

Strategic Roadmap for Oregon Postsecondary Education and Training: Preliminary Guiding Principles

May, 2020

Since late 2019 the Higher Education Coordinating Commission has worked with partners on developing a Strategic Roadmap for the future of postsecondary education in Oregon. Much great work has been accomplished so far, and the engagement of institutional leaders, students, faculty, legislators, trustees and other stakeholders has been impressive. We greatly appreciate all who have contributed their thoughts, perspectives and time to the process. It's clear there is a shared desire for an improved future, and one which prioritizes equity, access, and affordability in postsecondary education (see the Insights Report that emerged from our initial work here).

Our context has shifted dramatically over the recent few months, to an extent that no one predicted. The impact of COVID-19 on postsecondary education has been and will continue to be significant. In addition to the current challenges of remote learning for students, we are likely in the near term to face significant financial constraints on an already overwhelmed system. While we've been heartened to see the collaboration and support between institutions, the road ahead will undoubtedly be rough. After much consideration and discussion, the strategic roadmap planning team has decided to pause the current Roadmap Development effort until Fall 2020.

In the meantime, we offer few interim guiding principles which have emerged from our initial work, in the hope that these will provide a touchstone as we navigate the months ahead. We are asking all stakeholders to keep these guiding principles in mind as they take steps towards navigating the current crisis.

1. **Postsecondary education and training are central to Oregon's return to strength and prosperity:** Both from a civic as well as an economic view, we must prioritize students and their education in order to achieve success as a society and as a state economy. Our workforce must be nimble, trained and digitally-savvy to respond to economic disruptions such as those resulting from COVID-19, and to contribute the talent, innovation and knowledge needed during this crisis and beyond. Oregon's future depends on this.
2. **Affordability and access to postsecondary education and training require investments of the state funding:** Without additional resources from the state, institutions will have no other recourse but to either 1) shrink their services and offerings, potentially reducing the number and kinds of students they serve and/or 2) increase other sources of revenue, primarily tuition. Increases in tuition were significant over the past decade and, if not stabilized or reversed, will continue to price out many deserving students, especially underserved and vulnerable populations, out of a postsecondary education.
3. **Equity must be central to all we do:** Stakeholders have continued to raise concerns regarding equity, and we agree. Any decisions regarding future funding and resource allocation, programmatic shifts, and/or policy adjustments must consider impacts to our most vulnerable and underserved populations.
4. **To achieve our shared goals, we must all commit to collaborate and work together in new ways:** We've seen new forms of collaboration emerge through the COVID-19 crisis, and we're optimistic that we can continue to innovate and problem-solve through the challenges ahead. During our outreach over the past 6 months, stakeholders' desire for increased cooperation, collaboration and alignment emerged as a clear theme. Many stakeholders point to transparency in expenditures and accountability in decision making as specific areas of focus. Opportunity exists to demonstrate this in the months and years ahead.

We look forward to continuing this work to imagine a new future for higher education in Oregon, and we invite you to integrate these guiding principles into your own work and discussions.