



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

Higher Education Coordinating Commission

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Salem, Oregon 97302

www.oregon.gov/HigherEd

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(Chair)
Dr. Lisa Skari (Chair)
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Cassie Hamelman
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Kendra Larson
Kevin Mackie
Kyle Ritchey-Noll
Dr. Nagi Naganathan
Paul Cantrell
Robert Westerman
Sarah Means
Stephanie Hooper
Dr. Steve Wuhs
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Staff:

Emily Zuber
Jennifer Purcell
Ronan FitzSimons-
Brey
Shauna Theiss

FUTURE READY OREGON TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY CONSORTIUM

Quarterly Meeting Minutes

July 24, 2025 – 9:30am-1:30pm

Location

Pendleton Convention Center
1601 Westgate Pendleton, OR 97801

Meeting Objectives

Members Present: K S Venkatraman (Chair), Dr. Lisa Skari (Chair), Skip Newberry (Chair), Erik Adair, Corinne Bouchard, Dr. Joseph Bull, Jeff Hampton, Stephanie Hooper, Kevin Mackie, Courtney Martin, Sarah Means (Virtual), Jeff Rhoades, Kyle Ritchey-Noll, Amy Vander Vliet

Members Excused: Brooke Brownlee, Paul Cantrell, Ashley Espinoza, Fae, Cassie Hamelman, Wade Hopkins, Chrys Hutchings, Kendra Larson, Andrew McGough, Deb Mumm-Hill, Dr. Nagi Naganathan, Robert Westerman, Dr. Steve Wuhs

Guests and Presenters Present: Jesus Casas (Panelist), Rachel Driver (Panelist), Oliver Grant (Virtual Guest), Peter Hernberg (Panelist), Stefanie Holloway (Virtual Guest), Courtney Lee (Panelist), Natalie Miller (Panelist), David Melville (Presenter), Stephen Phelps (Virtual Guest), Juan Rodriguez-Ochoa (Panelist), Dazon Sigo (Panelist), Elaine Swanson (Presenter), Sullivan Swift (Virtual Guest), Nathan Temple (Panelist), Joseph Wyno (Panelist), Lindsey Watchman (Panelist)

Staff Present: Heather Anderson, Alex Brunot (Virtual), Staci Calkins, Ronan FitzSimons-Brey, Shanda Haluapo, Micah Laws (Virtual), Daniella Mondrago (Virtual), Todd Nell (Virtual), Celia Nunez (Virtual), Julia Pontoni (Virtual), Jennifer Purcell, Jennifer Rice (Virtual), Emily Ramos Cervantes (Virtual), Rudyane Rivera-Lindstrom (Virtual), Sarah Shinn, Shauna Theiss, Kerry Thomas (Virtual), Emily Zuber

Agenda

0.0 Arrival, Coffee, Networking

1.0 Welcome, Introductions, & Agenda Overview

Shauna Theiss opened the meeting with welcoming remarks and an overview of the agenda.

The Executive Leadership Team (ELT) provided welcoming remarks.

- Skip Newberry highlighted the Technology Association of Oregon (TAO) Energy Innovation Summit in Bend where industry leaders gathered to discuss the future of AI and energy innovation.
- Dr. Lisa Skari shared the recent changes in Pell Grants.
- K.S. Venkatraman highlighted America's AI Action Plan released by the White House.

Shauna Theiss provided an update of Consortium membership and welcomed a new member:

- Erik Adair, *Economic Development Manager, City of Sherwood*

2.0 Governor's Office Updates

Shauna Theiss introduced Sarah Means, Workforce, Higher Education, and Economic Development Advisor for the Office of Governor Tina Kotek, who provided an update regarding the Semiconductor Talent Sustaining Fund and the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with NVIDIA. Highlights included:

- A brief overview of the AI Ambassador Program.
- A quick timeline of the Semiconductor Talent Sustaining Fund.

Discussion:

- A comment sharing concerns that the AI Ambassador Program requirements may pose challenges for community college faculty. Jennifer Purcell explained that the Governor's Office and the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) are working with NVIDIA to address feedback. Sarah Means agreed and noted that staff are working to identify how to make the program accessible for all postsecondary faculty interested in participating.
- An inquiry as to whether the AI Ambassador Program will focus on initiatives in higher education only or will be inclusive of K-12. Jennifer Purcell responded that while the MOU with NVIDIA mentions K-12 education, the program will initially be offered to community colleges and universities.
- A comment about how TAO can help provide clarity regarding the MOU with NVIDIA, noting that there is confusing messaging regarding the distribution of funds and program initiatives.
- A question about how the remainder of funds in the Semiconductor Talent Sustaining Fund will be used and whether a timeline has been established. Sarah Means responded that there are continuing discussions about how the funds will be used and that there will be more information forthcoming in the following months. Jennifer Purcell agreed and stated that HECC is working with the Governor's Office to ensure there is alignment with the statutory requirements of the Semiconductor Talent Sustaining Fund (HB 4154, 2024) and the Oregon CHIPS Act (SB 4, 2023).

3.0 Consent Agenda

3.1 ACTION ITEM: Approve May 13, 2025 meeting minutes

Shauna Theiss walked Consortium members through a review of the approach used by the Consortium to advance consensus-based decision-making.

A consensus-based decision-making approach was applied to the approval of meeting minutes.

Consortium members indicated unanimous approval of the meeting minutes as presented.

4.0 Public Comment

No public comment.

5.0 Amazon Web Services (AWS) Data Center Workforce Panel

Shauna Theiss introduced a panel of regional leaders to share information about the Amazon Web Services (AWS) data center workforce investment in the region and its partnership with Blue Mountain Community College (BMCC). Panelists included:

- **Courtney Lee**, *Public Policy Manager, AWS*
- **Jesus Casas**, *PDX Area Manager for AWS*
- **Peter Hernberg**, *Math & Computer Science Instructor for BMCC*

- **Juan Rodriguez-Ochoa**, *Network Technician for AWS, BMCC program graduate*

Shauna Theiss prompted panelists to introduce themselves and provide an overview of their work.

- **Courtney Lee** provided an overview of AWS and its investment in data centers and workforce development programs in Eastern Oregon.
- **Jesus Casas** shared the story of how AWS partnered with BMCC to establish the data engineer program and operations technician program.
- **Peter Hernberg** described the development of BMCC's one-year data center technician certificate. He also shared successes of the program, which includes a 100% job placement rate for students.
- **Juan Rodriguez-Ochoa** explained his career journey as a student working two jobs to a networking technician with AWS.

Courtney Lee opened the discussion for questions from Consortium members.

Discussion:

- An inquiry as to whether there are other schools in the region providing similar certificate programs, to which Peter Hernberg stated that BMCC's program is the first data center technician program in the nation.
- An inquiry as to whether AWS is replicating this model in other locations, to which Courtney Lee explained that when developing a new data center, AWS engages with the community to upskill and reskill workers in the region.
- A question about the cost of the certificate program and the average wage for a technician position. Jesus Casas responded that wages range between \$25 to \$35/hour. Peter Hernberg explained that the cost of the data center technician certificate, including tuition and fees, is approximately \$8,000 while the other program is an upskilling opportunity paid for by AWS.
- A follow-up question about whether AWS pays the student or BMCC, to which Peter Hernberg confirmed that AWS pays BMCC directly.
- A follow-up comment about how one of Mt. Hood Community College's programs overcomes barriers by having employers pay the college directly instead of requiring students to pay the cost up front.
- A question about how to increase interest in skilled trades due to the importance of skilled trades in the development and maintenance of data centers. Peter Hernberg stressed the importance of understanding the regional supply and demand of certain occupations and training students for those entry-level roles. Courtney Lee responded that policymakers are working to understand how to address workforce challenges while creating access and meeting the State's clean energy goals.
- An inquiry about how Juan discovered the program and his perspective as a graduate. Juan Rodriguez-Ochoa described how he had an interest in technical skills and attended multiple workforce meetings with BMCC to learn more about the program.
- A question about how BMCC advertises the program, to which Peter Hernberg replied that word of mouth is the main marketing strategy. Courtney Lee mentioned that AWS will have a virtual reality data center tour at the Eastern Oregon Economic Summit.
- A question about current and projected employment in the region. Courtney Lee stated that in the last 15 years, AWS has created 8,300 jobs in Umatilla and Morrow counties. Jesus Casas commented that AWS needs 400 people per year in Umatilla and Morrow counties to staff the data centers.
- A question about the enrollment numbers for the data center technician certificate program at BMCC and whether there are barriers to recruitment or retention. Peter Hernberg responded that the upskilling program paid by AWS has a total of 36

students per year while the data center technician program has capacity for 20 students per year with an 85-90% term retention rate.

- An inquiry as to whether BMCC has other recruitment strategies to increase interest in the program, noting that community organizations or K-12 schools are potential audiences. Peter Hernberg confirmed that he does outreach with high schools in Boardman and Hermiston. He shared that BMCC will gather contact information and notify prospective students when applications or scholarships are available. Courtney Lee stated that AWS has a Girls Tech Day to promote technology careers to young women.
- A question about whether AWS is implementing recruitment strategies towards incumbent workers, to which Courtney Lee replied that AWS works with public sector entities to upskill and reskill workers in the cloud.

6.o GO STEM

Shauna Theiss introduced David Melville, Director of Greater Oregon Science Technology Engineering & Math (GO STEM), to present an overview of the GO STEM Hub Network. Highlights included:

- An explanation of Oregon's Regional STEM Hub Network.
- A geographic overview of GO STEM initiatives and its headquarters at Eastern Oregon University.
- A list of flagship programs provided by GO STEM.

David Melville introduced Elaine Swanson, Technology Workforce Exploration Educator, to provide a presentation on GO STEM's activities in AI education. Highlights included:

- An overview of Elaine Swanson's position assisting with educator training and K-12 programming using AI tools.
- A list of regional partners, which includes the Eastern Oregon Regional Educator Network and Oregon Trail Regional Educator Network.
- A preview of educator training initiatives, which includes a history and overview of Artificial Intelligence.
- An overview of student and community engagement, which includes math in nature camps and four AI agriculture lab offerings targeted towards K-12 students.
- Elaine discussed the importance of making concepts relevant to students based on their experiences and regions. Irrigation is an important topic and eastern Oregon.
- Elaine provided a brief overview of the irrigation districts across Eastern Oregon's seven counties and the current workforce environment. She followed this with an irrigation reservoir timelapse activity she uses with classes.

7.o Occupational Profiles and Wage Data Discussion

Jennifer Purcell reconvened the meeting and provided an overview and update regarding the Occupation Profiles and wage data. Highlights included:

- An overview of the updated Occupation Profile packet, which includes an executive summary, glossary, and appendices.
- An overview of feedback provided by Consortium members at the previous meeting.
- A reminder of the purpose and objectives of the Occupation Profiles.
- Next steps for this work using examples from the Semiconductor Consortium and Behavioral Health Talent Assessment.

Discussion:

- An inquiry as to why the maps in the packet state there are nine Workforce Development Regions when only eight are reflected in the map. Jennifer Purcell responded that while there are nine local workforce development regions, the Oregon

Employment Department (OED) no longer publishes data for Clackamas County individually. Clackamas County is included with the Portland Metro region.

- A comment acknowledging that education requirements for many occupations in the sector are evolving due to rapidly changing technology and will need to be reevaluated on a regular basis to maintain accuracy. Shauna Theiss agreed and noted that there may be occupations in high demand in the future that are not currently reflected in OED's occupation categories.
- A question regarding the 2023 wage data and whether it will be updated in the next revision. Jennifer Purcell confirmed that the Occupation Profiles will be updated biannually and that the next version will include 2025 wage data.
- A comment suggesting that the executive summary should acknowledge that there will likely be high-skill, high-demand, and high-wage occupations not reflected in OED's occupation categories due to the evolution of AI. Jennifer Purcell stated that HECC staff will work to create a statement to be included in the executive summary indicating the unique conditions impacting the technology sector.
- A comment suggesting that there is an opportunity to include an annual glossary or categorization of emerging occupations unique to the technology sector and that the Consortium can be a resource to spread awareness. Jennifer Purcell agreed and noted that the Consortium could leverage the AI Ambassador Program to engage with employers.
- A comment suggesting that the Consortium could identify emerging occupations by cataloging job board postings.
- A comment that data center technicians are not included in the Occupation Profiles. Amy Vander Vliet, Regional Economist, OED, explained that this specific job is categorized under the Computer Network Specialist occupation, and acknowledged that the occupation codes are evolving.
- An inquiry as to whether the skilled trades workforce emerging from the development of data centers is a topic that falls under the Manufacturing Consortium or the Technology Consortium. Jennifer Purcell responded that if the employment for the occupation was more concentrated in a specific industry sector, the occupation was sorted into that industry's Occupation Profile packet.
- A comment that cybersecurity occupations should be explicitly acknowledged in the executive summary.
- An inquiry about how the hybridization of certain roles is reflected in the Occupation Profiles, to which Jennifer Purcell replied that the executive summary could include a statement about emerging, evolving trends toward multidisciplinary workforce needs that include technology.

8.o ACTION ITEM: Approve Occupational Profiles and Wage Data

Jennifer Purcell prompted Consortium members to engage in an activity to reach consensus approval for the Technology Occupation Profiles and Wage Data with the following amendments:

- An additional statement in the executive summary that refers to the emerging and evolving nature of the occupations, workforce needs, and education requirements specific to the technology sector.
- A revision to the Workforce Development Regions map stating that there are eight regions.
- A correction of the occupation and wage statistics listed on page 57.

Consortium members expressed unanimous consensus approval.

The Technology Occupational Profiles and Wage Data were approved, as amended.

9.o BREAK for Lunch

10.0 Learning Lunch

Dr. Lisa Skari reconvened the meeting and introduced a panel featuring faculty, students, and leaders involved in the Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) credentialing with the unique partnership between Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation/Cayuse Native Solutions, DelMar Aerospace, and Blue Mountain Community College (BMCC). Panelists included:

- **Joseph Wyno**, *Executive Director of Oregon UAS Accelerator*
- **Rachel Driver**, *Current UAS instructor at BMCC*
- **Dazon Sigo**, *Current UAS student at BMCC*
- **Lindsey Watchman**, *Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Former Drone Workforce Program Director*
- **Nathan Temple**, *Founder/Owner of Advanced Drone LLC*

Dr. Lisa Skari prompted panelists to introduce themselves.

Dr. Lisa Skari prompted Dazon Sigo to explain how he gained interest in the program.

- **Dazon Sigo** shared that he began taking courses with Del Mar's commercial aviation program and decided to apply for the BMCC drone program after obtaining his drone license.

Dr. Lisa Skari prompted Rachel Driver to provide context on how the drone program was developed and what training activities students are engaged in.

- **Rachel Driver** explained that the curriculum is based on industry needs and places a strong emphasis on STEM education, professionalism, and collaborative teamwork. She further detailed how students complete hands-on learning in simulated and real aircraft.

Dr. Lisa Skari asked Nathan Temple what skills and certifications are needed when hiring graduates of the program.

- **Nathan Temple** highlighted the importance of the 14 CRF Part 107 license, noting that this license is required to fly drones commercially.

Dr. Lisa Skari prompted Lindsey Watchman to share how he was involved with building the partnership with UAS providers.

- **Lindsey Watchman** explained how the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation developed a department to house workforce development programs and applied for a Workforce Ready Grant. He then highlighted Dazon Sigo as a role model for the tribal community.

Dr. Lisa Skari asked Joseph Wyno to share how the Oregon UAS Accelerator has helped build the program.

- **Joseph Wyno** described his approach in addressing the needs of rural communities through hands-on internships. He then announced that BMCC is working with Oregon Institute of Technology to develop a transferable pathway to a UAS bachelor's degree.

Dr. Lisa Skari prompted Nathan Temple to explain how the industry is evolving and if there are any anticipated changes.

- **Nathan Temple** expressed how UAS was not a well-known industry ten years ago and highlighted the rapid increase in drone operators within the last year.

Dr. Lisa Skari asked Nathan Temple to describe what Advanced Drone LLC is doing with its drone activities.

- **Nathan Temple** specified that Advanced Drone LLC provides aerial applications of pesticides.

Dr. Lisa Skari asked Rachel Driver how BMCC adapts to a rapidly changing field and how she maintains curriculum.

- **Rachel Driver** summarized how faculty revisits lessons for accuracy and engages in industry input. She noted that regulations are anticipated to loosen, which allows companies more flexibility.

Dr. Lisa Skari asked Lindsey Watchmen to list the kinds of wraparound services being provided to participants.

- **Lindsey Watchmen** shared that the program has been able to provide access to daycare, gas allowances, academic stipends, internship stipends and night classes. He also shared that students get their own drone upon completion of the 14 CRF Part 107 license.

Dr. Lisa Skari asked all panelists to share what they would do if they could change one thing to accelerate their work within the partnership.

- **Nathan Temple** said that he would like to see more field experience with drones over 55 pounds.
- **Rachel Driver** responded that she would like to give students access to the right equipment for simulated and field environments.
- **Lindsey Watchmen** highlighted the continuity of flexible, long-term funding to address incoming barriers.
- **Joseph Wyno** responded that if the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) could provide more regulatory guidance on how to open the industry to commercial civilian businesses, it would lead to more innovative workforce development opportunities.

Dr. Lisa Skari opened the panel discussion for questions from Consortium members.

Discussion:

- An inquiry regarding the types of jobs or type of work that could be created if federal regulations decreased, to which Joseph Wyno explained that there are many innovative ideas in the UAS industry but there is uncertainty around regulations in national airspace. Nathan Temple highlighted how Advanced Drone LLC needed to request an exemption to the FAA to use drones at night, noting that the insecticides they use have a low tolerance for UV exposure.
- A follow-up inquiry as to whether overcoming barriers will allow for accelerated opportunities. Joseph Wyno shared that Oregon UAS Accelerator cohorts have between 20 to 30 startup founders applying for the program and explained that he expects that number to increase should there be federal rule changes on unmanned systems.
- An inquiry as to whether there are any short-term certificates or stackable credentials that can be combined with an associate's degree, to which Rachel Driver stated that the two-year drone operator associate's degree is the only credential offered at this time.
- A question about the current interest in the drone operator career pathway and if there are barriers to recruitment, to which Rachel Driver responded that lack of regional awareness and perception is a challenge.
- A follow-up question regarding outreach strategies for the program. Rachel Driver described how partners will bring prospective students to BMCC for more information. Lindsey Watchmen explained how faculty and partners engage with the local community.

11.0 Wrap up and Next Steps

Shauna Theiss provided an update on next steps for the Consortium's priorities and expectations for the next Consortium meeting to be held in the Salem-Portland metro area in November 2025.

12.0 Adjourn for Tour

Shauna Theiss adjourned the meeting at 1:25pm.