.state.oh.us
Bret Crow, Assistant Director of Communications
Office: 614-752-9480, cell: 614-783-8477, email: bcrow@regents.state.oh.us

Statewide conference to focus on student learning, accountability

COLUMBUS, Ohio – A conference of higher education officials will examine stakeholder demands for improved student learning and the ways in which Ohio's colleges and universities are responding.

The Conference on Higher Learning Accountability and Performance in Higher Education will focus on issues such as the importance of accountability, the development of institutional student success plans and the use of “e-portfolios” at and among campuses.

“More and more Ohio students and policymakers are demanding accountability for learning experiences in higher education,” said Garrison Walters, interim chancellor for the Ohio Board of Regents. “This conference culminates a year of hard work on these issues, but is just a first step in what promises to be a nationally important initiative.”

The conference will begin Thursday evening with remarks from Dr. Steven Kopp, president of Marshall University, who chaired an Ohio Board of Regents Planning Committee on Accountability and Productivity during the 2005-06 academic year. Then, Jon Husted, speaker of the Ohio House of Representatives, will share legislative perspectives on higher education accountability. After dinner, Nancy Zimpher, president of the University of Cincinnati, will provide an institutional perspective on the same topic.

On Friday, a panel of college and university presidents will examine “Why Accountability is Important for Higher Education and Why Standardized Tests are Not the Right Answer.” Later panels will discuss how campuses are responding to the challenge of accountability, the use of e-portfolios, making student success plans visible, assessment of learning and skills, budget challenges to the process and next steps for the initiative.

The Planning Committee on Accountability and Productivity – comprised of administrators and faculty from Ohio's two- and four-year institutions of higher education and Regents staff – discussed the different ways in which Ohio's colleges and universities could improve student learning. The centerpiece of the Planning Committee's work is a statewide Student Success Plan, which builds upon elements that already exist in many of Ohio's higher education institutions.

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Each institution will be responsible for developing an institutional Student Success Plan, which will be posted online so that citizens and prospective students can have instant access to the academic expectations and opportunities available at each campus in the state.

The development of these plans throughout the state should result in the collaboration of colleges and universities to define the outcomes and develop assessments that benefit a student's ability to transfer academic credit and enhance the academic connections between high school and college.

This fall, those individuals who attend the June conference will lead regional conferences that will include each of Ohio's higher education institutions, explaining the purpose and development of the statewide plan. Further, the regional meetings will focus on documenting and/or creating the institutional student success plans.

For more information on the conference, visit the Regents website at: www.regents.state.oh.us/accountability.

The Ohio Board of Regents is the coordinating body for higher education in the state. Created in 1963 by the General Assembly, the 11-member public board has a direct, non-governing relationship with all of Ohio's colleges and universities.

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