
Docket Item:

May Legislative Update

Joint Task Force on Student Success for Underrepresented Students in Higher Education

The Joint Task Force on Student Success for Underrepresented Students in Higher Education is in the middle of its effort to travel around the state to hear directly from students, faculty, staff, and community members. To date, the Task Force has held meetings on campus at (in order): Portland State University, Mt. Hood Community College, Lane Community College, University of Oregon, Western Oregon University, Eastern Oregon University, and Treasure Valley Community College.

The campus listening sessions are full days, with three separate one-and-a-half hour roundtable conversations for community members, faculty and staff, and students, a campus tour, and an evening public hearing. Legislators from both chambers and both parties appear to be very engaged, concerned, and interested in learning more about daily challenges faced by students. By and large, these are positive, worthwhile sessions that create opportunities for legislators to hear and learn from a wide variety of student, employee, and community perspectives in a way that does not happen in the halls of the State Capitol.

The number and complexity of issues the Task Force is hearing is overwhelming. If taken individually, solving all of them would appear to require hundreds of millions of dollars in new appropriations and dozens of pages of legislative text implementing new programs, and while these student and staff experiences are powerful, the legislature may have limited options to address many of the issues raised. In addition, there is no significant discussion underway on the topic of new revenues for Task force purposes, and the state budget picture for the upcoming biennium is not clear.

It appears very likely the Task Force will seek to make gains in the area of affordability first. After this issue area, it is also likely the Task Force will need to develop a framework that addresses myriad other concerns in the areas of wraparound services, campus culture and climate, and campus policies in an ordered way. The Task Force has announced an intention to utilize workgroups, likely over the summer, to research and deliberate upon recommendations, though the topics of the workgroups have not been finally determined.

The Task Force will have a subject matter meeting on affordability on May 19th. HECC has invited Dr. Louise Seamster to present at this meeting. Dr. Seamster is an Assistant Professor in Sociology and Criminology and African American Studies at the University of Iowa, and a Nonresident Fellow in Governance Studies at the Brookings Institution. Her research focuses on racial and economic inequality, and she will deliver a presentation titled "Wealth Disparities and Student Debt." In addition, HECC staff will also provide a presentation on financial aid and affordability in Oregon.

Draft Legislative Concepts for the 2023 Legislative Session

HECC staff are working on 17 legislative concepts for potential introduction in the 2023 legislative session. This is the maximum number of concepts that Commissioners may ultimately forward to the Governor for consideration. As more time passes, and more engagement occurs, concepts may be dropped or combined.

Our legislative development process does not occur in a vacuum. The Task Force will develop a policy bill, and HECC staff will seek to make a contribution to that effort. This contribution could mean the Task Force subsumes a Commission concept. In addition, as legislators develop individual concepts, HECC will contribute to those items as we become aware of them. In short, HECC's final legislative

agenda as approved by Commissioners in the fall will represent a subset of the higher education policy agenda that will be under consideration in 2023. Even though most higher education policy bills under discussion end up not being those introduced by the agency, staff still engage on these concepts, and seek to provide advice and guidance consistent with the goals, strategic plans, equity lens, and expertise of the Commission and its staff.

Internal Concept Number	Description of Concept
52500-01	<i>Financial Aid</i> – OSAC is working with the Student Aid Advisory Committee and other partners to develop a more robust approach to the state financial aid system that considers significant modifications to both the Oregon Opportunity Grant and the Oregon Promise, with the goal of providing more resources to a greater number of students.
-02	<i>Guaranteed Admissions</i> – APA is leading a concept to simplify the process and examine what minimum academic requirements may justify guaranteed admissions at public universities. This LC may work in conjunction with joint policy work with the State Board of Education to encourage more FAFSA completion in high schools, and may lay some groundwork for an electronic transcript process that allows student data necessary for admissions to more easily be delivered from high schools to institutions of higher education
-03	<i>Native American College Access Grant</i> – This concept, led by OSAC, will codify the program recently developed in partnership with the Governor’s office and tribal governments to provide awards to enrolled members of federally recognized, Oregon based tribes. This concept looks and feels like the rules the Commission recently adopted, which are unusually robust, owing to the fact that the current program is operated primarily under legislative budgetary authority, and not a statute that provides for a program outline.
-04	<i>ODA Fees</i> – This LC would move the ODA fee structure from statute to rule, allowing more flexibility and for a different process of fee adjustment when such adjustment is necessary.
-05	<i>Transfer of Cosmetology Curriculum Development</i> – This is a reintroduction of a 2021 concept led by the PPS office, with potential minor modifications. HECC is obligated to develop curricular standards for cosmetology programs, the only curricular area over which it exercises this authority, even though HECC does not possess subject matter knowledge and a professional licensure board with such knowledge exists.
-06	<i>Removing Transcript Barriers</i> – APA is investigating whether there are barriers for students in accessing transcripts needed to pursue further educational and professional opportunities related to small amounts of debt, penalties, fines, or fees owed to institutions. Institutions often withhold transcripts to encourage the payment of these debts.
-07	<i>Minor and Technical Revisions</i> – This recurring concept is a placeholder for the small changes that may be required to clean up statutes that have fallen out of alignment with modern terminology, or to align statutes with current practices. These changes have no fiscal, substantive, or equity impacts.
-08	<i>State Apprenticeship and Training Council Membership</i> – This OWI concept looks at the possibility of adding a Workforce and Talent Development Board member to the State Apprenticeship and Training Council to increase cross-board policy alignment and awareness.
-09	<i>Oregon Youth Works</i> – OWI seeks to reorganize its youth portfolio, which has expanded greatly over the course of the biennium, by creating a consolidated advisory board structure to oversee the activities of the Oregon Youth Employment

	Program, Oregon Youth Corps, and Oregon Conservation Corps.
-10	<i>Regional Accreditation</i> - Under the prior federal administration, the US Department of Education eliminated any federal distinction between regional and national accreditation. State statutes refer to regional accreditation, and now require adjustment. This concept will need to determine if and how a distinction between specific accrediting bodies should be maintained.
-11	<i>HECC/Institutional Collaboration</i> – This placeholder asks the question “How can the HECC administration and the Commission better communicate and collaborate with institutional administration and institutional boards in pursuit of state goals?”
-12	<i>Expanding ASPIRE</i> – This OSAC concept expands the ASPIRE program with the targeted goal of making the program more equitable and inclusive of college retention and completion activity.
-13	<i>Early Childhood Behavioral Health Grants</i> – In 2019, the legislature established a grant program to improve opportunity for students seeking credentials in early childhood care and education. This OSAC concept clarifies such grants are available to students pursuing adjacent degrees in early childhood behavioral and mental health.
-14	<i>AmeriCorps Education and Housing Incentives</i> – Related to concept -17, and following a legislative session where the Segal Education Award became tax exempt, this OWI concept seeks to increase the education award on a means-tested basis to ensure low income AmeriCorps members are able to afford tuition at a state college.
-15	<i>Tuition Policy for Veterans</i> – Multiple state and federal policies on the treatment of certain classes of students generally and veteran’s specifically cause veteran student reporting to be inconsistent and inaccurate. This concept from R&D looks to reduce the inconsistencies and capture veterans accurately.
-16	<i>WITHDRAWN</i>
-17	<i>Instate Tuition for National Service</i> – The OregonServes advisory board has proposed a concept to make national service more attractive and attainable to a greater diversity of prospective applicants by awarding completers the opportunity for in state tuition.
-18	<i>Continuous Improvement Committee Recommendations</i> – Current law requires a study and report on improvements to the state and local workforce board system and processes. This legislative concept serves as a placeholder for recommendations that may be issued in this report.

Two significant expectations have been placed upon staff developing concepts to a greater extent than in prior years:

- 1) The submission of a legislative concept must be accompanied by information documenting the external partner engagement that has been undertaken at the time the concept is due. This does not mark the end of engagement, but HECC has committed to expanding the table and including the thoughts and perspective of others not previously engaged in our processes.
- 2) Legislative concepts must also be accompanied by racial equity impact statements that are detailed and specific to the effect or intended effect of the proposal on diverse populations.

Staff Recommendation:

For discussion and informational purposes only.