



# Higher Education Coordinating Commission

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## Agency Update:

March, 2016 | The HECC is pleased to have completed its (2016-20) Strategic Plan, a statutory responsibility of the Commission, and a truly exciting opportunity to forge a deliberate path toward our collective postsecondary education goals. At its February meeting, the Higher Education Coordinating Commission approved the [final draft of its 2016-20 strategic plan](#) presented by Executive Director Ben Cannon. The HECC is required by law to adopt a strategic plan for achieving state postsecondary education goals (ORS 351.735), and the plan will provide a framework for the Commission and agency's actions in coming months and years. The developing plan focuses on the state's higher education goals, our progress towards them, background on the higher education landscape, the responsibility of the HECC, and outlines the following key strategies, which are detailed in the document:

- **Goal-setting.** Sharpening our state higher education goals and better describe our progress in meeting them
- **Funding.** Using effective advocacy to increase public funding for higher education
- **Pathways.** Simplifying and aligning systems and structures for student entry, navigation, completion, and exit/re-entry to career
- **Student Support.** Strengthening the ability of campuses and communities to support student success and completion.
- **Affordability.** Limit student and family cost for all, with a particular focus on ensuring that students rising through Oregon's K-12 school system may be reasonably certain that they will have access to affordable options for higher education
- **Research, Innovation, and Workforce Development.** Using state policies and investments to enhance the impact of Oregon colleges and universities on their community's civic and economic well-being

## Our Commission

The Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) is dedicated to fostering and sustaining the best, most rewarding pathways to opportunity and success for all Oregonians through an accessible, affordable and coordinated network for educational achievement beyond a high school diploma. Oregon's higher education and workforce system serves hundreds of thousands of learners through seven public universities, 17 public community colleges, private and independent colleges and universities, workforce programs, and private career and trade schools., who oversees the work of the HECC agency.

Established in 2011, HECC is a 14-member volunteer commission responsible for advising the Oregon Legislature, the Governor, and the Chief Education Office on higher education policy. The Commission is supported by an executive director who oversees the HECC agency. For more information, see About Us on the HECC website.

**April 13, 2016:** Funding and Achievement Subcommittee, Portland

**April 13, 2016,** Student Success and Institutional Collaboration Subcommittee, Salem

**April 14, 2016,** Full Higher Education Coordinating Commission Meeting, Portland

*For email notices of upcoming public HECC meetings, or sign up for our newsletter, go to [www.oregon.gov/HigherEd](http://www.oregon.gov/HigherEd)*

Since July, 2015, HECC has received comments on the strategic plan in writing and in person from campus leadership, faculty, students, community based organizations, business leaders, tribal leaders, and other partners, and extends thanks for the extremely valuable input and engagement in setting these strategic priorities.

Commissioner appointment: In February, Claire McMorris was appointed to serve on the HECC as a student, non-voting member. Ms. McMorris is a student in the Honors College at Oregon State University, pursuing a BA in Political Science with an emphasis in Law, Policy, and Society, and minors in Music and Spanish.

Oregon #1 for funding improvement. Oregon leads the nation in the rate at which it increased state funding for higher education from 2015 to 2016, according to initial results of the [new Grapevine report released recently](#). Oregon's state investment in higher education increased 16.2 percent between 2015 and 2016, compared to a 4.1 percent increase nationally. While it is exciting to have positive news to report about higher education funding in Oregon, our recent gains still leave us well below the national average for state investment on a per-student basis—giving us considerable work still to do.

Completion Data: Oregon public colleges and universities award 45,151 degrees and certificates. [In data released by the HECC's Office of Research and Data](#), Oregon's public colleges and universities awarded 45,151 degrees and certificates in 2014-15, an increase from 43,791 in 2013-14. The great majority of these awards—35,786—were awarded to Oregon residents, also up from the previous academic year.

Patrick Crane appointed as HECC Director of Community Colleges and Workforce Development (CCWD): Patrick Crane has been appointed as the new Director of the HECC's Office of Community Colleges and Workforce Development starting February 1, 2016. Crane formerly served as Director of the HECC's Office of Research and Data, and he succeeds Dan Findley who had served as Director of CCWD since July, 2015. Crane came to the HECC last year from West Virginia, where he administered a Department of Labor TAACCCT grant for the West Virginia Community & Technical College System. He previously served as Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives for the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission and was Education Policy Advisor to West Virginia Governor Joe Manchin. He is a graduate of Wesleyan University (Connecticut) and earned his PhD in Higher Education from the University of Georgia. Laurie Roe has stepped up from her role as lead research analyst to act as Interim Director of the HECC Office of Research and Data. In addition, the HECC announced at its January meeting that fiscal analyst Andrew Rogers has stepped up to lead the Finance unit of the Office of University Coordination, following the departure of the former Director of University Finance, Brian Fox.

#### 2016 Legislative Session

The 2016 Legislative Session began on February 1st and is scheduled to conclude no later than March 6<sup>th</sup>. Just over 260 bills were introduced for consideration. The HECC agency was actively engaged as a resource to the Legislature, Governor Brown, Oregon's postsecondary institutions, and other partners in providing policy and fiscal analysis on numerous bills. Commissioners Neil Bryant and David Rives and Executive Director Ben Cannon presented the Commission's Strategic Plan to the House Higher Education, Innovation and Workforce Development Committee and the HECC provided other informational updates on a variety of work that the Legislature has assigned to the HECC.

A few bills that directly impact the HECC appeared poised for passage including:

- House Bill 4021 that directs the HECC to work with the Office of the State Treasurer to explore approaches for lowering interest rates on student loans for students in Oregon.
- House Bill 4076, introduced by Representative Johnson and Sen. Hass, that would establish a grant program for community colleges to support Oregon Promise students and provide a first-year experience to encourage their success.
- Senate Bill 1537 changed what has been known as "5th year" programs to a more limited program for "post-graduate scholars". Qualifying students must meet several criteria including completing diploma requirements, applying for federal financial aid, and not receiving an Oregon Promise grant, which requires at least a 2.5 GPA, in order to receive state support to attend a community college in their district for one year.
- Senate Bill 1540 directs the HECC to study methods to increase the number of Math majors at Oregon's universities.

Related to budget, the Legislature appropriated approximately \$5.7 million to support student transitions from high school to postsecondary education and Umpqua Community College received just over \$6 million to support their recovery stemming from the shooting that occurred there on October 1<sup>st</sup>.

Legislative Reports: The HECC website [Featured Reports page](#) now includes reports on [SB 418 \(Accelerated Learning and the Oregon Promise\)](#), [HB 2973 \(Affordable Baccalaureate Degree Options\)](#), [HB 2681 \(Community College Course Placement\)](#), [HB 4059 \(Credit for Prior Learning\)](#), and more, which were recently submitted to the Oregon Legislature. Stay tuned to this page for other upcoming reports as they are finalized.

#### **Accessible, affordable and supportive pathways**

Financial Aid Deadlines: While the deadlines have passed for the Oregon Promise and the OSAC Scholarships, students are still encouraged to fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as soon as possible to take advantage of all possible aid such as Pell Grant and Oregon Opportunity Grant dollars.

The Oregon Promise/Senate Bill 81: A major area for the HECC Office of Student Access and Completion (OSAC) has been the launch of the new Oregon Promise program, created through Senate Bill 81 (2015). The Oregon Promise program is a new state program that gives the graduating high school Class of 2016 and qualified GED® recipients the opportunity for full or partial tuition grants to attend community college. The deadline for the Oregon Promise program was March 1, and over 15,000 students have completed applications for the program. In the last several months, HECC staff designed and launched the application for this program and shared information across the state about eligibility requirements, application process, and more; we are pleased by the numbers of students who are drawn to this new opportunity.

Oregon Opportunity Grant: Effective for 2016-17, the awarding priority for the Oregon Opportunity Grant (OOG) will change from awarding on a first-come, first-served basis to awarding based on financial need. The maximum annual grant amount will increase from \$2,100 to \$2,250. To be considered for an OOG, students must submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Students can link to the FAFSA website from OSAC's website ([www.OregonStudentAid.gov](http://www.OregonStudentAid.gov)), or they can go directly to [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov). All students (and parents of dependent students) will need an FSA ID, which serves as their electronic signature on the FAFSA. Those who do not yet have an FSA ID need not wait; they can go to the website (<https://fsaid.ed.gov>) anytime and create their FSA ID. For undocumented students who are ineligible for federal student aid programs, OSAC has developed the ORSAA – an alternative need analysis process for determining a student's financial need. Responses to a short set of filtering questions link students to the correct form – the FAFSA or the ORSAA.

OSAC Educates 1,000 students Statewide on Financial Aid Resources: Congrats to all students and families who attended the many financial aid education events that the OSAC hosted across the state in January. At more than 87 events, students were encouraged and informed on how to take advantage of all available financial aid options to support their college goals. OSAC offered 70 financial aid outreach events through College Goal Oregon, 12 events focused on the OSAC Scholarship Application and the Oregon Promise, as well as 5 college affordability events in partnership with the Oregon College Savings Plan, serving approximately 1,000+ students statewide. At the events, students received guidance and hands-on assistance with filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which determines financial need for purposes of federal, state and campus-based financial aid including the Oregon Opportunity Grant and the Oregon Promise.

OSAC receives training on American Indian/Alaskan Native Cultural Competency: On February 22nd, four OSAC staff members involved with scholarship selection attended a training sponsored by the Ford Family Foundation entitled American Indian/Alaskan Native Cultural Competency. Both organizations are committed to increasing participation and selection of native students for their scholarships. April Campbell and Tabatha Whitefoot from the Oregon Department of Education led the presentation. The meeting and discussion focused on raising awareness of cultural differences, which could inadvertently prevent Native Americans from being selected for scholarship consideration, and possible culture differences that could prevent an advantageous response by Native Americans. Following the training, staff presented a mini version of the training at an OSAC all-staff meeting.

ASPIRE Calls for Volunteer Mentors to Help Youth Achieve College and Career Goals: The ASPIRE Program invites Oregonians to volunteer to mentor middle and high school students in communities across the state in achieving their college and career goals. Administered by the HECC Office of Student Access and Completion, ASPIRE offers training and opportunities for adult Oregonians to become youth mentors at over 150 sites across the state.

How to Volunteer:

- [Explore the "Become a Volunteer" tab on the Oregon ASPIRE website.](#)
- On this site, you can find the ASPIRE location nearest you and start the application process.

For more information, contact Vickie Potoski at OSAC at 541.687.7307, or email Vickie.

### **Promotion of college completion, and broadening the pathways to our 40/40/20 goals**

Attention GED Community: New Passing Score: After a recent decision by the GED Testing Service (GEDTS), all Oregon students who took the new GED test since the inception of the 2014 GED Test series and who received a 145 or higher on all four tests will now earn a GED Certificate. Beginning January 26, 2016, GED Testing Service has implemented the new GED pass score of 145 (a change from the previous 150 pass score), and the Oregon GED program administered through the HECC Office of Community Colleges and Workforce Development is facilitating this change with partners across Oregon. Students should go to the [GEDTS website here](#) which has a [student FAQ sheet](#) about the new passing score, what it means for them, and next steps. To receive ongoing GED updates, please consider [joining the GED listserve here](#).

New Programs Approved: At its December, January, and February commission meeting the Higher Education Coordinating Commission approved the following academic programs (and new program location) at Oregon community colleges and universities: Linn-Benton Community College: AAS in Nondestructive Tests (NDT) and Evaluation; Mt. Hood Community College: Certificate in Basic Health Care; Mt. Hood Community College: AAS in Engineering Technology; Oregon Institute of Technology: new Wilsonville location for B.S., Mechanical Engineering; Oregon Institute of Technology, M.S. degree in Allied Health (MSAH). Oregon State University: M.A. in Environmental Arts and Humanities; Oregon State University: M.S./Ph.D. in Psychology; Oregon State University: M.S. in Athletic Training; Southwestern Oregon Community College, Certificate of Completion in Dental Assisting.

Commission Responds to Eastern Oregon University and Southern Oregon University Financial Conditions: The HECC recently provided feedback to Eastern Oregon University (EOU) and Southern Oregon University (SOU) on their respective financial positions and strategic planning efforts, meeting a key responsibility of the Commission's under conditions adopted during the establishment of governing boards at those two universities. These [conditions](#) were established in 2014 by the former State Board of Higher Education due to concerns about fiscal challenges and long term financial viability at EOU and SOU. The Commission heard extensive presentations from campus leaders in December, 2015 on fiscal and institutional planning ([see docket items here](#)). At January's public meeting, the Commission approved official feedback from the HECC to [Eastern Oregon University](#) and [Southern Oregon University](#) related to regional opportunities, enrollment trajectories, and key challenges the institutions will need to address in the years to come. The EOU and SOU reports and the Commission's feedback represent the second step in a multi-year review process.

### **Other Updates**

HECC News Clips service: The HECC provides a regular email service including a selection of news clips primarily related to Oregon postsecondary education. If you wish to sign up for this email, please [subscribe to news clips here](#).

For more on current work of the HECC, please see recent meeting materials, or go to [oregon.gov/HigherEd](http://oregon.gov/HigherEd).