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**Docket Item:** 13.0 - HECC Strategic Planning 2023-24

**Summary:**

ORS 350.075 (3)(d) requires the HECC to “adopt a strategic plan for achieving state post-secondary education goals, taking into consideration the contributions of this state’s independent institutions, philanthropic organizations and other organizations dedicated to helping Oregonians reach state goals.” The law further notes that the strategic plan should address goals including but not limited to: increasing educational attainment, increasing the state’s economic competitiveness and quality of life, ensuring affordable access to colleges and public universities, and removing barriers to on-time completion of degrees.

The HECC’s most recent strategic plan was completed and adopted by the Commission in August 2021. Today, HECC staff encourages the Commission to launch a new phase of strategic planning, to be completed by Fall, 2024. This docket item summarizes that recommendation.

*Background*

As a new state Commission in early 2014, the HECC adopted its [first Strategic Plan](#), “Pathways to Progress: A Strategy for Steering, Cheering, and Persevering to Achieve Oregon’s Higher Education Goals.” Nearly two years later, it adopted an updated [2016-2020 Strategic Plan](#) and, in 2017, a [Strategic Framework 2017-2021](#) that concisely summarized the Commission’s updated vision, mission, values, beliefs, and four key areas of strategic action for the Commission.

In August 2021, the Commission adopted a [Strategic Roadmap](#) for the future of postsecondary education and workforce training in Oregon. That document intended to describe, at a high level, what needed to change across various systems and institutions to achieve Oregon’s goals for postsecondary educational attainment and equity. While it drew from extensive surveys, focus groups, and interviews with Oregon leaders that took place in late 2019 and early 2020 (published as an [Insights Report](#)) and was originally intended to reflect a broad consensus among the HECC and a variety of educational and community partners, the untimely outbreak of the Covid pandemic diminished the amount of time that HECC staff and partners were able to dedicate to the consensus-building effort. The result is a document that reflected HECC’s aspirations for postsecondary education and training but that has not galvanized and organized

as much activity among our institutional, legislative, and community partners as the Commission had hoped when it launched its ambitious effort in 2019.

### *Scope*

For 2023-24, HECC staff proposes a new phase of strategic planning. The completed plan should build on prior Commission work, including the 2021 Strategic Roadmap, but with a narrower focus on how the HECC will exercise its leadership and statutory authority to advance State objectives. In this sense, the plan's scope will come closer to resembling the HECC's earliest strategic plans that focused intently on identifying the Commission's particular role and its specific opportunities for influence.

As accordance with ORS 350.075, staff recommends that HECC's 2023-24 Strategic Plan should be designed to advance progress towards state goals for higher education and workforce development, including those contained in Oregon statutes as well as the HECC's legislatively-adopted Key Performance Measures (KPMs). It should likewise be anchored in the Commission's [Equity Lens](#), which was updated in 2021 and expresses the HECC's commitment to achieving the "universal goal of educational equity" through "targeted strategies to eliminate racial disparities and other identity-based disparities."

Staff recommends that commissioners evaluate and consider maintaining or updating the vision statement that the HECC first adopted in its 2017 Strategic Framework and affirmed in its 2021 Strategic Roadmap. Commissioners may also want to review the "Preamble" to the 2021 Strategic Roadmap, and to consider whether this statement still summarizes the type of transformation that they believe postsecondary education and training must undergo. Finally, staff suggests that the four "Strategic Action Areas" that the Commission described in the 2017 Framework continue to provide a useful synopsis of the HECC's primary tools for influencing outcomes, although the Commission may want to reassess the Framework's relevance upon the completion of its 2023-24 strategic planning process.

In HECC strategic planning the question inevitably arises, "Are we limited by how Oregon law defines the current authorities and responsibilities of the Commission?" Staff strongly recommends that the Commission focuses mainly on how it intends to work within the *existing* statutory arrangements for postsecondary education and training to accelerate progress towards state goals. That said, staff recognizes that the Commission's statutory responsibilities include advising the Governor and Legislature on postsecondary policy and governance. The Commission should not feel strictly prohibited from using the Strategic Plan to suggest ways

that Oregon law should be altered, if that seems necessary and urgent in order to achieve state objectives.

Commissioners will need to determine the time period that the 2023-24 Strategic Plan is meant to address. Is this a plan intended to guide action over the upcoming year? The next decade? The answer will likely fall somewhere in between. Staff suggests that the plan should look towards a horizon that lies beyond the current biennium (2023-25) but likely not past 2029. The completed plan may identify shorter or longer timelines for each specific strategy.

### *Context*

The HECC's 2023-24 Strategic Plan should attempt to reflect and address key contemporary issues and dynamics affecting higher education and workforce development, including:

- Employers' and the State of Oregon's acute need for trained workers in critical industry and public service sectors.
- The falling percentage of recent Oregon high school graduates enrolling in higher education.
- Enrollment declines that have put substantial pressure on financial sustainability at some Oregon institutions of higher education and that may result in increased competition between them.
- Pandemic-induced effects including schooling gaps and their effect on learning, the widespread adoption of online education, and other innovations in education and training.
- The sharp increase in learners' mental health and wellness needs.
- Declining public perception about the value of higher education.

Commissioners are encouraged to share other pieces of context that should inform the plan.

### *Roles and Outreach*

Staff envisions that the Commission will have final responsibility for the development and adoption of the 2023-24 HECC Strategic Plan. In practice, that will likely mean setting aside time on most or all Commission meeting agendas over approximately the next year to review progress and provide direction. Commissioners may also be invited to share their perspectives with staff and/or a contractor in private individual or small group conversations. Finally, Commissioners are encouraged to email articles or other background informational items to staff for dissemination to the full Commission.

Under the leadership of the Executive Director, HECC staff will be responsible for developing materials (outlines, drafts, etc.) for the Commission's review. HECC staff will likely engage a contractor to provide capacity and expertise to support in this work.

HECC partners -- including public and private colleges and universities, local workforce boards, employers, foundations, training organizations, community organizations, faculty, staff, students, and others – will provide critical input to the development of the Strategic Plan. HECC staff and/or its contractor will conduct outreach to these constituencies at various points during the Plan's development. Partners may also provide input to the Commission during public testimony at any Commission meeting.

**Docket Material:**

13.0a – [HECC Strategic Framework 2017-2021](#)

13.0b – [2021 HECC Strategic Roadmap](#)

13.0c – [HECC Equity Lens](#) (2021 update)

**Staff Recommendation:**

Informational and discussion purposes only.