



For Immediate Release

November 14, 2019

**OHIO COMMUNITY COLLEGES JOIN TO SHED THE OUTDATED STIGMA OF
ATTENDING A TWO-YEAR SCHOOL**

COLUMBUS, OH – Students and alumni of Ohio’s community colleges want the world to know they’re proud of their education and tired of the mistaken notion that their schools don’t measure up to four-year institutions.

So they’re spreading the message through a short, peppy video that’s making the rounds of social media as part of the #EndCCStigma campaign started by Owens Community College President Steve Robinson.

“We need to break away from a bunch of outdated assumptions about community colleges,” says Robinson, who’s been leading the effort since early this year and has the support of fellow Ohio community college presidents. His motto: “We’re not going to change our name; we’re going to change your mind.”

The new video features students, staff and alumni from most of Ohio’s 23 community colleges explaining how their school has given them the tools to succeed and why they want to #EndCCStigma.

“We wanted to show that it’s not just the presidents trying to end the stigma, but the students themselves,” said Robinson.

For years, community colleges were thought of as a college of last resort – the place where students went who couldn’t get into four-year schools, Robinson said. That’s an idea that has stuck in people’s minds even as studies and surveys debunked it. A recent national study by the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, for example, found that students who attended a community college before transferring to a four-year university were more likely to graduate than those who started at a four-year campus directly from high school.

“It’s difficult to understand how this misperception has lasted so long, given the fact that so many of today’s college graduates started out their higher-education journey on a community college campus,” says Jack Hershey, president and CEO of the Ohio Association of Community Colleges.

Community colleges today work hand-in-hand with universities to allow students to attend community college first and then transfer to a four-year school to finish their degrees. More than 20,000 Ohio students are taking advantage of those options each year, reducing their college debt at a time when a \$1.5 trillion student-loan crisis is burdening the country.

Hershey says community colleges are working harder than ever to make sure students succeed, helped by a performance-based funding formula for state support of higher education put in place several years ago by the Ohio General Assembly. The system rewards graduation and completion rather than student enrollment and has resulted in an 8.5 percent increase in the number of community college students earning credentials as well as a 22.5 percent increase in students earning one-year certificates.

So far the new video has been shared via YouTube on Twitter and Facebook. Ohio community colleges have been asked to share it and incorporate it into their own promotional efforts. Other #EndCCStigma efforts have included an ongoing podcast by Robinson, T-shirts and pins with the slogan and a website, EndCCStigma.org.

The new video can be viewed at www.endccstigma.org.

The OACC represents the presidents and trustees of the state's 23 public two-year institutions that work to advance community colleges through policy advocacy and professional development. For more information, visit www.OhioCommunityColleges.Org

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