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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **PRESS RELEASE: With Increased Funding, State Plans to Award Oregon Opportunity Grants to Thousands More Students, Encourages Applications**

*Prospective students are encouraged to apply as soon as possible for the need-based financial aid for college using the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#) or the [Oregon Student Aid Application \(ORSAA\)](#)*

*Salem, OR* – The Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) Office of Student Access and Completion (OSAC) is pleased to announce that the recent approval of an additional \$28.8 million to the state's need-based college financial aid program, the Oregon Opportunity Grant (OOG), will allow the HECC to immediately begin awarding more financial aid to current and future Oregon students to support college affordability statewide. These additional funds, approved in Senate Bill 5528 by the 2021 State Legislature and signed by Governor Brown on July 27, 2021 increase the grant's total funding by 21.8 percent in comparison to the last biennium's legislatively adopted budget to a total of \$200 million. **The HECC invites partners to spread the word about the increased funding and to encourage Oregonians who may enroll in an Oregon college this year to [file the FAFSA or ORSAA as soon as possible](#) if they have not already done so.** Students still have time to complete these forms for the 2021-22 school year.

The Oregon Opportunity Grant is the state's largest and longest-running student financial aid program. More than 30,000 students receive an OOG award each year to pursue their undergraduate degree at a public or eligible private Oregon higher education institution. The \$28.8 million budget increase is expected to increase the number of grants awarded by approximately 11,000 over the course of the 2021-23 biennium. Awarded students who are enrolled full-time for a full school year may receive \$2,778 at a community college or \$3,612 at a four-year college/university, and students may be eligible for a prorated grant if they attend at least half time.

Juan Báez-Arévalo, director of OSAC, said, "We are thankful to the Oregon Legislature and Governor for responding to the significant challenges that low and middle income students and families face in affording college, especially after the economic hardships and disruptions of the pandemic. In addition to youth pursuing college, many adults are needing to return to complete a degree or seeking new credentials in the shifting

economic landscape. Oregonians should know that the added investment in the Opportunity Grant can support students of all ages in their postsecondary goals, and we encourage anyone who is considering college in the next year to apply.”

In addition to the added funding, OSAC will also be adjusting the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) limit for qualifying students, to ensure that more Oregonians have financial support to pursue a college degree or certificate. The grant is designed to prioritize awards for highest-need students first; in recent years, due to limited funding, the award was limited to students with an EFC of 3,500 or lower, a much lower threshold than the EFC limit for the federal Pell Grant of 5,846. For 2021-22 applicants, the EFC limit for the OOG has been raised to 6,000 which is higher than the federal Pell Grant EFC limit. This increased EFC means that students who qualify for the federal Pell Grant may also qualify for an OOG award.

OSAC encourages all learners to apply at the earliest point possible, as the agency continues making OOG awards until funds are exhausted. The state has already been working to increase financial aid applications, with the support of a grant from the National College Attainment Network. In addition to this outreach, OSAC will be reaching out to prior applicants who qualified for an OOG award but did not use their grant, as well as newly eligible applicants. **Additional details about the OOG can be found at: <https://oregonstudentaid.gov/oregon-opportunity-grant.aspx>**

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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](http://www.Oregon.gov/HigherEd)*