



Legislative Session Update May 2015

The 2015 Legislative Session is progressing quickly. The first deadline for passing bills came and went in April and the next significant deadline is next Friday, May 22nd. On that day, committees other than Rules, Ways & Means, and Revenue must post any bills that will receive a work session on an agenda. This will signal which bills have a chance of passing from now until *sine die*.

The revenue forecast was issued this morning. Legislative leaders will use this forecast to determine how much money is available to finalize budgets for all public agencies and services.

HECC's Policy Bills

As of today, all of the agency's bills are still alive. Three of them are in the Joint Ways & Means Committee, the Legislature's budget committee:

- The HECC's highest priority bill, **House Bill 2407A**, would implement changes to the Oregon Opportunity Grant (OOG) in order to effectively promote affordability as endorsed by the Commission. The bill was presented to the Joint Ways & Means Education Subcommittee earlier this week. We have received positive feedback on the redesign of the program that prioritizes students with the highest financial need. The biggest question around this bill and the OOG is how much the Legislature will be able to invest in it. The Governor's Recommended Budget set aside \$143.3M for the program while the Co-Chairs budget has it set at \$137M with a possible \$5M following the May revenue forecast.
- **Senate Bill 218**, revising the fees for the Office of Private Postsecondary Education, was passed by the Senate Education Committee and is currently in Ways & Means.
- **House Bill 2409** is a technical bill that cleans up OSAC statutes. It passed unanimously out of the House Higher Education Committee and has been referred to Ways & Means.

House Bill 2408, that would formalize the merger of CCWD and the HECC, is awaiting an amendment that would transfer CCWD's capital construction accounts to the HECC.

Two other bills, **House Bill 2410** allowing community colleges to offer noncredit training certificates and **Senate Bill 219** that changes the quorum requirements for HECC Commission action, have passed out of both chambers and are awaiting signature by the Governor.

Additional Bills of Interest

A legislative update that was provided to the Student Success and Institutional Collaboration Subcommittee yesterday is attached. It includes detail on several bills of interest. In addition to those bills, we are closely tracking the following bills:

- **House Bill 3516** would authorize the ODA to require a surety bond from private, non-exempt regulated institutions in Oregon. This bill is scheduled for a public hearing in the Senate Workforce Committee next week.
- **Senate Bill 80**, that will dissolve the Oregon University System, the State Board of Higher Education, and the Chancellor's Office, was heard in the Senate Revenue Committee earlier this week.
- **House Bill 2662**, that would establish the Pay It Forward program, was heard in the House Revenue Committee earlier this week.

In addition to those bills, the HECC is following bills that pertain to expanding access to Open Education Resources; institutional contracts for student financial aid services; requiring low-cost degree options; developing a General Education Credential to be awarded by universities; staffing ratios at colleges and universities; sexual assault at postsecondary institutions; the ASPIRE program; addressing disparities in higher education for underrepresented communities; university shared services; and student complaints at exempt institutions.

HECC's Budget

The HECC completed its "Phase II" presentations to Education Subcommittee of the Joint Ways & Means Committee this morning. Phase II hearings allow subcommittees to conduct in-depth discussions on major budget issues. The HECC was invited to present on funding distribution models for community colleges and universities, as well as the OOG and the agency's policy option packages.

HECC staff is currently reaching out to the public universities to discuss distribution of funds that previously resided with the Engineering Technology Industry Council (ETIC). A group will be convened over the next few months to develop a framework for the 2015-16 fiscal year allocation and to develop a long-term approach to allocating these funds.

Additional Updates

Executive Director Ben Cannon, Interim Commissioner Jim Middleton, and Finance Director Brian Fox presented the Commission's work on funding distribution models to the House Higher Education, Innovation, and Workforce Development Committee last week. HECC staff has also been invited to present to the Senate Workforce Committee next week on the State's regulatory relationship with private career schools and private degree granting institutions.

The House Higher Education Committee held an informational hearing on "Debt-Free Education" earlier this week featuring the free community college concept. Presenters included Sen. Mark Hass, Sara Goldrick-Rab, and President Larry Galizio from Clatsop Community College. This committee also held a hearing on the retrenchment processes at Southern and Eastern Oregon Universities yesterday. A related bill, **Senate Bill 493**, would remove the Governor's ability to disband the governing board of either of these institutions if the conditions that were imposed by the State Board of Higher Education are not met. This bill is in the House Higher Education Committee.