



Higher Education Coordinating Commission

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February Agency Update:

February 2021 | Our partners can find previous quarterly Government to Government updates as well as other information on work and initiatives in the [Coordination with Oregon Tribes](#) section of our website.

Legislative Session Commences: A focus on equitable outcomes helped guide the postsecondary education and training budget development Process for 2021-2013. HECC presents regularly to legislative committees and advises the Oregon Legislature and the Governor on topics of critical concern to Oregon postsecondary education. HECC agency staff are planning for the budget presentation on the comprehensive funding needs of the postsecondary education and workforce system to the Joint Ways and Means Education Subcommittee this Spring. Partners can stay updated on recent HECC presentations to the Legislature, as well as key documents and links, on our [2021 Legislative Resources web page here](#). Our [recent issue of HECC Collaborations](#) newsletter included information on our priority bills this Session, which are related to: Financial Aid Redesign, Youth Employment, and Transfer. While we will not know the final outcome of the budget until the 2021 Oregon Legislature completes their work, the [Governor's Recommended Budget for 2021-23](#) contains equity-focused proposals proposed by the HECC including recommendations for: new funding to provide paid work experience and workforce training to underserved youth ages 14-24; investment in additional HECC staffing to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) leadership efforts and eliminate systemic racism in agency policies and practices, including dedicated tribal consultation and support; funding to continue work to improve transfer student pathways; and more.

Our Commission

OUR VISION:

The State of Oregon's Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) envisions a future in which all Oregonians—and especially those whom our systems have underserved and marginalized—benefit from the transformational power of high-quality postsecondary education and training. [Learn more about our vision and Strategic Plan here.](#)

The HECC is the state entity responsible for ensuring pathways to higher education success for Oregonians statewide, and serves as a convener of institutions and partners working across the public and private higher education arena. Established in 2011, HECC is a 14-member volunteer commission responsible for advising the Oregon Legislature and the Governor on higher education policy. The Commission is supported by an executive director who oversees eight offices of the agency. To learn more about the HECC go to: www.oregon.gov/highered/about/Pages/hecc.aspx

Upcoming Meetings:

Higher Education Coordinating Commission,
February 11, 2021 (tentative)

HECC Funding and Achievement Subcommittee:

February 10, 2021 (tentative)

Oregon Youth Commission Advisory

Committee: February 11, 2021

Workforce and Talent Development Board

Executive Team: February 11, 2021
(tentative)**Ore**

For other [upcoming public meetings of the HECC, see our website here](#). For [Affiliated Boards \(WTDB, others, see here\)](#). For email notices of upcoming public Commission meetings, or to sign up for our newsletter, go to www.oregon.gov/HigherEd

Response to the Pandemic: Oregon colleges and universities continue to operate the increased use of remote and distance learning, physical distancing, and limited access to campus facilities for the public to prevent spread of the coronavirus. Throughout 2020, HECC has worked closely with the Oregon Health Authority and the Governor to communicate and clarify the [public health standards all Oregon colleges and universities](#) must follow for any in-person operations at public and private colleges statewide. In this process, we have urged institutions to utilize [Governor's Equity Framework for Pandemic Response](#). While the need for postsecondary education continues to be high, our reports show that fall, 2020 enrollment was down overall across the public postsecondary education landscape in Oregon. In addition, while federal relief dollars have provided some much-needed support, the pandemic has introduced fiscal hardships for Oregon learners and the higher education institutions that serve them. The HECC Office of Workforce Investments (OWI) continues its extensive work to mitigate challenges for workers and employers impacted by COVID-19. The OWI works with the Oregon Employment Department, partner agencies, and community-based organizations to coordinate Rapid Response services supporting affected workers and businesses during reported layoffs.

Equity Leadership: Rudyane Rivera-Lindstrom, Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for the HECC, continues to collaborate with our partners and staff on the HECC's internal and external goals and initiatives related to racial justice and equity. In November 2019, the HECC began examining its equity processes, levels of understanding of how to engage authentically in the work, and identify what is needed to strengthen the agency's long-standing commitment to equity and partnership with higher education institutions and other state agencies. Internally, agency leadership has adopted four overarching equity goals that will support consistency and accountability to the HECC's work and in operationalizing of our equity lens. Externally, collaboration and network building has been strained due to the limitations resulting from the pandemic, only allowing for virtual meetings and collaborations. Most recently, the HECC has participated in the education recovery work under the Governor's Racial Justice Council.

TIE Partnership Grant: With support from the Oregon HECC [Talent, Innovation, and Equity Partnership grant from Lumina Foundation](#), HECC continues to be in close conversation and consultation with diverse community members and groups. Building on a statewide equity roundtable listening tour in 2019-2020, HECC convened a Leadership Council for Equity, comprised of leaders from various postsecondary institutions and community cultural organizations. This Leadership Council is developing culturally relevant and responsive tangible tools aimed to disrupt systemic practices in Oregon's postsecondary landscape that have created disproportionate educational achievement gaps amongst Black/African Americans, Hispanic/Latinx, Native American/Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders learners. In addition, in fall, 2020, HECC [awarded three Talent, Innovation, and Equity \("TIE"\) sub-grants](#) for new innovative collaborations between higher education institutions and community-based organizations (CBOs) that have strong expertise serving diverse communities with culturally-specific programming. Of these grants, the Indigenous Nations Studies Department of Portland State University (PSU) was awarded \$75,000 to collaborate with the OHSU-PSU School of Public Health and the Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA). This cross-institutional and community-based collaboration will support Native students through frameworks centering Indigenous Traditional Ecological & Cultural Knowledge (ITECK).

Adult Learner Outreach Toolkit: The HECC is pleased to share a toolkit of marketing resources to help Oregon postsecondary education institutions and partners to engage adult learners of color in their postsecondary education and workforce training goals. The Oregon Adult Learner Outreach toolkit includes a set of messages and documents that may be effective with adult learners from communities of color and other Oregonians interested in starting or restarting in a postsecondary education or training program. Supported by the TIE grant, the goal of this toolkit is to help institutions and partners improve outreach to Oregonians from underrepresented communities of color with research-informed messaging focused on decreasing barriers to enrollment and completion, changing narratives that discourage access, and improving strategies for retention. Institutions, community and tribal partners are encouraged to choose the messages that best suit their needs and audiences, and customize them to speak to their own offerings.

Funding Formula Review: In addition to the approval of the ARB, the HECC is nearing completion of an extensive year-long review of the [funding distribution model for the public universities](#) in the state, the first comprehensive review since the model was launched in 2015. The funding formula creates state financial incentives for universities to increase the number of resident students who complete degrees, with additional funding weights for students of color, low-income, rural, and veteran students. The recommendations, if adopted by the Commission, will update the way \$837 million in state funding is distributed among the seven public universities to incentivize investments leading to student success.

Recent Research and Reports:

State Funded Financial Aid Programs Linked to Student Success: The HECC Office of Research and Data is pleased to release two issue briefs on Oregon's largest state-funded financial aid programs, [2021 Oregon Opportunity Grant \(OOG\) Issue Brief](#) and the [2020 Oregon Promise Issue Brief](#). These financial aid programs are administered by the HECC Office of Student Access and Completion (OSAC). The issue briefs highlight the significant impact state-funded financial aid has on postsecondary affordability and completion for Oregon students, especially those from underserved racial/ethnic, low-income, and rural groups. The issue briefs highlight key findings from two comprehensive legislative reports the HECC has completed on these programs. The [full report for the OPG can be found here](#) and the [report for the OOG here](#).

Workforce Impacts of Pandemic: The Oregon Workforce and Talent Development Board (WTDB) has commissioned ECONorthwest and other researchers and policy leaders to develop a series of reports regarding key issues resulting from the pandemic. We invite our partners to explore these reports on the WTDB website here: www.oregon.gov/workforceboard/pages/index.aspx

Oregon Educator Equity Report: [The HECC was a contributor to the 2020 Oregon Educator Equity Report](#), documenting Oregon's progress in diversifying the educator workforce. This [annual report](#) was published by the former Chief Education Office, with contributions from the HECC, the Oregon Department of Education, and the Teacher's Standards and Practices Commission, pursuant to Senate Bill 755 (2013) and HB 3375 (2015).

Affordability and Financial Aid:

The HECC Office of Student Access and Completion (OSAC) continues to encourage Oregonians to pursue grants and scholarships at OregonStudentAid.gov.

Oregon Students are Encouraged to Apply as Soon as Possible for Grants and Scholarships at OregonStudentAid.gov: In a recent press release, the HECC Office of Student Access and Completion (OSAC) encouraged all Oregonians to be aware of upcoming student financial aid application deadlines. [Read the full press release including key upcoming deadlines here.](#)

Outreach and Presentations: To help students understand the programs detailed here, and the application processes, OSAC offers numerous [videos and resources for students, counselors, parents, and educators](#). Schools and organizations may [request a financial aid presentation by OSAC speakers](#) to their students, and Oregon tribal partners are encouraged and welcomed to make such requests.

1st Step for Financial Aid is FAFSA or ORSAA: Students should complete the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid](#) (FAFSA) or the [Oregon Student Aid Application](#) (ORSAA) to be considered for federal and/or state financial aid. The FAFSA is the primary application for federal and state financial aid, and the ORSAA is Oregon's alternative for undocumented students, including students with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status. Learn more about Financial Aid Programs Administered by the HECC at www.oregonstudentaid.gov

FAFSA Plus+: OSAC continues to invite applicants for FAFSA Plus+. FAFSA Plus+ is a year-round program that includes Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion support, FAFSA completion events, and other college access resources. OSAC shares information about FAFSA completions with participating sites, allowing site staff to provide targeted assistance to high school seniors and their families. School districts, high schools, TRIO programs, Tribal education agencies, Indian organizations, or community-based organizations are invited to complete the non-competitive [FAFSA Plus+ Application](#).

Tribal Access to Oregon Foster Youth Tuition and Fee Waiver: HECC-OSAC continues to be available to ensure tribal foster youth have access to the Oregon Foster Youth Tuition and Fee Waiver program, which waives tuition and fees for the equivalent of 4 years of undergraduate studies after other public grants and any school aid are applied. Learn more about eligibility at www.oregonstudentaid.gov. OSAC in 2019 developed a solution to ensure that information on eligible tribal foster youth are provided to college financial aid offices to be considered for the Foster Youth Tuition and Fee Waiver. Tribes who administer their own Foster Youth programs can now upload lists of eligible students into the OSAC Partner Portal. OSAC representatives would be pleased to help any tribal staff who utilize this option (contact Kristin.Vreeland@state.or.us).

Expansion of Equity-Based Scholarship Program for Educators: With additional state support through the Student Success Act, the HECC was able to expand the number of future educators supported through the Oregon Teacher Scholars Program in 2020. The Oregon Teacher Scholars Program (OTSP) is a HECC-

operated scholarship for students pursuing an education degree who are ethnically diverse or are Heritage Speakers of a non-English language. The program provides students with career coaching, and awards scholarships to help students complete their degree with less debt.

Supporting Pathways and Student Success

Academic Program Approvals: The Commission approved the following new academic programs at Oregon's public institutions in fall 2020. For more information. For details, see the [August through December 2020 Commission meeting materials here](#).

Community Colleges: Blue Mountain Community College: Certificate, Medical Assisting; AAS, Industrial Systems Technology; Chemeketa Community College, Certificate, Computer Information Systems; Clackamas Community College, Wildland Fire Science, Certificate of Completion; Klamath Community College, AAS, Lab Technician;

Universities: Oregon State University/University of Oregon Joint Degree, Master of Science and PhD in Bioengineering; Oregon State University, B.S. in Supply Chain and Logistics Management; Oregon State University, M.S., M. Eng., and PhD degrees in Artificial Intelligence; Portland Community College, Deaf Cultural Studies, Certificate of Completion; Oregon State University, Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science, Marine Studies; Western Oregon University, B.S., Cybercrime Investigation and Enforcement (program change); Western Oregon University, B.S. in Economics and Mathematics.

Youth Employment Partnerships with Tribes: The Oregon Youth Corps (OYC) was unable to support youth employment programming over the summer of 2020 due to Covid-19 restrictions and financial impacts of the pandemic; however, if public health guidance and additional funding allows, OYC will make grants available in 2021 for all nine federally-recognized Tribes for traditional youth programming. Additionally, if the public health guidance allows it this year, for the first time, OYC will have an Oregon Tribal Youth Corps Natural Resource Conservation Summer Program in partnership with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Oregon Youth Corps will grant these funds to tribes in the BLM's Coos Bay and Northwest Oregon Regions. OYC hopes to expand upon existing partnerships with the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Coquille Indian Tribe, and the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians and begin new partnerships with the remaining Tribes in Oregon.

STEM Investment Council Launches 2021-2025 STEM Education Plan: The STEM Investment Council recently completed Oregon's [2021-2025 STEM Education Plan](#). The council hopes that this plan will be used statewide to guide investments, policy, and programming related to STEM education.

Applied Baccalaureate Programs Coming Soon at Community Colleges: Oregon's community colleges now have the choice to design and offer an 'applied baccalaureate' (AB) — a bachelor-level, workforce-oriented program that prepares Oregonians for high-value career opportunities with Oregon's most active employers and industries. Oregon community colleges were authorized to seek HECC's approval to offer these programs with the passage of Senate Bill 3 in 2019, and the agency in fall 2020 launched the program review process.

Economic and Community Impact

The Oregon Legislature's Emergency Board Approves HECC's request for Emergency Relief for Students: In addition to the federal support through the CRRSSA Act, the Higher Education Coordinating Commission is pleased to report that the Oregon Legislature recently approved the agency request for \$932,112 in emergency financial assistance to support students experiencing hardship as a result of the pandemic. The allocation was approved by the Legislative Emergency Board on January 8, 2021. These resources will be used to assist students who have so far been ineligible for federal CARES and CRRSSA Act assistance. More information is in our [HECC Collaborations newsletter here](#).

Oregon Institutions and their Students will Benefit from new CRRSAA Federal Relief Funding, but Gaps Remain: Oregon students, colleges, and universities will receive much-needed relief funds from the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA), passed by Congress on December 21, 2020. In addition, significant changes to federal student aid policy, including simplifying the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), expanding Pell Grant eligibility to incarcerated students, and more, were attached to the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021. The HECC has produced a preliminary summary of the [CRRSAA key higher education provisions and impacts for Oregon institutions here](#).