

## Belmont 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.

#### Belmont County Higher Education

- Belmont Technical College, [www.btc.edu](http://www.btc.edu)
- Ohio University-Eastern, [www.eastern.ohiou.edu](http://www.eastern.ohiou.edu)
- Belmont County OSU Extension, [www.belmont.osu.edu](http://www.belmont.osu.edu)
- Ohio Board of Regents, [regents.ohio.gov](http://regents.ohio.gov)
- Ohio Higher Education Facility Commission, [ohefc.ohio.gov](http://ohefc.ohio.gov)
- Ohio Learning Network, [www.olin.org](http://www.olin.org)
- Ohio Continuing Higher Education Association OCHEA, [www.ocha.org](http://www.ocha.org)

Approximately 46.3% of Belmont County residents have a high school degree, but only 11.2% have a bachelor's degree or higher. This is lower than the state average of 24.1%.

## Where Are We Today?

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

- 59% of residents use a search engine (73% statewide average)
- 36% of residents research for schoolwork (55% statewide)
- 22% of residents contact teachers for self or others (34% statewide)
- 16% 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.

Belmont Technical College

[www.btc.edu](http://www.btc.edu)

Ohio University-Eastern

[www.eastern.ohiou.edu](http://www.eastern.ohiou.edu)

Franciscan University

[www.franciscan.edu](http://www.franciscan.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](http://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 Belmont 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.

There has been a significant increase in the demand for online courses and several hybrid classes are being developed and implemented using a combination of both in-class and online work. The popularity of these

courses is increasing as more students need access to high-speed Internet. Not having this access at home causes the non-resident student to travel to the campus or to seek out a local hot spot to meet the course requirements.

Higher Education Sector Assessment Overview			
Category	Current Assessment	Future Vision	Additional Comments
Networked Places	4	5	
Applications & Services	3+	5	
Leadership	3+	4+	

The Belmont 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, Belmont 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 3 on a 0 to 5 scale. Many of the faculty are trained to use the Internet for instruction. Many classes use digital content and/or web-based content for instruction. Students use chat rooms to discuss lessons and ask questions of instructors outside of class hours. Online registration, catalogs and payment are available.
- **Leadership** – In terms of technology Leadership within the higher education community, Belmont County is currently at stage 3 on a 0 to 5 scale. Specialized courses have been developed to cater to area businesses seeking to improve the skills of workers. Some colleges and universities have or are developing online classes to provide greater convenience for students and to increase student enrollment. Faculty training on new technology is priority.

## Where Do We Need To Be?

The Belmont 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 team has set goals to move networked places from stage 4 to stage 5, applications & services from stage 3 to stage 5, and leadership from stage 3 to stage 4, all on a 0 to 5 scale. The team's vision includes:

- Many classrooms have been remodeled to include network connections and power outlets at every seat. Most students bring laptop computers or other network-enabled devices to class. Many classrooms have video equipment for recording lectures.
- Many undergraduate students take distance learning classes for specialized subjects and graduate-level research. All aspects of higher education are available through the network including instruction and administration.
- 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.

## How Do We Get There?

### Project Ideas

- Think of scholarship and academic creation as an engine of economic development, e.g., the commercialization of research and the licensing of intellectual property as a way to create new jobs, new businesses, and new institutions.
- Create eCommunities.
- Policy research for universal access funding.
- Establish more opportunity for distance learning.
- Technical outreach, extensions and information.
- Encourage faculty to web-enhance classes.
- Provide laptop incentives to encourage student purchase.
- Encourage institutions of higher education to work together to develop online courses and programs.

- Provide continuous training to all educators and staff on technology usage and applications.

The eCommunity Leaders within the Higher Education sector include:

Joseph Bukowski, Belmont Technical College  
Rich Greenlee, Ohio University Eastern Campus  
Mike McTeague, Ohio University Eastern Campus

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.

Don Shirley, Southeast 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.