



Legislative Session Update February 2015

The 78th Legislative Session convened on Monday, February 2nd. The Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) staff participated in several presentations to House and Senate education-related committees and public hearings were held on three of the agency's bills.

House Higher Education, Innovation & Workforce Development Committee

At the initial meeting of this committee, Executive Director Ben Cannon and Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development (CCWD) Interim Commissioner Jim Middleton presented an overview of higher education including information on student success goals, progress toward those goals, and data on related trends and trajectories. On Wednesday, February 4th, Mr. Cannon was joined by the Director of the Office of Student Access and Completion (OSAC) Bob Brew as well as public and private university and community college representatives to discuss cost trends in higher education. Both of these presentations laid the groundwork for appreciating the Commission's focus on completion, in addition to access, and increasing affordability for low-income students by delving into trends around state appropriations, tuition and fees, institutional aid, time to degree, and potential earnings for students who complete and students who do not.

Representative Read has invited HECC staff to provide workforce systems overview and to discuss postsecondary affordability in further depth in the coming weeks.

During the first week of session, the committee held public hearings on three agency bills: House Bill 2408, that would make statutory changes to combine CCWD and the HECC; House Bill 2409, repealing OSAC statutes for programs that have not been funded; and House Bill 2410, that would authorize community colleges to offer noncredit training certificates. The committee was generally receptive to each of these bills although amendments for each will be needed.

Senate Education Committee

Mr. Cannon participated with Chief Education Officer Nancy Golden, Deputy Superintendent Rob Saxton, Early Learning Systems Director Megan Irwin, and Youth Development Director Iris Bell in an overview of Oregon's P-20 education system. This presentation was also delivered to the House Education Committee. The Senate Education Committee also held its first public hearing on Senate Bill 215 that would lift the sunset on the Oregon Education Investment Board.

The chair of the committee, Senator Roblan, has invited the agency to present information on cost trends in the future and has indicated that public hearings will be held on two HECC agency

bills in the coming weeks. Those bills are Senate Bill 218 that would increase the level of fees that may be charged by the Office of Private Postsecondary Education, and Senate Bill 219 that makes technical changes to HECC requirements for taking action and appropriations for public universities and the Oregon Health and Sciences University (OHSU).

Additional Legislative Activity

The House Veterans Committee held a public hearing on House Bill 2645 that would require community colleges and public universities to establish a priority enrollment system for qualified students who are active members of the Armed Forces or qualified veterans. The bill is sponsored by Representative Brad Witt.

HECC staff also participated in a presentation on the workforce system in the Senate Workforce Committee.

Mr. Cannon will participate in a P-20 budget overview presentation to the Joint Ways and Means Education Subcommittee at the end of February. The HECC's agency budget presentation is scheduled to be before this subcommittee beginning on March 16th through the first week of April. The presentation will include a holistic view of state funding for postsecondary education including participation by the public universities, the community colleges, OHSU, and all of the offices within the HECC agency.

On February 12th, the Oregon Student Association with the community colleges and public universities are a "Restore the Cuts" Rally at the Capitol.