



# Choose **1**hioFirst

2021-2022 Annual Report





## History and Overview

The General Assembly created the Choose Ohio First scholarship program in 2007 to increase the number of Ohio residents completing postsecondary studies in the fields of science (including health professions), technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), as well as teaching degrees or certificates that focus on STEM disciplines. The goal of the program is to strengthen Ohio's competitiveness within STEM disciplines by developing STEM scholars and connecting them with Ohio employers.

Under the Chancellor's leadership, the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) manages a competitive process for Ohio's public and independent colleges and universities seeking a Choose Ohio First (COF) designation and funding. Choose Ohio First colleges and universities use COF funds to provide scholarships to Choose Ohio First Scholars. Each institution is responsible for recruiting, selecting, and supporting its Choose Ohio First Scholars. Scholars are provided scholarships and work-based learning experiences that lead to success in their STEM or STEM educator program. Since its inception, the Ohio Department of Higher Education has conducted multiple, consecutive COF funding rounds, resulting in Ohio educational institutions recruiting new COF Scholars since 2007. In 2021-22, the average scholarship at a four-year institution was \$4,324 and the average scholarship at a two-year college was \$2,226.

In FY22, the Chancellor awarded a Choose Ohio First designation and \$42.9 million to 44 Ohio institutions through a competitive request for proposal process. The funding will be allocated to each institution over the course of five fiscal years, FY23 through FY27.

As required by [Ohio Revised Code 3333.041 \(3\)](#), this report summarizes the Chancellor's strategy in assigning Choose Ohio First scholarships and describes how the awards are consistent with that strategy.

# Chancellor's Strategy in Assigning Choose Ohio First Designations

In FY22, the Chancellor conducted a competitive proposal process to designate Choose Ohio First institutions and award funding to those institutions for student scholarships. A review panel reviewed and scored 44 proposals from 13 public universities, 13 community colleges, and 18 independent private institutions. Scoring of the proposals included evaluation of the extent to which a proposal recruits underrepresented populations in STEM fields and STEM education, along with one or more of the following criteria in [ORC 3333.62](#):

- The quality of the program and the extent to which additional resources will enhance its quality;
- The extent to which the proposal is integrated with the strengths of the regional economy;
- The extent to which the proposal is integrated with the institution's mission and does not replace existing resources;
- The extent to which the institution has committed to an increase in the total graduates in STEM and STEM education, consistent with the workforce needs;
- The extent to which the proposal meets a statewide educational need;
- The extent to which the proposal facilitates the completion of an associate or baccalaureate degree in a cost-effective manner; and
- The extent to which the proposal encourages students to complete a certificate program.



*Kent State University students present at the Choose Ohio First Northeast Ohio Spring Symposium on April 10, 2022 at Cleveland State University.*

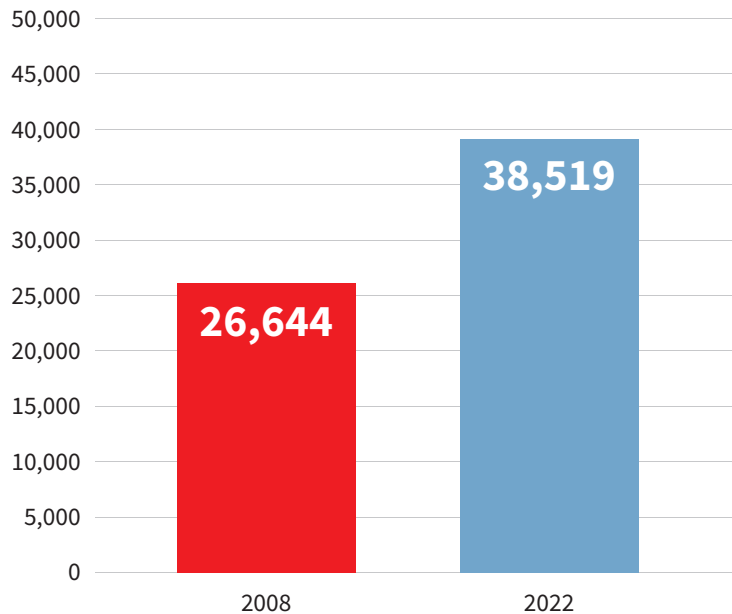
The Chancellor awarded a Choose Ohio First designation and \$42.9 million to 44 Ohio institutions, which began offering scholarships from the FY22 funding round in academic year 2022-2023. Grantees will receive funding on a reimbursement basis as Choose Ohio First Scholars progress through their academic program.

# Expanding STEM Talent in Ohio

Since its inception, the Choose Ohio First Program has complemented the Chancellor’s strategy to strengthen Ohio’s workforce by recruiting and supporting students pursuing STEM degrees and certificates. The number of STEM degrees awarded at Ohio’s public colleges and universities increased from 26,644 total students in 2008 to more than 38,500 total students in 2022.

Choose Ohio First scholarships can be used to support students pursuing graduate, baccalaureate, or associate degrees, as well as for-credit certificates in designated STEM fields or STEM teaching programs. Participating colleges and universities provided scholarships to 3,802 STEM students this past academic year. This includes 1,191 students who were first-time Choose Ohio First scholarship recipients; 46.6% of those first-time COF scholarship recipients were students who had previously participated in the College Credit Plus program.

STEM Degrees Awarded at Ohio's Public Colleges and Universities  
AY 2008 vs AY 2022



In academic year 2022 (AY22), 3,224 COF Scholars were enrolled at a public or private independent four-year institution and 578 were enrolled at a public two-year institution. Several institutions that received Choose Ohio First awards took part in an articulation agreement that allowed students to move from a two-year degree to a four-year degree with a seamless transfer.

Institutions select the specific areas of study to include in their COF program based on the regional and statewide economic and educational needs in Ohio. In AY22, students received Choose Ohio First scholarships to support their studies in more than 185 unique STEM academic programs. Engineering, healthcare, and information technology-related fields were the three most popular academic program areas.

Ohio’s Career Resource Navigator (formerly the Workforce Success Measures) website reports that 78% of Choose Ohio First’s public college and university completers from academic year 2019 were working in Ohio and/or enrolled in a U.S. higher education institution six months and one year after graduation.



Central principles of the COF program include connecting COF Scholars with co-ops, internship experience in a university, college, or private laboratory, and other work-based learning experiences. AY22 was the first year that these experiences were required for each COF Scholar, per House Bill 110. Work-based learning experiences included apprenticeships, co-ops, and internships with public and private employers in a variety of industries. They also included research opportunities with many Ohio health systems and private companies, along with university-supported projects.

*Choose Ohio First Northeast Ohio Spring Symposium on April 10, 2022 at Cleveland State University.*

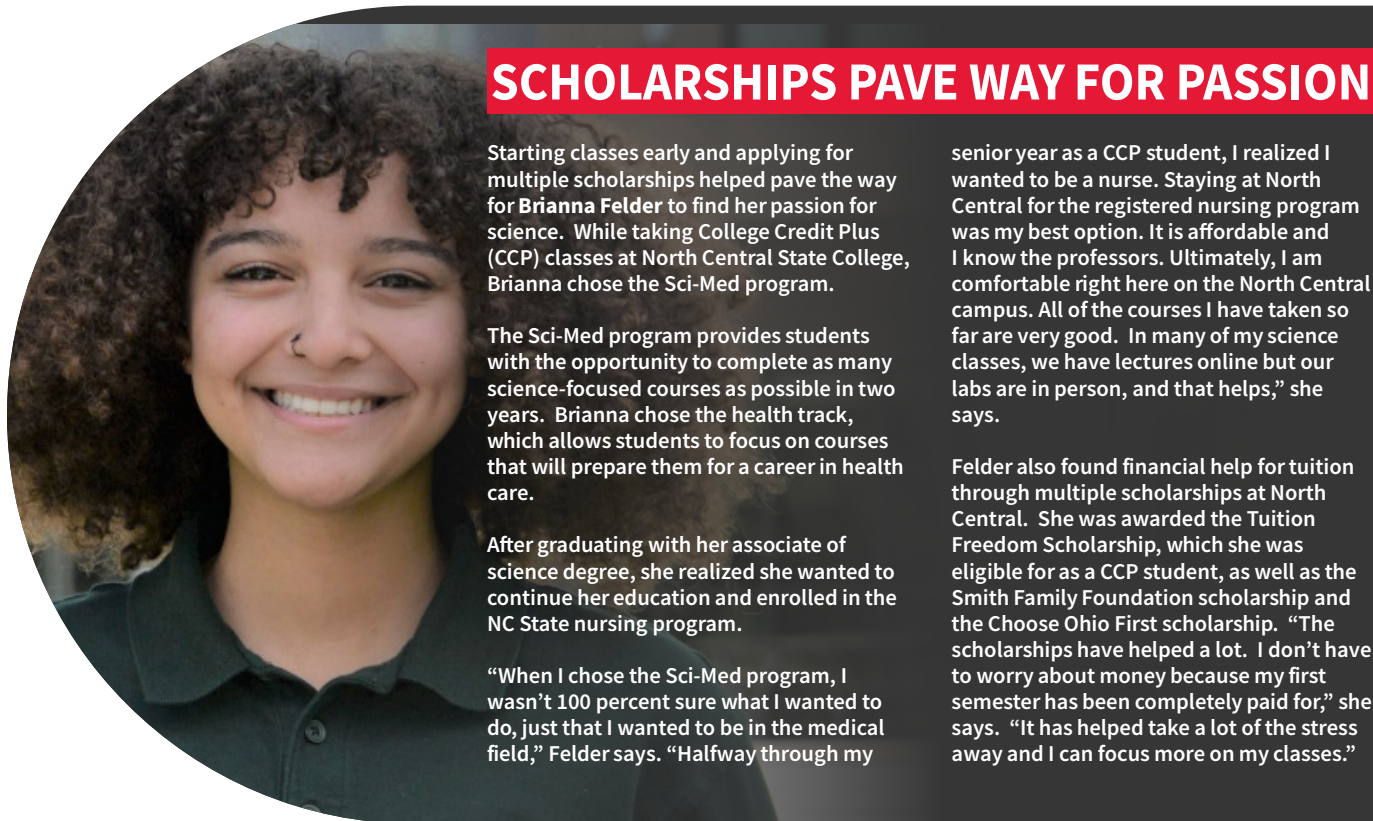
## Supporting STEM Students' Success

Institutions with Choose Ohio First designation provide support to their Choose Ohio First Scholars that will help students complete their academic program and connect with employers. The forms of support vary among institutions. Some examples of support provided by Choose Ohio First colleges and universities include:

- summer bridge programs designed to affirm first-year students' commitment and promote academic preparedness;
- mentoring from faculty, peers, and/or alumni;
- STEM-specific events, cohort and team building;

- STEM success coaching and tutoring;
- referrals to food banks and clothing banks, and mental health and social services;
- connections through networking platforms and advisory boards;
- designated internships and co-op experiences; and
- cohort-based research projects and publications of STEM research.

These support systems are designed to increase retention and graduation rates for Choose Ohio First Scholars. Many colleges and universities also offer career and post-graduation advising, helping to connect Choose Ohio First graduates with Ohio employers.



## SCHOLARSHIPS PAVE WAY FOR PASSION

Starting classes early and applying for multiple scholarships helped pave the way for Brianna Felder to find her passion for science. While taking College Credit Plus (CCP) classes at North Central State College, Brianna chose the Sci-Med program.

The Sci-Med program provides students with the opportunity to complete as many science-focused courses as possible in two years. Brianna chose the health track, which allows students to focus on courses that will prepare them for a career in health care.

After graduating with her associate of science degree, she realized she wanted to continue her education and enrolled in the NC State nursing program.

“When I chose the Sci-Med program, I wasn’t 100 percent sure what I wanted to do, just that I wanted to be in the medical field,” Felder says. “Halfway through my

senior year as a CCP student, I realized I wanted to be a nurse. Staying at North Central for the registered nursing program was my best option. It is affordable and I know the professors. Ultimately, I am comfortable right here on the North Central campus. All of the courses I have taken so far are very good. In many of my science classes, we have lectures online but our labs are in person, and that helps,” she says.

Felder also found financial help for tuition through multiple scholarships at North Central. She was awarded the Tuition Freedom Scholarship, which she was eligible for as a CCP student, as well as the Smith Family Foundation scholarship and the Choose Ohio First scholarship. “The scholarships have helped a lot. I don’t have to worry about money because my first semester has been completely paid for,” she says. “It has helped take a lot of the stress away and I can focus more on my classes.”

Choose Ohio First is part of a State of Ohio strategic effort to bolster Ohio’s economic strength by ensuring a ready workforce for STEM-related (science, technology, engineering, math) industries. North Central State College has been awarding Choose Ohio First Scholarships to students since 2010.

Felder credits North Central State College faculty for helping her feel at ease on the campus and preparing for the future. “It has challenged me, taking classes at North Central, but I am a better student because of it,” she says. “The faculty has taught me how to study properly while also helping me become confident in asking for help when I need it, which has become very beneficial for me as a student.”

Felder hopes to graduate with an associate degree in registered nursing in 2024.

**SOURCE:**

North Central State College  
<https://ncstatecollege.edu/scholarships-pave-way-for-passion/>

## Leveraging Other Resources

The Choose Ohio First Scholarship Program requires designated institutions to match all COF funds dollar for dollar. In academic year 2021-2022, \$15.18 million was awarded and disbursed to 3,802 Choose Ohio First Scholars attending an Ohio college or university. Participating institutions reported matching contributions totaling \$40.67 million to support Choose Ohio First Scholars.

Matching funds can be used for a variety of things within the institution's COF program. Approximately \$34.55 million, or 85% of the total institutional matching dollars, was reported in the form of scholarship dollars. Institutions have also used matching funds to revise and develop new curricula in the STEM disciplines, offer students opportunities to participate in conferences and research symposia, and leverage the involvement of businesses in the professional development of COF Scholars.

BGSU

*"The (Choose Ohio First) Scholarship has helped me in many ways. The most beneficial thing the (Choose Ohio First) Scholarship has done for me was push me to be a better architect. By requiring me to complete a co-op my first summer, I have learned to put myself out there, and find ways to find a job. As a student finishing my first year, this was not easy. **Through my co-op I have learned so much. Being in the real world can't be taught in class as well as it can when you're actually working in the field.** Another reason the (Choose Ohio First) Scholarship has helped me is through paying for some of my schooling. This pushes me to get good grades to keep the money that I need to complete four years of schooling without years of debt to pay off."*

- Student from **Bowling Green State University**

*"The COF scholarship has helped me tremendously in multiple aspects. Research-wise, I have been able to gain valuable experience in the astrophysics field by attending these conferences as well as going to research meetings. **The people I have been able to meet, as well as the knowledge I have received through attending, has helped me become a better student, researcher, and gain professional insight.** In the same aspect, this scholarship has helped me financially so I can focus more on academics, which I believe is very important at this stage in my education. Without the COF scholarship, I would not be the student I am today."*

-Student from the **University of Toledo**





## Choose Ohio First Funding Cycles

Since 2007, ODHE has issued multiple COF funding rounds, resulting in institutions being able to recruit new COF Scholars. In AY22, the vast majority of the 3,802 students receiving a Choose Ohio First scholarship were funded through one of three funding cycles: the FY21 grant cycle, the FY19 grant cycle, or the FY16 grant cycle.

» **FY22 grant cycle**

In FY22, a new Choose Ohio first grant cycle began. In this cycle, the Chancellor awarded a Choose Ohio First designation and \$42.9 million to 45 institutions through a competitive request for proposal process. The funding will support institutions recruiting new COF Scholars every year for five fiscal years, FY23 through FY27.

» **FY21 grant cycle**

In FY22 ODHE supported scholarships at 57 institutions for scholarships from the FY21 Choose Ohio First grant. The FY21 grant awarded \$42.8 million through a competitive grant process for fiscal years FY22 through FY26.

» **FY16 completion grant cycle**

In FY22, ODHE supported scholarships at 32 institutions to support COF Scholars who began their COF experience during a previous funding cycle that began in FY16. These funds will help COF Scholars who started their COF educational program during academic years 2017 through 2021 complete their degree or certificate within the next four years. ODHE committed a total of \$27.10 million to these institutions for fiscal years FY22 through FY25.

» **FY19 computer science grant cycle**

In FY22, ODHE supported scholarships at 35 institutions for scholarships from the FY19 Computer Science Choose Ohio First grant. The FY19 Computer Science program awarded \$20.60 million through a competitive grant process for fiscal years FY21 through FY25.

## Choose Ohio First Program Changes

Choose Ohio First will add a fifth round of funding to the program portfolio in FY23. In September 2022, the Chancellor released the FY23 request for proposals. Through this proposal process, institutions can apply for five years of COF funding (FY24-FY28) for scholarships in STEM-related fields as part of a strategic effort to deepen Ohio's economic strength by developing talent in STEM-related fields through the completion of postsecondary degrees and certificates. Awards are expected to be announced in December 2022.



*A group of Choose Ohio First scholars from the College of Mount St. Joseph University in Cincinnati, Ohio.*

## Conclusion

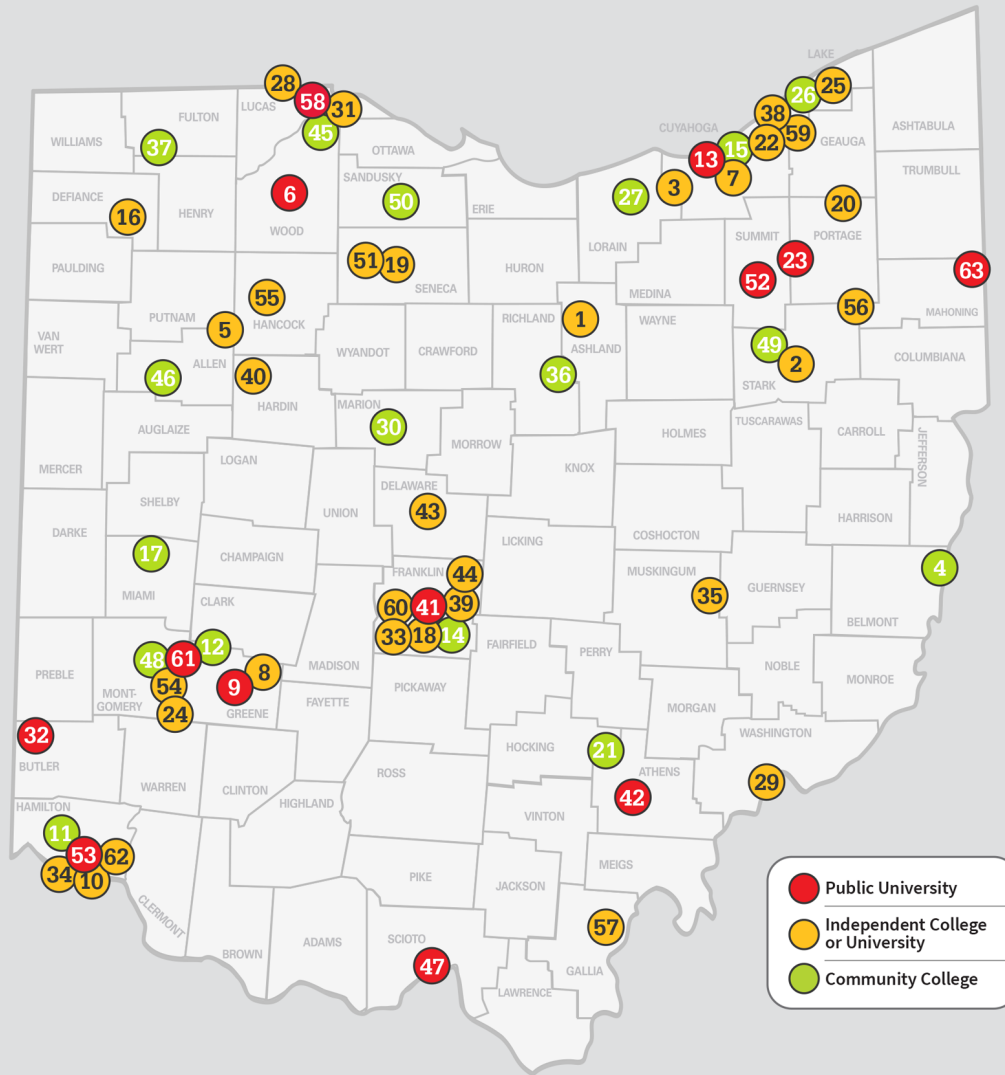
Under the Chancellor's leadership and with support from the General Assembly, the Ohio Department of Higher Education continues to offer and administer competitive funding opportunities to Ohio's public and private colleges and universities to provide scholarships in STEM and STEM teaching fields.

The Choose Ohio First program is a scholarship program providing financial support to STEM students in Ohio. Through the program guidelines and objectives, COF partners with institutions that provide a wide range of academic, social, emotional, and career supports resulting in successful completion of STEM degrees and certificates. Retention and graduation rates are high as a result of targeted recruitment, strong wrap-around student support services, and matching scholarship dollars to complement the Choose Ohio First award. Employer involvement through internships, co-ops, research, and other work-based learning experiences are connecting COF Scholars to employment opportunities in Ohio.

## Participating Institutions

In FY22, a total of 63 public and nonpublic colleges and universities had a Choose Ohio First designation, with enrolled scholars receiving scholarship funds through one of the active funding rounds.

# Participating Institutions



1. Ashland University
2. Aultman College
3. Baldwin Wallace University
4. Belmont College
5. Bluffton University
6. Bowling Green State University
7. Case Western Reserve University
8. Cedarville University
9. Central State University
10. The Christ College of Nursing & Health Sciences
11. Cincinnati State Technical & Community College
12. Clark State College
13. Cleveland State University
14. Columbus State Community College
15. Cuyahoga Community College
16. Defiance College
17. Edison State Community College
18. Franklin University
19. Heidelberg University
20. Hiram College
21. Hocking College
22. John Carroll University
23. Kent State University
24. Kettering College
25. Lake Erie College
26. Lakeland Community College
27. Lorain County Community College
28. Lourdes University
29. Marietta College
30. Marion Technical College
31. Mercy College
32. Miami University
33. Mount Carmel College of Nursing
34. Mount St. Joseph University
35. Muskingum University
36. North Central State College
37. Northwest State Community College
38. Notre Dame College
39. Ohio Dominican University
40. Ohio Northern University
41. The Ohio State University
42. Ohio University
43. Ohio Wesleyan University
44. Otterbein University
45. Owens Community College
46. Rhodes State College
47. Shawnee State University
48. Sinclair Community College
49. Stark State College
50. Terra State Community College
51. Tiffin University
52. The University of Akron
53. University of Cincinnati
54. University of Dayton
55. University of Findlay
56. University of Mount Union
57. University of Rio Grande
58. The University of Toledo
59. Ursuline College
60. Western Governors University
61. Wright State University
62. Xavier University
63. Youngstown State University

