

Ashland County Higher Education Sector

Why Is This Important?

Colleges, universities and community colleges in Ohio continue to find new ways to use the Internet to improve everyday activities. Websites are an important source of information about the institution, from providing news and information concerning campus activities to offering online registration for classes. Colleges and universities often implement the use of school websites to attract prospective students, remain connected to alumni and allow for online donations.

The most common application of high-speed Internet on college and university campuses, however, is typically not actually used on-campus. Most colleges and universities offer online classes and academic programs to better equip students with the opportunity to learn. The Ohio Learning Network OLN created by the Board of Regents in 1999, serves campuses by promoting the use of technology to enhance teaching and learning in the classroom and online. The Ohio University Blackboard eEducation platform is one example. By bringing the classroom to the students, participants from every walk of life in the state are able to participate in higher education classes. However, it is necessary to have high-speed Internet to participate successfully in online classes. High-speed Internet is crucial to supporting the capabilities and the possibilities of higher education in Ohio.

Ashland County Higher Education

- Ashland University, www.ashland.edu
- OSU Extension, www.ashland.osu.edu
- Ohio State University, www.osu.edu
- Ohio Board of Regents, regents.ohio.gov
- Ohio Higher Education Facility Commission, ohefc.ohio.gov
- Ohio Learning Network, www.olin.org
- Ohio Continuing Higher Education Association OCHEA, www.ochea.org

Approximately 47% of Ashland County residents have a high school degree, but only 16% have a bachelor's degree or higher. This is lower than the state average of 24.1%.

Where Are We Today?

Ashland County residents use the Internet to assist with education needs, but at the same or at a higher rate than the state average. The following is how Ashland residents who have the Internet at home are using the Internet in education today:

- 75% of residents use a search engine (73% statewide average)
- 55% of residents research for schoolwork (55% statewide)
- 45% of residents contact teachers for self or others (34% statewide)
- 19% of residents take online courses (19% statewide)

Websites are an important source of information, from providing news and information about campus activities to offering online registration. Colleges and universities in Ohio often use school websites to attract prospective students, remain connected to alumni and allow for online donations. The Internet also allows students in Ohio to obtain their degree without ever having visited a college campus. Students can receive degrees from the comfort of their own home, allowing them to have the flexibility to maintain jobs and raise a family.

Ashland University

www.ashland.edu

Ohio State University Extension-Ashland

www.ashland.osu.edu

Higher education provides considerable value to individuals, to the economies where educated individuals live and work and to society in general. Economies that have experienced substantial investment in either private or public institutions of higher learning have realized considerable growth and prosperity.

Higher education influences the well-being of local economies in three ways. First, the direct expenditures by the institutions, their employees and students impact the local economy. This spending multiplies through the local economy until the monies are used to purchase goods and services from outside the local area.

Second, higher education provides financial and non-financial benefits to the individual who pursues an advanced education and to society in general. The average earnings of individuals are closely related to their educational attainment. In particular, those with a bachelor's degree earn substantially more than those with

some college education. Relative to those with a bachelor's degree, a postgraduate degree provides nearly as large a boost in earnings. Even for those workers who do not possess much educational attainment, the average wage is higher in communities with a substantial proportion of highly educated workers. Further, communities with a high level of educational attainment realize lower crime rates.

Third, higher education institutions are increasingly focused on knowledge creation. Thus, universities are sources of key research and development innovations that are beneficial to society and conducive to economic growth.

The Ohio Board of Regents, regents.ohio.gov, a nine-member advisory board to the Chancellor with two ex-officio representatives from the State Legislature, was created in 1963 by the General Assembly. Currently, Eric D. Fingerhut serves as Chancellor. The board's mission is to raise the education level of Ohio's population. A ten year strategic plan was released in 2008 to raise the educational attainment of our state each year, and to close the gap between Ohio and competitor states and nations. To accomplish this goal the primary components are to graduate and retain more Ohio students by:

1. Increasing seamless access to affordable, quality higher education for all Ohioans.
2. Identifying and encouraging academic programs of distinction and excellence.
3. Eliminating unnecessary duplication in programs, services and facilities.
4. Elevating the scientific and technical competence of all of Ohio's citizens to meet the needs of the 21st century economy and enhance their quality of life.
5. Focusing and expanding research and workforce development to create economic opportunities and assure the success of the Third Frontier program and other key initiatives.

The higher education sector in Ashland County understands the value of technology. Ohio's higher education institutions continue to look for expanded distance learning opportunities and try to find ways for students to continue their education on and off campus, thereby increasing the number of degree-holding Ohio residents.

At Ashland University, the technology infrastructure is very comprehensive with many faculty using the learning management system, web conferencing, online video, etc.

- 90%+ of students have a wireless phone and 80%+ have a computer.

- The deans of the university's Information Systems Group are very strong and strategic planning is a priority.
- Issues that need to be addressed in order for online learning to be fully effective include faculty support for development, extended hours for help desk services and additional funding for increased licensing costs.
- There has been a significant increase in the demand for online courses.

Higher Education Sector Assessment Overview			
Category	Current Assessment	Future Vision	Additional Comments
Networked Places	4	5	More than 90% of students have phones. More than 80% bring a computer.
Applications & Services	4	5	
Leadership	4	5	

The Ashland County eCommunity Leadership Team found that the higher education sector is already using some technology to its advantage and identified opportunities for additional technology applications within the higher education community.

- **Networked Places** – In the category of Networked Places, Ashland County’s higher education sector is currently at stage 4 on a 0 to 5 scale. Some classrooms have been remodeled to include network connections and power outlets at every seat. Many students bring laptop computers or other network-enabled devices to class. Some classrooms have video equipment for recording lectures.
- **Applications & Services** – In the category of technology Applications & Services, the higher education sector is currently at stage 4 on a 0 to 5 scale. Most of the faculty are trained to use the Internet for instruction. Most classes use digital content and/or web-based content for instruction. Some undergraduate students take distance learning classes for specialized subjects and graduate-level research.
- **Leadership** – In terms of technology Leadership within the higher education community, Ashland County is currently at stage 4 on a 0 to 5 scale. Higher education and local businesses are working

together to raise the skill level of the current workforce. Community colleges are expanding their capacity by using distance learning technologies to reduce the need for classroom time. Some colleges and universities are developing online classes to market to students in other parts of the country and the world.

Where Do We Need To Be?

The Ashland County eCommunity Leadership Team sees great potential for the use of technology and understands the need for increased use of new technologies in the higher education sector. The goal set by the leadership team includes reaching stage 5 on a scale of 0 to 5 on all categories including: networked places, applications & services and leadership. The team's vision includes:

- Ashland University has a new website using full web 2.0 applications.
- Sharepoint and “cloud computing” is being utilized to drive collaboration, document sharing, workflow and to reduce costs.
- Document imaging management is in place.
- Room schedule management, part of emergency preparedness, is in place.
- Higher education and local businesses are working together to raise the skill level of the current workforce.

How Do We Get There?

Project Ideas

- Complete web revamp and move to 2.0 applications.
- Develop support infrastructure for distance learning, including licensing, extended help desk hours and content development.
- Create network redundancy and emergency preparedness.
- Establish stable budgeting, training and succession planning.
- Take steps to expand community involvement and develop relationships with community leaders.

Other Potential Projects

- Encourage faculty to web-enhance classes.
- Expand Internet use for administration functions.
- Provide continuous training to all educators and staff on technology usage and applications.

The eCommunity Leaders within the Higher Education sector include:

Curtis White, Ashland University

Mark Ushes, Ashland University

In working toward the implementation of the sector-specific goals, Connect Ohio will recommend specific additional participants be brought into the process, who may include technology providers, subject matter experts, other community organizations, funding sources, government agencies, and the resources of agencies and commercial providers of products and services to the higher education sector.

Dave Davidson, Northeast State Operations Manager for Connect Ohio will continue to work with the sector leaders to advance selected projects toward their completion. By leveraging Connect Ohio's project management process, its research information, and its partners, projects will be defined, developed, and reviewed to help assure that the local teams are equipped to execute them. Connect Ohio will assist in the identification of funding sources, introducing technical resources, and helping to define the measurable goals and timelines that will ensure that the projects are actionable, measurable, and valuable.