

Panel Cooperation in Larger Networks

University System of Ohio

Summary of Remarks

Eric D. Fingerhut, former Chancellor, Ohio Board of Regents

As Chancellor of the Ohio Board of Regents from 2007-2011, I led an effort to build greater cooperation among the 14 public universities and 23 community colleges in the State of Ohio. Prior to my tenure, the institutions had largely operated independently, with cooperative efforts between them arising as the result of coincidental relationships between faculty, administrators or trustees. During my tenure, we created the University System of Ohio as the organizing principle, with common goals, strategies and metrics of performance. Being fortunate to have many existing state university systems in the United States to study, we sought to forge a middle ground between highly centralized and highly decentralized systems. We recognized that most of the productive work would occur on the campuses, but that the central authority could set the tone, direction and build a sense of common purpose and responsibility to the state.

The main impetus for our action was the need to make Ohio more competitive in the global economy. Where once industrial giants created jobs by the thousands in Ohio without competition from other states or countries, today Ohio competes for every factory, every research center, every headquarters and every back office operations center with dozens of other states and regions in the United States and globally. The higher education resources needed to compete for business investment on a global scale are beyond the reach of any one of our universities, but within the reach of a collective effort.

Among the key strategies we pursued as part of the initial Strategic Plan for the University System of Ohio were the following:

- **Centers of Excellence:** Each university was asked to identify the academic and research areas in which they had the greatest chance of providing national and global leadership within four major industry categories – Transportation/Aerospace, Agriculture, Health/ Medicine, and Energy/Environment. These Centers of Excellence were approved by each university's governing bodies and the Chancellor's Office. Once designated, the Centers of Excellence were required to work together across universities on grants and industrial projects and meet together regularly under the auspices of the Chancellor's Office. To the greatest extent possible, the Chancellor was committed to distributing research funding according to the Centers of Excellence, and the institutions were required to invest in their centers.
- **Standard Technology Transfer Agreement Terms:** The Chancellor's Office led the effort to develop a standard set of technology transfer terms that all University System of Ohio institutions would offer to business partners. This allowed large companies like P&G to know what the terms would be in advance of working

with our schools, and also save time and money in negotiating separate agreements each time a new research and commercialization opportunity arises.

- **Industry/University System Workforce Planning:** The Chancellor's Office convened industries with a statewide presence and planned together with them and the institutions for the pipeline of students they would need in various disciplines and locations to allow the industries to grow in the state.
- **System-wide Administrative Efficiencies:** The University System of Ohio allowed for accelerated operational efficiencies in many areas, particularly in IT. Funds saved could be reinvested in academic programs. Efficiency targets were set by the Chancellor's Office and efficiency reports were required and reviewed.