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## **Testimony to the Ohio Joint Education Oversight Committee**

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Thank you, members of the Joint Education Oversight Committee, for allowing us to testify on behalf of McGraw-Hill Education. My name is Matt Pastier, and I am the District Manager for the Ohio region. Attending our hearing today along with me are: Alisha C. Wilson, College & Career Readiness Coordinator, Whitehall-Yearling High School; Sarah Narsavage, Teacher of Mathematics, Whitehall-Yearling High School; TJ Duda, faculty member at Columbus State Community College; and Katie Cannon, my colleague at MHE whose efforts focus on K-12 initiatives in Ohio. Our speakers and I are here to discuss the importance of aligning high schools and colleges through academic bridge programs, to support high school students in their college and career readiness plans.

McGraw-Hill Education is a global learning science company that delivers personalized learning experiences that help students, parents, educators and professionals drive results. McGraw-Hill Education has nearly 1,000 employees that work in the Columbus area, and multiple offices across North America, India, China, Europe, the Middle East and South America, with learning solutions available in more than 60 languages.

### **Academic Bridges Between High Schools and Colleges**

Our nation's K-12 and higher education systems are highly fragmented. School districts and colleges establish unique goals, standards, objectives, and desired outcomes for their students, without creating a shared vision or alignment for students who seek a path forward to college. This often leads to a chasm between high schools and colleges which continues to widen and results in high school students who are unprepared for the rigor of college-level course work. In the long run, it has resulted in low student retention and college graduation rates, while contributing to growing student debt nationwide.

While some local partnerships focus on college readiness, there are few catalysts in place--such as accountability systems or funding mechanisms that cross both the K-12 and higher education sectors--to encourage the high school and colleges to work together. This is particularly of concern for colleges with high remediation and low retention rates, whose students would benefit from being assessed and placed into a focused, college or career pathway of choice in their junior or senior year of high school to help them transition smoothly into college.

Building and supporting strong partnerships between high schools and colleges is a critical priority for increasing student's educational outcomes and goals. Such

partnerships can lay a resilient foundation for early college readiness with a focused, unified curriculum in high school that helps to navigate a personalized pathway to success in college.

When schools and colleges form such partnerships, there is a sense of community, where stakeholders are working toward the same goals: to ensure the best outcomes for their unique student needs and interests. High schools and community colleges can work in unison to craft a strategic plan, identify a common set of digital learning tools at both the high school and higher education levels, measure student progress using common data, and align their vision to the needs of their learning community. This spirit of partnership incentivizes students to focus on their long-term plans and encourages them to identify how to match their course mastery level and knowledge base to their desired college or career goals.

### **Building an Academic Bridge Program**

Academic bridge programs allow high schools and colleges in a shared locality to partner and develop a common articulation for their students, including shared goals, objectives, and assessment and pathways, before enrolling in college. This helps students enter college with a clear understanding of their mastery level to plan for success, and seek remediation, if necessary.

For example, high school students can be assessed on their level of math readiness and placement level, using a digital assessment tool, at the end of their junior year of high school. Based on results from the assessment, students can be placed into courses that fall into one of two tracks: 1) a track for students who have the skills ready to be placed into a college-level course; and 2) a track for students who will require further math mastery support to be deemed college-ready. Students in the college-ready track would take a concurrent enrollment math course in their senior year of high school. Students who do not appear to be ready for a college-level course at the end of their junior year of high school would partake in additional courses as determined through the program and continue to be assessed and reassessed using an adaptive, assessment tool, such as ALEKS PPL®, to ensure they are ready for college-level courses once they complete their senior year of high school.

The Ohio College Credit Plus program is one example of a successful academic bridge that has been a joint effort across high schools and colleges in Ohio and is supported by the state. Students are assessed for college-readiness in their junior or senior year of high school, and after being evaluated for readiness, are enrolled in credit-bearing courses which can jumpstart their progress toward college-level coursework. Participation in the program may be of greatest advantage to first generation college students and students of color, as they feel more comfortable working toward their college plans in a familiar school setting. Students who enroll in credit-bearing, college-level courses in Ohio's College Credit Plus program are typically not charged for college tuition, books, or fees, further maximizing the return on students' investments in their educational plans.

## **Adaptive Learning Strengthens Academic Bridge Programs**

Adaptive solutions have been proven to help students enter college ready to succeed, stay in and complete college, and feel more prepared for their future careers. Participating high schools and colleges in the academic bridge programs can work together to identify and choose a single, innovative college readiness assessment which may be most effective for tracking, managing, and evaluating students' performance over time, and may be more likely to achieve the goal of improving student outcomes from high school through college.

Partners in an academic bridge program can engage in a continuous feedback loop to allow for continuous improvement each semester. Data from the bridge program can be shared amongst the high school and college faculty to evaluate success and course needs. Once the bridge program has been validated and has been successful over time, it is possible to engage other local colleges and districts in the state to participate in a similar model, tailored to their unique setting and characteristics.

McGraw-Hill Education supports the use of such personalized learning tools to ensure that the individualized needs of students are being met. McGraw-Hill Education supports partnerships between K-12 schools and institutions of higher education that use adaptive learning technologies to remediate students during their junior and senior years of high school to ensure they are ready to enroll directly into credit-bearing courses when they start college.

## **Benefits of Academic Bridge Programs**

Academic bridge programs have benefited through participation in bridge programs by *increasing* the percentage of students who:

- Demonstrate college-readiness and preparedness;
- Demonstrate success in college-level courses, including dual credit and concurrent enrollment courses;
- Complete courses and take courses of higher level than the prior semester; and
- Attain a college degree or certificate.

*Bridge programs may also reduce the:*

- Percentage of students enrolled in non-credit bearing courses;
- Amount of time it takes a student to matriculate;
- Rate of students dropping out of high school and/or college; and
- Graduation cost for students.

We encourage policymakers to review academic bridge programs more closely and consider supporting efforts to build and expand bridge programs across the K-20 continuum. Academic bridge programs are likely to benefit from: additional funding to drive these partnerships and support the innovative tools to sustain accelerated learning; policies permitting data sharing across partnering high schools and colleges, so these systems can communicate effectively and transparently; and increased investments in

research which can shape future best practices for academic bridge programs. It is critical for Ohio to spark a meaningful, national dialogue about the importance of making collaborative efforts across local high schools and colleges to smooth the transition points for students moving from high school to college and boost their chances of succeeding in college. Evaluating high school students for credit-bearing, college-level coursework earlier in the process, and proactively preparing students for the rigors of college are vital steps toward making statewide progress a reality.

McGraw-Hill Education understands the importance of retaining students in higher education and challenges of getting them to completion. We are committed to expanding the presence of bridge programs in Ohio, to better align our education systems, and in the long-run, help students achieve success in their college and career readiness plans.

Sincerely,

Matt Pastier  
District Manager  
McGraw-Hill Education