



November 13, 2020

PRESS RELEASE

Media Contact: Endi Hartigan, Communications Director, 971-701-4032, endi.hartigan@state.or.us.

Source: Dr. Amy Cox, Director of HECC Research and Data, amy.cox@hecc.oregon.gov

Questions on individual institution trends should be directed to the college or university.

HECC Data Shows Sizable Decline in 4th Week Fall Enrollment at Oregon's Public Colleges and Universities

Salem, OR – New data released today by the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) shows that statewide enrollment has declined across Oregon public institutions in fall 2020 compared to 2019, with community college enrollment falling much more substantially than public university enrollment. [The 4th week fall data](#) is considered final for the public institutions, and allows leaders to understand changes related to the pandemic and other factors.

The HECC Office of Research and Data has reported that the number of community college students fell 23 percent from the previous fall, and the number of public university students declined by 3.8 percent across all institutions. The measure of full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment declined similarly: 19 percent at community colleges and 3.9 percent at public universities. The HECC community college data represents all student enrollment in both credit and noncredit courses. All 17 Oregon community colleges showed reductions, and five of the seven public universities showed reductions, with two universities (Oregon Institute of Technology and Oregon State University) countering the trend and reporting slight increases. The 3.8 percent decline at the public institutions includes non-admitted students, including high school students who would have taken college coursework at their high school. Admitted public university undergraduates declined 2.8 percent.

Amy Cox, Director of Research and Data for the HECC, said, "Overall, the overall reductions at the public universities are thankfully not as high as many anticipated, but the community colleges reductions are steep, and likely reflect the hardships so many students and families are facing. Oregonians who were unable to pursue their postsecondary goals this fall should be assured that the opportunity to earn a degree or credential continues to be open to them."

The inability or choice not to enroll in school this fall is not equal across racial/ethnic groups. At community colleges, all racial/ethnic groups showed decreased enrollment, with greater declines among Hispanic/Latinx and white students. Community college Hispanic/Latinx enrollment fell from 17.7 to 16.7 percent of total enrollment, and white

student enrollment fell from 57.3 to 55.7 percent, compared to the 2019-20 academic year. At the universities, international student enrollment declined substantially, from 7.7 percent to 6.0 percent of total enrollment, compared to fall 2019.

While we do not know all the causes for student decisions, enrollment rates suggest that not only the pandemic, but also the recent wildfires may have had an influence, as several institutions geographically near the Southern Oregon, Clackamas County, and coastal wildfires this fall show some of the steepest declines in enrollment.

The enrollment declines at the 17 community colleges ranged from 11.0 percent at Tillamook Bay Community College to as high as 52.8 percent at Clatsop Community College. The range in changes at the public universities spanned from an increase of 1.8 percent at Oregon State University to a decline of 18.3 percent at Southern Oregon University. Looking only at admitted students, the range at the universities was from an increase of 3.2 percent at Oregon State University to a decline of 7.1 percent at Western Oregon University. The Oregon enrollment reductions are generally consistent with national trends of declining postsecondary enrollment during the pandemic economic crisis, with more severe impacts seen at community colleges and for international students. The full set of statewide enrollment data is available on the [HECC website here](#). Questions on individual institution trends should be directed to the college or university.

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The State of Oregon's Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) envisions a future in which all Oregonians—and especially those whom our systems have underserved and marginalized—benefit from the transformational power of high-quality postsecondary education and training. For more information, go to www.Oregon.gov/HigherEd