

Docket Item:

Legislative Session Update – February 2016

Summary:

The 2016 Legislative Session began on Monday, February 1st and is moving forward quickly. Just over 260 bills were introduced for consideration and the agency is tracking about 50 of those. Today, just 9 days into the Session, is the last day for policy committees to pass bills that originated in their chamber.

The revenue forecast was issued yesterday morning and gave us a sense of the resources that are available, or not, to address any remaining budget issues.

Here are a few of the bills that would directly impact the Commission and the agency:

[House Bill 4019](#) was introduced on the agency's behalf to fix a couple of technical statutory issues.

[House Bill 4021](#) directs the HECC to work with the Office of the State Treasurer to conduct a study on what could be done to lower interest rates on student loans for students in Oregon.

[House Bill 4076](#), introduced by Representative Johnson and Sen. Hass, would implement a support program at community colleges to operate alongside the Oregon Promise program. The measure would draw \$2.5M from the appropriation that was set aside in Senate Bill 418 last Session.

[Senate Bill 1526](#) would appropriate \$9M to support workforce investment boards and the Oregon Youth Conservation Corps.

[Senate Bill 1537](#) reflects work by an interim work group on the "5th year" issue.

[Senate Bill 1540](#) would direct the HECC to study methods that would increase the number of Math majors in postsecondary education.

On the budget side, there are a few requests and proposals of interest. First, officials from Umpqua Community College presented their request for state support for their recovery issues to the Education Subcommittee of Ways & Means yesterday. Tomorrow, there will be a hearing on all capital requests this Session. The HECC will not be coordinating the presentation of those requests but expects that the universities and colleges will appear before the Capital Construction Subcommittee. As I mentioned at the last Commission meeting, the community colleges are also pursuing a request to address campus safety and security issues for all of their campuses. The universities are seeking, with the Oregon Student Association, approximately \$15M to support student completion efforts. Agency staff also continues to work with the colleges and universities to provide information on the impact of changes to the State's minimum wage to campuses and students.

Lastly, Executive Director Ben Cannon will present the Commission's Strategic Plan to the House Higher Education, Innovation and Workforce Development Committee next week.