

Docket Item:

Competency Based Education Report per HB 3289 (2017)

Summary:

This report is provided pursuant to HB 3289 (2017), codified into law as ORS 350.125, which requires, beginning in 2018, that the HECC submit an annual report to the Oregon Legislature regarding competency based education (CBE). This first report will define CBE, provide a background on CBE both nationally and in Oregon, and provide the following required by HB 3289:

- Describe the effectiveness of expanding competency based education in public post-secondary institutions of education in this state and of granting postsecondary degrees on the basis of competency based education.
- Identify issues and barriers, including postsecondary accreditation standards that present challenges to implementing or expanding competency based education programs in post-secondary institutions of education in this state.
- Analyze competency based education models and determine which models have been successful.
- Recommend specific policy changes and initiatives that public post-secondary institutions of education in this state may implement to expand competency based education.

Competency based education presents a unique opportunity to increase access to, and foster completion of, degrees for many students who may have historically been underrepresented in higher education. This is not to say that competency based education can, or should, replace traditional higher education approaches, but that it can supplement it.

Some regulatory barriers do exist that limit the expansion of CBE within Oregon. First, and foremost, there are potential issues around state funding for public institutions for student participation in CBE programs, as the current public university and community college funding models do not include CBE. Second, in the private career school sector, only cosmetology schools may currently be recognized as CBE programs, although work is being done to potentially expand this format to other types of private career schools. Third, federal financial aid rules that are based on student credit hours for determining if a student is making sufficient progress towards a degree are incompatible with CBE models. Although long-term plans to fix this are underway, currently access to financial aid for CBE is provided

through waivers of certain federal aid rules to allow CBE programs to disburse federal student aid to students.

In Oregon, although there is growing interest, CBE is largely in its infancy, with one hybrid program at SOU and an MD program being established at OHSU as the only Oregon-based CBE programs at public institutions. In the private sector, seven cosmetology schools currently offer CBE programs to Oregon residents and several out of state institutions offer online CBE degree programs to Oregonians.

This report concludes with a few policy suggestions around CBE. Of particular note, the HECC sees a potential need to work with institutions to modify its community college and university funding models to accommodate CBE; suggests that an expansion of CBE to private careers schools beyond cosmetology might be warranted; and recommends that, if the Oregon Legislature wishes to encourage CBE, it could establish a grant program to support the creation and start-up costs of new CBE programs. The HECC is encouraged by the potential of CBE to help close achievement gaps and bring Oregon closer to 40-40-20. Progress will be catalogued in annual CBE reports.

2018 Competency Education Report: See attached draft report.

Staff Recommendation:

Draft report for review, discussion, and approval, and then upon completion of suggested revisions, submission to the Oregon Legislature by September 15, 2018.