

**ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT  
COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES OF OHIO**

**AICUO** Presents the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual

# **COLLABORATIVE CONFERENCE**

**The Point at Otterbein University**  
Thursday, June 4, 2026

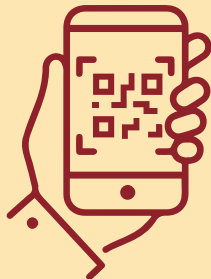
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*Scan the QR code for access to the agenda, presentations, and presenter biographies.*

## Letter from the President of AICUO



Colleagues,

Welcome to AICUO's 9th Collaborative Conference. We are pleased to have you join us as we discuss the future of higher education. We encourage collaboration and discussion among our member institutions and hope what you gain here today will help you further the success of your college.

This event brings together our 50 member institutions to learn about the expertise of our partners in engaging independent colleges and helping you reach out to future students. We designed this event to ensure you get the most relevant and beneficial information. Working closely with our Affiliate Members, we have put together timely sessions covering a variety of topics of interest.

We hope you enjoy your experience at the conference and that you take time to network with leaders from fellow AICUO-member institutions. At this time in higher education, knowledge and collaboration are essential to all of our success.

Thank you for your continued support of this program.

Cordially,

C. Todd Jones

AICUO President and General Counsel

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## About the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Ohio (AICUO)



The Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Ohio was organized in 1969 to represent the interests of its 50 members to Ohio's lawmakers, regulators, and citizens. AICUO seeks to strengthen student financial aid programs and bring about a greater understanding of the benefits and contributions of Ohio independent colleges and universities. At the same time, the association works to promote the well-being of Ohio higher education as a whole, with special regard for the dual private/public nature of the responsibility to serve the educational, social, and cultural needs of the state and the nation.

Located in every region of the state, Ohio's independent institutions include research universities, traditional liberal arts colleges, comprehensive universities, single-purpose institutions, and religiously affiliated colleges.

The foundation of AICUO's work is built on government relations, data analytics, public relations, and collaborative services. Over the past decade, AICUO has worked to strengthen the relationships and networking opportunities among its member institutions. The association established the Affiliate Member program to link member campuses with trusted business partners throughout Ohio and beyond. Many of these business partners also provide outstanding educational programming and collaborative purchasing discounts for AICUO members.

From connecting colleagues to facilitating significant savings for members, AICUO value the concept of collaboration and is proud to offer you the opportunities available at this conference.

## Presidential Panel



**Dr. Coreen (Corey) Cockerill** was named the 20th President of Wilmington College in March 2024 following a 16-year career as Professor of Agriculture and Communication Arts. She earned her PhD from The Ohio State University in 2006 in environmental sociology and communication. Prior to her academic career, she served as the electronic communications manager for the Ohio Division of Wildlife.

Dr. Cockerill served for six years on the board of Energize Clinton County, a nationally recognized, award-winning community development organization. She has held memberships with the North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture, the Ohio Farm Bureau, the Soil and Water Conservation Society, the Association for Conservation Information, the International Association of Business Communicators, and the Outdoor Writers of Ohio. Her honors include the 2025 Outstanding Women of Clinton County award, the 2021 ACEL Distinguished Alumni Award from The Ohio State University, the 2021 SOCHE Teaching Excellence Award, the 2013 Student Government Association Academic Award, and the 2013 Ohio Magazine Excellence in Education Award.

She and her husband are third-generation farmers in Leesburg, Ohio, where they live and raise their two children.



**Kathryn J. Heidemann** currently serves as President + CEO of Cleveland Institute of Art (CIA). She has played a pivotal role in steering the institution through transformative initiatives, integrating creative practice with technological innovation and civic engagement. Under her leadership, the college has launched several forward-facing efforts, most notably the \$35 million Transformation Campaign. Focused on expanding student access and success, investing in faculty development, and accelerating technological innovation on campus, the campaign has raised more than \$32 million to date.

Heidemann brings more than 25 years of multifaceted experience in arts administration and higher education. Her background includes leadership positions at Carnegie Mellon University, The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust, Chicago Academy for the Arts, and the Edinburgh Festival Fringe (Scotland), and she was appointed by the mayor to serve as Art Commissioner for the City of Pittsburgh.

Heidemann currently serves on several local and national boards, including University Circle Inc., Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Ohio, and Association of Independent Colleges of Art and Design. She has been recognized for her visionary leadership and service through various outlets such as *Smart Business Magazine*, *Ohio Business Magazine*, and *Cleveland Magazine*.

A proud graduate of Carnegie Mellon University (MAM), Columbia College Chicago (BA), and Leadership Cleveland (LC '22), she's also a rock bassist and adventurer-in-chief with her husband, two sons and one very wacky German Shorthaired Pointer.



**Dr. Jared R. Tice** is the 18th president of Capital University, where he is leading a bold, student-centered vision focused on growth, innovation, and impact. Since beginning his tenure in August 2025, he has prioritized strengthening enrollment, expanding academic opportunities, and positioning Capital for long-term success.

Previously, Dr. Tice served as Senior Vice President and Chief Strategy Officer at Catawba College, in Salisbury, N.C. He was instrumental in advancing strategic and campus priorities through the college's strategic plan (A College of Our Own), aligning institutional vision with actionable, student-centered plans that have resulted in significant advancements, including four consecutive years of new student enrollment growth, academic and athletic innovation through new program launches, the funding of over \$90 million in capital projects, and more.

A native of the Mid-Ohio Valley, Dr. Tice is a graduate of Concord University, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts in political science. After attending Concord University, Dr. Tice earned a Master of Arts in educational leadership with a focus on higher education administration and a graduate certificate in higher education marketing from West Virginia University. He earned a doctorate in higher education leadership from Maryville University in St. Louis and completed the Executive Leadership Certificate in Higher Education at Harvard Graduate School of Education.

## Presidential Panel Moderator

**Rocco Freed** is a Partnership Director at EdSights, an ed-tech company that helps colleges and universities improve student outcomes through AI-powered SMS engagement. In his role, Rocco works closely with higher education leaders to drive enrollment and student success initiatives focused on increasing yield, improving retention, and better understanding the student experience by amplifying the student voice. The EdSights platform engages students through conversational text messaging, surfaces real-time insights on issues such as mental health and financial stress, and empowers institutions with actionable data to intervene early. Rocco brings over seven years of experience in ed-tech sales, partnering with institutions across North America and globally to implement innovative technologies that support communities and institutional growth.



# Collaborative Conference Agenda

- 8:15am – 9:00am**    **Registration, Networking Breakfast & Vendor Fair** // Event Forum
- 9:00am – 9:10am**    **Welcome** // Event Forum  
C. Todd Jones, President and General Counsel - AICUO  
Dr. John Comerford, President - Otterbein University
- 9:10am – 10:25am**    **Presidential Panel Discussion** // Event Forum  
Dr. Jared Tice, President - Capital University  
Ms. Kathryn Heidemann, President - Cleveland Institute of Art  
Dr. Corey Cockerill, President - Wilmington College  
Moderator: Rocco Freed, Partnership Director - EdSights
- 10:35am – 11:25am**    **Track Session 1**
- Rethinking Gateway Placement and Removing Barriers to Matriculation - Franklin University // Rm. 113
  - Beyond the Balance: Reframing Financial Responsibility Through Campus-Wide Collaboration \* - Ashland University // Rm. 164
  - Bridging the Gaps: Designing Collaborative Information Systems to Support Adult Learner Transitions - Oberlin College, ESC of Northeast Ohio // Rm. 165
  - Systems, Not People: Fixing Campus Program Pitfalls through Better Processes - Ohio Wesleyan University // Rm. 140
- 11:35am – 12:25pm**    **Track Session 2**
- Audacity & Alignment: Repositioning Enrollment Marketing as a Strategic Driver of Institutional Growth - Columbus College of Art and Design // Rm. 113
  - Driving Transformational Change - Selecting ONU's Next ERP \* - Ohio Northern University // Rm. 164
  - Breaking Bread: Gamifying Intercultural Empathy and Navigating Difficult Conversations - John Carroll University // Rm. 165
  - A Fieldhouse for Everyone: Where Design Meets Mission - Design Collaborative, Heidelberg University // Rm. 140
- 12:25pm – 1:30pm**    **Networking Lunch & Vendor Fair** // Event Forum
- 1:40pm – 2:30pm**    **Track Session 3**
- Proactively Supporting Admitted Students for a Stronger Start - Edsights // Rm. 113
  - Campus Master Planning In the Land-Rich, Cash-Poor Era \* - McCullers Group, University of Dayton // Rm. 164
  - Preparing Students to be READY for their Future - Otterbein University // Rm. 165
  - CARE in Action: Strengthening Student Retention Through Belonging, Early Support, and Campus Partnerships - Wilmington College // Rm. 140
- 2:40 pm – 3:30pm**    **Closing Session** // Event Forum  
Equity in Inquiry: How to Conduct Neuroinclusive Campus Grievance Procedures - Bricker Graydon Wyatt  
Laura Anthony, Chair, Education Practice Group - Bricker Graydon Wyatt  
Senior Consultant - INCompliance Consulting

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■ Admissions & Enrollment   ■ Business & Finance   ■ Strategic Partnerships & Collaborations  
■ Student Support & Retention   \*CPE Credit Available



## Track Session: Admissions & Enrollment

10:35 a.m. – 11:25 a.m. // Session 1, Room 113

### Rethinking Gateway Placement and Removing Barriers to Matriculation

*Dr. Kody Kuehnl, Dean, College of Arts, Sciences & Technology | Franklin University*  
*Dr. Lynne Rouzer, SVP, Student Affairs & Enrollment Management | Franklin University*

Each trimester, hundreds of otherwise qualified working adult applicants do not matriculate, not because of academic inability, but because of friction with placement testing. Franklin University is replacing traditional gatekeeping with a multi-model, technology-enabled placement strategy. At the center is an agentic AI-supported Guided Self-Placement system that actively engages students in structured reflection, presents authentic course expectations, and generates placement insights, followed by a required advising conversation to preserve rigor and accountability. By combining AI, student agency, controlled pilot design, and embedded safeguards, we are testing whether institutions can increase matriculation, protect academic standards, and improve persistence while removing one of the most persistent enrollment barriers.




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11:35 a.m. – 12:25 p.m. //

Session 2, Room 113

### Audacity & Alignment: Repositioning Enrollment Marketing as a Strategic Driver of Institutional Growth

*Tia Ramey, Senior Director of Marketing and Performance | Columbus College of Art and Design*  
*Corinne Mares, Marketing Manager | Columbus College of Art and Design*

In a higher education landscape defined by economic uncertainty and increased competition, institutions cannot afford fragmented messaging or passive marketing. This session explores how finding the audacity in your institutional voice can become the catalyst for deeper alignment and measurable enrollment growth. Participants will learn how to build cross-campus alignment around a shared messaging framework, ensuring marketing, admissions, and leadership are moving in the same strategic direction. The session also demonstrates how to connect bold storytelling to performance by leveraging website optimization, behavioral tracking, SEO strategy, email engagement, and weekly dashboard reporting. Audacity is not just tone — it is a disciplined approach to differentiation, alignment, and accountability.

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1:40 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. // Session 3, Room 113

## Proactively Supporting Admitted Students for a Stronger Start

Gabrielle Cervantes, Partnerships Director | EdSights

EdSights will provide a data-driven discussion on how institutions are using real-time insights to better support students through the admissions process and set them up for a stronger start before day one. The session will focus on identifying and addressing enrollment barriers such as financial uncertainty, next-step confusion, and readiness questions, as they surface after acceptance. Through SMS-based engagement and real-time response data, institutions can uncover patterns across incoming students, guide timely outreach, and reduce friction during critical enrollment moments. Attendees will gain practical takeaways on how admissions teams can use data to improve coordination, support students earlier, and create a more connected admissions experience.



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## Track Session: **Business & Finance**

**10:35 a.m. – 11:25 a.m.** // Session 1, Room 164

### **Beyond the Balance: Reframing Financial Responsibility Through Campus Wide Collaboration**

*Catherine Williams, Asst. Provost & Senior Advisor to the President for Student Success | Ashland University*

*Janet Edwards, CPA, Assistant VP & Controller | Ashland University*

*Marc Pasteris, VP and CFO | Ashland University*

Institutions across higher education continue to face challenges related to financial literacy, student financial account responsibility, and the impacts of unpaid balances on student success and institutional stability. At Ashland University (AU), fragmented processes, inconsistent messaging, delayed payments, and beginning-of-term account issues affected key populations, including student-athletes, international students, and residential students. Financial literacy and accountability were often viewed as transactional rather than integrated components of student success. To address these challenges, AU launched a cross-campus collaboration uniting Financial Aid, Student Accounts, Student Success, Athletics, and International Services under a shared, student-centered framework. Using institutional data, AU identified populations needing additional support, evaluated processes, clarified roles, and examined system limitations to improve efficiency and compliance. **1.0 CPE Credit Available.**

**11:35 a.m. – 12:25 p.m.** // Session 2, Room 164

### **Driving Transformational Change - Selecting ONU's Next ERP**

*Jeff Reiman, CIO | Ohio Northern University*


This presentation outlines the university's strategic process to select a new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system as part of a broader digital transformation. After more than 30 years on an on-premises system, the institution pursued a cloud-based Software as a Service (SaaS) solution to better support its students, driven by Board priorities, staffing challenges, and budget needs. A cross-functional committee representing HR, Finance, IT, and the Registrar completed the selection, choosing Workday over other vendors. The university's vision focuses on transforming operations through automation, increasing efficiency with streamlined processes, enhancing the user experience, and establishing a secure, reliable "single source of truth" for data. Expected benefits include improved financial and HR workflows, stronger mobile capabilities for students, and advanced tools for IT, along with key lessons on the importance of strong partners, process standardization, clear communication, and preparing teams for large-scale change. **1.0 CPE Credit Available.**

**1:40 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. // Session 3, Room 164**

## **Campus Master Planning In the Land-Rich, Cash-Poor Era**

*Cortland McCullers, Director, Development Planning | McCullers Group  
Rick Krysiak, VP for Facilities & Planning | University of Dayton*


McCullers Group will address the challenges and value of available or underutilized land and assets, and the opportunities they present to support university goals. Featuring a campus perspective from the University of Dayton, the session will explore the role of housing, recreation, entertainment, athletics, and service- and experiential-focused retail, as well as strategies for maximizing available land and funding to meet these needs. It will also highlight the value of a campus master plan that incorporates diversified revenue opportunities while enhancing the student and faculty experience, along with lessons learned, best practices, and key value-adds from McCullers Group's experience in the marketplace. **1.0 CPE Credit Available.**




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### Yield more of the students you've already admitted

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## — RETAIN

### Keep students enrolled from day one through graduation

Continuous listening across belonging, wellness, financial, and academic experiences drives **62% engagement** — helping you identify risk in real time and take action before it's too late.

NC

Nick Carroll  
VP of Sales  
[nick@edsights.io](mailto:nick@edsights.io)

### When Admit and Retain work together, the impact compounds

Campuses using both see engagement climb even higher — **with up to a 10% lift** — powered by one continuous student voice from acceptance through graduation.

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## Track Session: **Strategic Partnerships & Collaborations**

**10:35 a.m. – 11:25 a.m.** // Session 1, Room 165

### **Bridging the Gaps: Designing Collaborative Information Systems to Support Adult Learner Transitions**

*Moderator: Shaun Yoder, Advisor | Oberlin College & Conservatory  
Nadine Grimm, Coordinator of 21st Century Learning | ESC of Northeast Ohio  
Tanisha Shende, Student | Oberlin College and Conservatory  
Laura Baudot, Senior Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences | Oberlin College & Conservatory*

The Northeast Ohio Adult Provider Network, coordinated by the Educational Service Center of Northeast Ohio, unites independent adult education organizations around a shared mission: building a regional system that offers learners real options and mobility as they pursue workforce readiness. Despite this shared vision, limited coordination and inconsistent information sharing create transition points where learners fall through the cracks. In partnership with Oberlin College, Network members are addressing this challenge through a two-phase, human-centered design study examining how breakdowns occur during program transitions, what information providers need from one another, and how a collaborative information system can improve coordination and learner retention.

**11:35 a.m. – 12:25 p.m.** // Session 2, Room 165

### **Breaking Bread: Gamifying Intercultural Empathy and Navigating Difficult Conversations**

*Ayse Selen Zarrelli, Director, Center for Student Belonging | John Carroll University  
Dr. Semiha Topal, Associate Director, Tuohy Center of Interreligious Understanding | John Carroll University*

How do we move students from polarized silence to curious dialogue? This session explores “Breaking Bread,” an award-winning collaborative program at John Carroll University between the Tuohy Center for Interreligious Understanding and the Center for Student Belonging. By integrating structured gameplay into interreligious dialogue, this student-led initiative, funded by Interfaith America and recipient of the 2025 OCPA Innovation Award, creates a low-stakes environment for high-impact learning. Participants will discover how to use interactive programming to build empathy and foster curiosity on their own campuses.



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**1:40 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.** // Session 3, Room 165

## **Preparing Students to be READY for their Future**

*Dr. Colette Masterson, Associate Director, Student Success & Career Development / Otterbein University*

*Kate Lehman, Asst. Provost & Executive Director, Student Success & Career Development / Otterbein University*

Established in 2025, READY Day is a day out of the academic calendar dedicated to personal and professional preparation. Shifting the academic calendar to cancel classes, events, and athletic events, all Otterbein students, faculty and staff spent the day focused on affirming their academic course of student, building community in their academic discipline, and planning for life after Otterbein, connecting with alumni, exploring internship and employment opportunities. Learn how faculty, staff, students, alumni, employers, and community stakeholders came together to start this new University tradition and graduation requirement.



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## **Track Session: Student Support & Retention**

**10:35 a.m. – 11:25 a.m.** // Session 1, Room 140

### **Systems, Not People: Fixing Campus Program Pitfalls through Better Processes**

*Lauren Hensley, Director of Holistic Advising | Ohio Wesleyan University*

*Brad Pulcini, Dean of Student Services | Ohio Wesleyan University*

*Emily Lugg, Director of the Sagan Academic Resource Center | Ohio Wesleyan University*

When our campus programs aren't getting the buy-in we would like, it can be easy to blame a lack of resources, skills, or care. When we flip the script and look at the systems that affect the challenge, we get to the root of the challenge, transforming the ways we work. In this session, leaders of four campus offices at Ohio Wesleyan University will share examples of turning challenges into successes by recognizing system-level issues and opportunities and ultimately building better processes. The session will be directly relevant to first-year experience, new student registration, faculty development, and academic success, while overall takeaways and discussion prompts will engage all functional areas of higher education.

**11:35 a.m. – 12:25 p.m.** // Session 2, Room 140

### **A Field House for Everyone: Where Design Meets Mission**

*Tim Terman, Partner, Senior Architect | Design Collaborative*

*Ashley Helmstetter, VP for Advancement, Marketing, Alumni, and Community Relations | Heidelberg University*

When Heidelberg University built Frann's Fieldhouse, the vision went beyond creating a space for varsity sports. The goal was simple: give students a place to gather, move, connect, and feel like they belong. This session will break down how intentional choices helped turn a large recreational facility into a true third place: welcoming, flexible, and accessible to all students. Attendees will learn how to align facility investments with student success goals, design spaces that prioritize belonging, and create environments that feel genuinely open to everyone, not just those in uniform. They'll gain relatable insights and practical strategies for leveraging campus facilities as powerful, everyday tools to strengthen engagement and support long-term retention.

**1:40 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.** // Session 3, Room 140

**CARE in Action: Strengthening Student Retention Through Belonging, Early Support, and Campus Partnerships**

*Toycee Hague-Palmer, Ed.D., Associate VP for Student Affairs | Wilmington College  
Sigrid Solomon, VP, Chief Student Affairs, Dean of Students | Wilmington College*

This presentation examines Wilmington College’s CARE Team model, a coordinated, student-focused approach that promotes student success and retention through campus partnerships. The session shows that students are more likely to be retained and persist when they have significant relationships and feel they belong. A key part of this model is the CARE Team’s use of an early alert system, which helps spot students’ concerns early and start timely, personal support. Faculty, staff, coaches, and campus support services work together so Student Success Coordinators and CARE Team members can reach out, mentor, and connect students with campus resources to address academic, social, and personal challenges. Coupled with interventions and individualized support, Wilmington College students’ ability to remain enrolled and continue their academic pursuits is positively impacted. Through intentional collaboration, the CARE model builds connections, supports achievement, and improves retention.



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## Closing Session

**2:40 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.** // Event Forum

### **Equity in Inquiry: How to Conduct Neuroinclusive Campus Grievance Procedures**

*Laura Anthony, Chair, Education Practice Group - Bricker Graydon Wyatt  
Senior Consultant - INCompliance Consulting*

Statistics suggest that up to 20 percent of the population—and 53 percent of Gen Z—experience neurodiverse conditions that affect how they process, recall, and communicate information. Campus grievance procedures often overlook these impacts, making it difficult for neurodivergent participants to navigate them. In this session, Laura Anthony will explore common forms of neurodivergence and share strategies for institutions to improve policies and practices and ensure grievance procedures are neuroinclusive. She will address misconceptions about neurodiversity, highlight research on credibility assessments, and offer practical tips for structuring investigations and hearings, including those under Title IX, to produce reliable outcomes.

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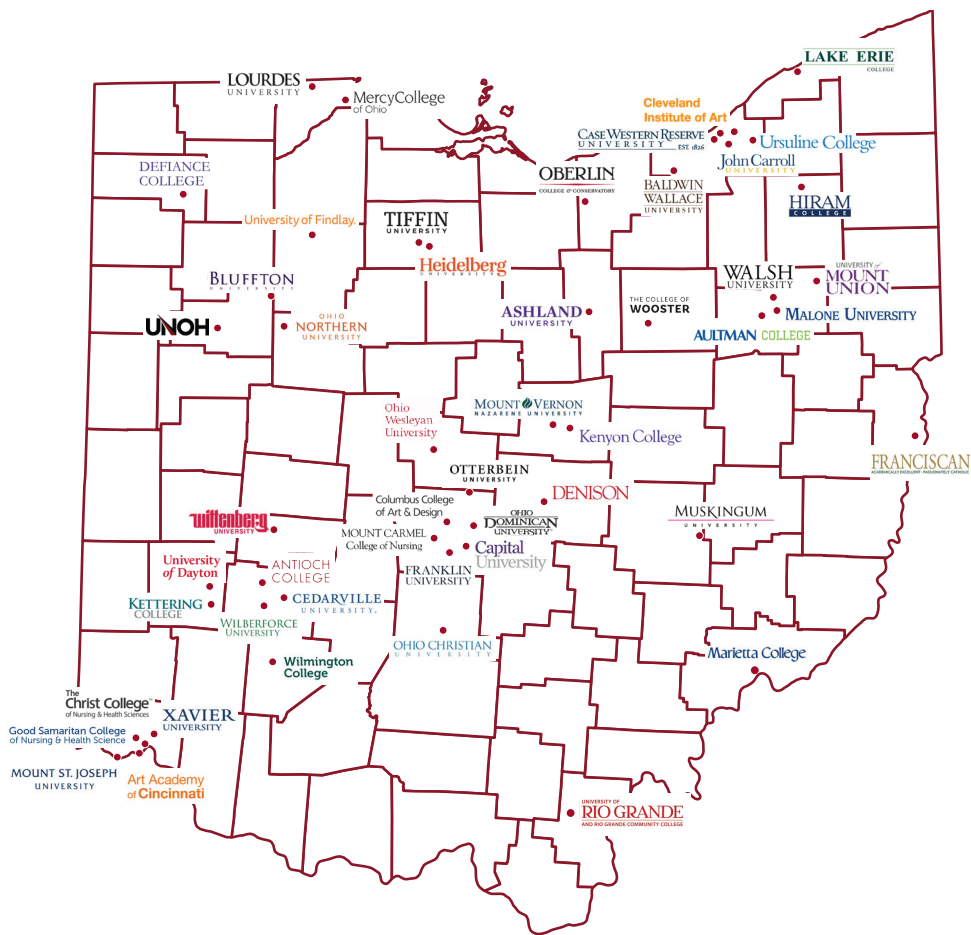
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