



## University hosts White House Rural Council Roundtable

Finance, business incubation and economic development among topics discussed

Sep 23, 2011

From staff reports

Ohio University's [Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs](http://www.ohio.edu/voinovichschool/) hosted an official White House Rural Council Roundtable on Wednesday featuring Doug O'Brien, the newly appointed Deputy Under Secretary of Rural Development at the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The roundtable discussion included several Ohio University and southeast Ohio leaders from the areas of finance, philanthropy, real estate, business incubation and economic development. The discussion centered on successes and obstacles to rural economic development and offered many ideas and insights as to how federal, state and private resources can collaborate and leverage one another. Outcomes of the discussion will be reviewed by White House and USDA officials for input to federal policy and programs.

"Ohio is always a good place to visit for information about what is happening in the marketplace and it was especially helpful to learn about all of the progress and successes being achieved in southeast Ohio," said Doug O'Brien, who previously served as assistant director at the Ohio Department of Agriculture and special counsel to the United States Senate Agricultural Committee.

"It was a good forum to learn and discuss how federal agencies like USDA might be able to play a meaningful role in advancing rural Ohio's economy, especially with nationally recognized efforts underway here like the Third Frontier program," said Lisa Delp, entrepreneurial services and incubation program manager at the Technology and Innovation Division of the Ohio Department of Development.

"The leadership in the room exemplified the energy, drive and momentum



Deputy Under Secretary of Rural Development Doug O'Brien (center) led roundtable discussion on Wednesday

*Photo courtesy of: Voinovich School*



Roundtable participants discussing many topics on Wednesday

*Photo courtesy of: Voinovich School*

southeast Ohio has established recently, and represents great promise for the future of the region," offered Lynn Gellermann, executive director of the Center for Entrepreneurship and TechGROWTH Ohio, who co-hosted the roundtable with Director of the Voinovich School Mark Weinberg.

Chris Gerig, local attorney and angel investor, said "We need to recognize the leadership Ohio University has provided in developing our community and region. Their efforts have led to so many public and private developments, including successful business start-ups and resulting job creation," and added "as someone who grew up in Athens and is involved with several business enterprises, that really means a lot to me."

This roundtable was part of a series of national and regional roundtables across the U.S. to gather information on best practices, obstacles and ideas for rural development.

Participating organizations included: TechGROWTH Ohio, East Central Ohio Technology Angel Fund (ECOTAF), Ohio Appalachian Business Council, Appalachian Partnership for Economic Growth, Athens County Economic Development Council, ACEnet, Muskingum County Business Incubator, Foundation for Appalachian Ohio, Athens Foundation, Bricker & Eckler, OU Innovation Center, OU Center for Entrepreneurship, Edison Biotechnology Institute, Global Cooling, Ohio University College of Business and the Voinovich School.

## Related Links

Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs [<http://www.ohio.edu/voinovichschool/>]

University Communications and Marketing | 740.593.2200 | [news@ohio.edu](mailto:news@ohio.edu)

Ohio University | Athens OH 45701 | 740.593.1000  
[ADA Compliance](#) | © 2011 [Ohio University](#). All rights reserved.