

## **DRAFT: HECC 2017-2021 “Strategic Roadmap”**

*An update to the 2016-2020 HECC Strategic Plan*

### **HECC History and Background:**

The Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) is the State of Oregon’s sole board and agency responsible for ensuring pathways to educational success from the point at which students are completing their formal high school experience and moving forward to learning, training and mastering skills in college and career training programs.

Originally chartered as a state commission by the Legislature in 2011, this body was given expanded authorities in 2013 to include both a commission and a state agency that supports and implements the commission’s vision.

In creating the HECC, the Legislature consolidated state-level leadership and coordination for post-secondary education, which had been previously spread across several boards and positions.

The HECC’s statutory charter outlines three primary aspirations for Oregon higher education, including: (1) improving educational attainment and completion, (2) improving Oregon’s economic competitiveness and quality of life; and (3) ensuring that resident students have affordable access to colleges and universities.

The HECC is generally responsible for advising on, adopting, and implementing state policies to ensure that the network of colleges, universities, workforce development initiatives and pre-college outreach programs remain well coordinated and learner-friendly.

To effectively exercise its powers, duties, and functions, the HECC works in close partnership with the governing boards, administrators, faculty, and students at the institutions it serves—playing a critical convening role for Oregon higher education and the communities it affects.

The HECC adopted its first Strategic Plan in Spring, 2014. Almost two years later, the HECC adopted a revised [2016-2020 Strategic Plan](#), which it committed to updating regularly during the 2016-2020 time period.

This “Strategic Roadmap” represents the first official update to the Commission’s 2016-2020 Strategic Plan. It doesn’t replace the longer Plan adopted in 2016, but represents a summary, simplification, and, in some respects, a reframing of the original Plan. It is intended to express a vision of the Commission’s primary strategic

### **Values (PROPOSED):**

- Post-secondary education, including higher education and workforce training, is critical to ensuring the economic, civic, and social well-being of our state and its residents.
- Everyone has the ability to learn, and we have an ethical and moral responsibility to ensure an education system that provides optimal learning environments that lead students to be prepared for their futures.

- Students who have previously been described as “at-risk,” “underperforming,” “under-represented,” or minority actually represent Oregon’s best opportunity to improve overall educational outcomes. Our ability to meet the needs of this increasingly diverse population is a critical strategy for us to reach our education goals.
- Increasing access to post-secondary education and training is critical, but we must place equal emphasis on strategies that improve learners’ rates of success.
- Planning and strategies for post-secondary education and training should reflect the state’s specific talent and workforce needs.
- Oregon’s public post-secondary institutions cannot be shielded from competition, but we should reduce friction and unnecessary duplication in order to promote smooth pathways for learners and effective returns for taxpayers.
- Our Commission and agency must be publicly transparent, inclusive, and collaborative. We have a particular responsibility to bring underrepresented stakeholders to the table, including students and community-based organizations.
- As a coordinating commission, we operate with significant responsibility but limited authority for higher education and workforce in Oregon. Mindful that we do not govern the institutions that directly serve Oregon learners, we will exert leadership through careful but vigorous exercise of our statutory authorities – as well as by using our power to name an issue, convene those who can address it, and champion solutions.

**Vision (adopted November 2013):**

The Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) is dedicated to fostering and sustaining high quality, rewarding pathways to opportunity and success for all Oregonians through an accessible, affordable and coordinated network for educational achievement beyond high school.

**Mission (PROPOSED):**

The mission of the Higher Education Coordinating Commission is to (1) improve post-secondary educational attainment and completion; (2) improve Oregon’s economic competitiveness and quality of life; and (3) ensure that resident students have affordable access to colleges and universities.

**Strategic Themes (PROPOSED):**

- 1. Conduct annual reporting on state, regional, and institutional progress to promote a virtuous cycle of accountability for reaching state goals**

Advancing Oregon’s higher education and workforce investments requires shared responsibility for state goals, visibility into progress, and an understanding of program effectiveness. To broaden and deepen commitment to higher education and workforce goals, especially at the local level, HECC will work with institutions and communities to identify the contributions they can make to the broader goal as well as their progress toward that contribution. Leaders of institutions, communities, and the state also need regular updates on improvement and evidence of which programs are effective in order to improve decision making and change course when needed. These needs are met with annual reporting on student, state, and institutional progress.

The HECC will engage in an array of reporting mechanisms to facilitate progress toward state higher education and workforce goals. These will include annual measures of statewide progress, both

overall and for underrepresented learners. In addition, the HECC will develop profiles of institutions, to give a current snapshot of higher education markers, and profiles of counties or other locales, to focus on the economic and social context for HECC work, the work itself, and the results of those investments. The breadth of these profiles should be complemented by short research briefs and longer topic reports that delve more deeply into particular aspects of higher education and workforce investments. Finally, evaluations of individual programs or efforts will offer opportunities to adjust specific strategies. These reporting efforts will be aimed primarily at three groups: policy makers (legislators; HECC, OWIB, and other Commissions and Boards; HECC staff; K-12 agencies and boards); postsecondary institutions, local workforce boards, and other groups that work directly with students and participants; and individuals and families.

## **2. Develop and advocate for a funding plan linked to state goals**

The Commission will empower public institutions of higher education to make student-focused investments in pursuit of aggressive improvement in higher education attainment levels. Sufficient core operations funding of institutions will allow for enhanced student support effort and programming in pursuit of State attainment goals. Throughout the State budgeting process, the required level of State investment will be communicated by the Commission through a clear and convincing model of the relationship between public investment in higher education and student outcomes, demonstrating both the opportunity and risk to Oregon students and the Oregon economy to the Governor and Legislature.

Such an understanding will require a view of institutional funding that transcends the borders of traditional State support funds and comprehensively considers other public investment, including capital expenditures, and student financial aid—each viewed as a component of the whole State investment, not as substitute funding streams. It will consider the students themselves and how demographics are shaping the challenge of meeting higher education attainment goals. Similarly, it will look beyond Oregon's borders and the State budget to examine how the cost of education attainment should be shared between Oregon, the federal government, and students. Finally, it will contemplate the potential instability future resources and contemplate reserves needed to ensure State goals are attainable throughout full economic cycles of recession and recovery.

## **3. Promote and adopt clear pathways for learner advancement and success**

As the sole board and agency responsible for coordinating education and training beyond high school, the HECC is responsible for promoting education and training opportunities where all Oregonians can be successful. Existing educational pathways are not serving all Oregonians equally well, a challenge that needs to be addressed if Oregon is to meet its educational attainment target, reach its equity goals, and expand its economy. To help the state, and Oregonians, to meet their goals, the HECC must promote pathways that will assist returning adults, displaced workers, transfer students, GED recipients, non-native English speakers, as well as traditional students in acquiring the skills they need to be successful.

The HECC has two primary strategies at its disposal to promote clearer pathways for learner advancement and success. The first is smoothing existing pathways to eliminate unnecessary impediments to student progress, especially credit loss and redundant coursework. The second is collaborating with postsecondary institutions and other training providers to create better on-ramps

to education and training opportunities, especially for non-traditional, rural, and underrepresented students. By 2021, Oregonians who enroll in the public education and workforce system should be able to seamlessly track and transport their credits, skills, and abilities from any education or training provider to any employer in a way that allows them to acquire the credentials they need, demonstrate their competencies, and meet their educational and professional goals. These same Oregonians should also receive comprehensive and relevant career advising at every entry point to the education and training system so that each one has a clear understanding of how to navigate the system and meet their goals, no matter where they are on their pathway.

#### **4. Conduct statewide outreach to connect Oregonians with affordable options for post-secondary education and training**

In order to measurably impact the successful transition of Oregon's youth and adult population to post-secondary education and training, HECC will develop an integrated statewide strategic outreach plan and staff will execute coordinated initiatives to better connect all Oregonians with affordable options for post-secondary education and training. HECC will expand and fortify its outreach efforts in partnership with K-12, nonprofit, and regional partners in order to reach all Oregonians equitably, and in doing so, aims to close gaps in access, achievement, completion and employment across the state.

HECC offices and programs have already demonstrated expertise and success in outreach related to increasing access to post-secondary education financial aid and planning resources, high school FAFSA completion, and workforce development. However, this impact is currently limited in reach and breadth. HECC will build and expand upon agency strengths in workforce development, adult training, youth outreach and K-12 pipeline initiatives such as ASPIRE, FAFSA Plus, Public Grants and hundreds of Private Scholarships. The state can do a more comprehensive job at serving and connecting all Oregonians through strategic outreach, using the equity lens as a guide to expand its network of partnerships and services in areas of the state that have the least amount of postsecondary participation, infrastructure (access), and support networks. A sustained strategic outreach initiative will increase the educational attainment of Oregonians, particularly the underserved, resulting in a more prosperous workforce, economy and communities. By building integrated strategic outreach initiatives, HECC offices will better reach Oregon's youth and adults who have been historically least engaged in postsecondary education and training, and those who are most underemployed or unemployed.