
Docket Item:

October 2019 Legislative Update

Summary:

Legislative Days Activities

The Legislature held interim meetings during the week of September 16th, and HECC staff was active in presentations and meetings during this time:

- Patrick Crane and Veronica Dujon presented to the Senate Education Committee an update on HECC transfer activities and potential future needs. In particular, staff indicated to the Committee that future investment in student information and communication systems was necessary to make transfer pathways accessible to the broadest possible audience. Staff was assisted in the presentation by two guests, Jason Taylor, a transfer researcher from the University of Utah, and Gloria Crisp, an expert on issues of equity in transfer from Oregon State University.
- Anthony Medina presented to the House Education Committee a brief preview of the HECC 2019 report on competency-based education, as part of a panel discussion led by Southern Oregon University.
- Ben Cannon presented to the Joint Committee on Education Appropriations. This Committee convenes once per biennium to satisfy constitutional and statutory mandates to consider the sufficiency of education appropriations. He provided the committee views on higher education appropriations from the lenses of affordability, total state investment, and student debt. The Committee will finalize a report on the question in November.
- Karen Humelbaugh and Amy Cox provided an update to the Senate Labor and Business Committee in conjunction with the Governor's office and the Oregon Employment Department on the status of the state workforce and specific regional needs.

In addition to these formal presentations, Cannon and Kyle Thomas held numerous private meetings. The bulk of these meetings focused on discussions with legislators that have expressed interest in higher education issues, and by virtue of their interest and position, are important members with whom to engage on the issues of strategic planning and long-term state and student needs.

Some members are taking the initiative to lead conversations regarding higher education investments in the next biennium, and Cannon and Thomas attended one such meeting led by a group of primarily House members, together with institutions, where discussion occurred on how best to secure the support of legislative leadership.

Additionally, in the lead up to the final draft of the capital planning report the Commission will receive at this meeting, Cannon and Thomas discussed key report themes with legislative leaders in order to help ensure the report will be well-received by and useful for members as they make important capital investment decisions.

Looking Ahead to 2020 and 2021

The short legislative session in 2020 is right around the corner. In February, legislators will convene for a brief 35 day legislative session. While it is important to be actively involved and engaged in the session, we must at the same time have an eye toward 2021.

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While the economic and budgetary conditions the state will face are uncertain, if the higher education sector is to see a reform and investment package that builds in any tangible way on the P-12 focused Student Success Act passed in 2019, planning for those investments will take significant time and energy today. As we reach out to legislators to engage them on our strategic plan and take their temperature on the legislative environment in 2021, we will continue to think about how the HECC's legislative concepts and the Agency Request Budget will position the agency as one with concrete ideas and ambitious proposals, derived from a strategic plan that ideally has broad support and that can serve as the basis for significant gains in higher education affordability, quality, and student success.

Policy Development

As in the fall of 2017, next month HECC policy staff will convene in a policy development kickoff meeting to begin the process of planning for 2019 legislative initiatives. An agenda for this meeting is in the preliminary stages of planning, but this meeting will be used to ensure staff has an understanding of not only the policy development process but how it meshes with budget development, the HECC strategic planning process, and the discussions we are engaged in regarding opportunities for the 2021 session.

Process Improvement – HECC Reporting

Thanks to the diligent work of Kaitlyn Wiggins, the agency now has, for the first time, compiled a comprehensive list of all legislative reports assigned to HECC. In addition to the list, she has worked to identify the key responsible party for the production of the report, and met with each of those individuals to identify a basic work plan that spells out when work on the report must begin, and the key steps required to bring the report to completion two commission meetings prior to the due date (this allows the report to be altered if the Commission so desires). A master calendar has been created so that the agency now has a centralized view of all report work being done.

All of this process work comes with a policy benefit as well. Now that there is visibility into all of the reporting requirements place on HECC, and reports won't "sneak up" on staff, it is easier for staff to determine how best to use these report submissions as an opportunity to produce thoughtful work that promotes key policy recommendations to the legislature.

Staff Recommendation:

No action is required. This item is for informational purposes only.