



# Higher Education Coordinating Commission

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## December Agency Update:

December 2024 | Tribal partners can find previous quarterly Government-to-Government updates as well as other information on work and initiatives in the [Coordination with Tribes](#) section of our website.

**Featured Updates:** We are pleased to report on our ongoing work and new initiatives to support Oregon learners and communities.

**HECC Convenes Oregon Tribal Student Success Network:** Thank you to all who joined us to connect and collaborate at the Oregon Tribal Student Success Network Summit, a day-long convening organized by the HECC on October 28, 2024. This was the second summit organized by the HECC to build relationships and collaboration among tribal partners and institutions to better serve tribal students and their families. The Summit brought together numerous representatives from the federally-recognized Tribes of Oregon, students, community members, HECC agency staff, and educators from many of Oregon's public and private higher education institutions at the Many Nations Longhouse on University of Oregon's (UO) campus. This year, the event was led primarily by the HECC Office of Student Access and Completion and the agenda focused heavily on the Oregon Tribal Student Grant (OTSG), Oregon's

## Our Commission

### OUR VISION:

*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. [Learn more about our vision here.](#) Oregon's [Strategic Roadmap for Postsecondary Education and Training](#) sets an ambitious path forward by describing how postsecondary systems, policies, and practices need to change in order to achieve Oregon's goals for educational attainment and equity.*

The HECC is the State of Oregon's Commission and agency working to improve equitable access to and success in higher education and workforce training for Oregonians statewide. Established in 2013, the HECC is a volunteer commission responsible for advising the Oregon Legislature and the Governor on higher education policy. The Commission is supported by an executive director who oversees eight offices of the agency. To learn more about the HECC, go to:

<https://www.oregon.gov/highered>

[Sign up for newsletters and updates here.](#)

## Upcoming Meetings

**Higher Education Coordinating Commission,** December 12, 2024 (tentative) Funding and Achievement Subcommittee meeting; December 11, 2024 (tentative). For other [upcoming public meetings of the HECC](#), see [our website here](#). For [Affiliated Boards \(WTDB, others, see here\)](#). For email notices of upcoming public meetings, or to sign up for our newsletter, go to [www.oregon.gov/HigherEd](http://www.oregon.gov/HigherEd).

## Funding Opportunities

Explore HECC [Grants and Contracting Opportunities here](#). In addition, Oregon Youth Works has funding currently available – see page 2.

state-funded financial aid program, first launched in 2022, that pays up to the full college costs for eligible tribal students.

HECC Approves Strategic Plan: Many thanks to all who have shared their valuable perspectives with us to inform the development of a new strategic plan for Oregon higher education and workforce training. We are pleased to announce our new Strategic Plan for 2024–2029, after a year-long public process. The HECC strategic plan is used to guide development and implementation of higher education and workforce development funding and policy initiatives that impact Oregonians statewide. The new plan focuses on lowering costs and increasing benefits of higher education and training for individuals, employers, communities, and the economy. [Read our recent press release here.](#)

The two-page Strategic Plan was approved unanimously by the Commission at the October 10, 2024, public meeting, after a process of development and public input that started in fall 2023. It includes revised vision, mission, and values statements, and establishes five action-focused strategic goals to advance systems change through intentional strategies:

- **RELEVANCE**: Improve the responsiveness of Oregon’s education and training systems to the goals and needs of learners, employers, and communities.
- **ALIGNMENT**: Align Oregon’s education and training systems to create straightforward pathways for learners.
- **AFFORDABLE ACCESS**: Make postsecondary education and training affordable for all Oregonians.
- **BELONGING**: Elevate learner voices and support inclusivity and belonging in all postsecondary learning settings.
- **LEADERSHIP**: Infuse postsecondary education, workforce development, research, and innovation into Oregon’s economic development strategies.

The HECC contracted with Coraggio Group to facilitate the strategic development process, which included assessment of background data and needs; broad public and partner engagement (including a public survey with over 400 responses, numerous focus groups, interviews, and outreach sessions); as well as discussion and input over the course of a year of HECC public meetings. Thank you to all tribal partners who participated!

Legislative Session Resources 2025-27: The HECC serve as a resource to the Legislature and the Governor as they make budget and policy decisions. Partners can find information on HECC testimony and presentations during the session on our [Legislative Resources web page](#), which will be updated throughout the spring. Information on the [typical budget timeline is available here](#). Governor Kotek released her recommended budget on December 2, 2024. Among other strategic investments, the GRB includes a recommendation to fund the Oregon Tribal Student Grant at \$28.5 million, which includes an increase of \$2.5 million above current service level.

- [Priorities in the 2025-2027 Governor’s Recommended Budget](#)
- [Governor’s Recommended Budget, 2025-27](#)

Oregon Tribal Student Grant: The application is still open for the Oregon Tribal Student Grant (OTSG) for the current academic year, and we encourage members of the nine federally recognized tribes in Oregon to apply. The OTSG, first launched in 2022 and codified in statute in 2023, bolsters the opportunity for tribal members to achieve their postsecondary education goals, whether they have just graduated from high school, or are adults wanting to start or return to college. The HECC has seen growing participation in the OTSG in its first two years and we are very glad to see that the growth trend continues into 2024-25. For the 2024-25 school year, the HECC Office of Student Access and Completion (OSAC) has already received 992 submitted applications and 746 of those applicants have been fully approved, others are pending due to one or more of the following: needing to submit a Tribal Enrollment Verification form, need to complete the 2024-25 FAFSA/ORSAA, or they might seek to enroll in a non-eligible school. For the 2023-24 school year the OSAC awarded 501 OTSG recipients, compared to 412 students for the 2022-2023 academic year (the pilot year). The OTSG to date has served students pursuing all levels of

postsecondary education, including certificates, associate degrees, bachelors, masters, PHDs, MDs and JDs. The current 2024-2025 application will remain open until April 2025, as long as funds are available. To be eligible for the program students must be an enrolled member of one of the nine federally recognized tribes in Oregon. Students must also be enrolled or accepted for enrollment at an Oregon college or university and complete a valid FAFSA or ORSAA for the 2024-2025 academic year. Additional eligibility information can be found on the [Oregon Tribal Student Grant web page](#).

[Oregon Youth Works](#) has a direct investment opportunity to cooperatively partner in Tribal Workforce Partnerships that emphasize youth workforce & development experiences. In collaboration with each of Oregon's 9 Federally Recognized Tribal Sovereign Nations, Oregon Youth Corps has an initial investment of \$540,000 of funding available through Intergovernmental Agreements (\$60,000 of per agreement). Intergovernmental Agreements intend to start in 2025 and span over four years, with an opportunity to add new funding as it becomes available. Oregon Youth Corps invites you to schedule an initial meeting with the contact below to learn and share about partnering and building a framework to support mutually shared goals. Primary Contact: Jeremy Ahola. Call or Text: 503-689-6662. Work email: [Jeremy.w.ahola@hecc.oregon.gov](mailto:Jeremy.w.ahola@hecc.oregon.gov).

### **Affordability and Financial Aid News**

[Oregon Student Aid Website](#): The HECC Office of Student Access and Completion (OSAC) encourages visiting the Oregon Student Aid website at [OregonStudentAid.gov](https://OregonStudentAid.gov), the state website where Oregonians can go to apply for state-administered grants and scholarships to help afford their college goals, and to get help planning for college, training, or careers.

[Apply for Scholarships at OregonStudentAid.gov](#): In November, the HECC Office of Student Access and Completion (OSAC) officially opened the [OSAC Scholarship Application](#) where students can explore more than 600 scholarships. Students can apply to many awards at one time through the OSAC Scholarship Application, open now through March 3, 2025. [Read more in our recent press release](#).

[FAFSA/ORSAA](#): To be eligible for most types of financial aid, students must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or the Oregon Student Aid Application (ORSAA). The FAFSA has opened earlier than expected and is now open for applicants! Resources on financial aid form completion can be found using the links below.

- [OSAC: Introducing FAFSA/ORSAA](#)
  - [OSAC: FAFSA and ORSAA Information](#)
  - [OSAC: Updates on Recent FAFSA and ORSAA Changes](#)
- [Federal Student Aid FAFSA page](#)

[Application Open for Oregon Tribal Student Grant for 2024-25](#): As noted above, the [Oregon Tribal Student Grant application](#) is open for the 2024-25 school year for students planning to attend this academic year. Current and continuing students who are members of Oregon's nine federally recognized Tribes are eligible and encouraged to apply: <https://oregonstudentaid.gov/grants/oregon-tribal-student-grant/>.

[Oregon Promise Grant](#): Learn about the [Oregon Promise Grant here](#). Deadline varies by graduation date for new students.

[OSAC offers the FAFSA Plus+ program](#) for schools, community-based organizations, and other sites that work with a specific student population. Becoming a FAFSA Plus+ site allows an organization to upload a roster of students and then be able to see the FAFSA filing status for those students. Learn more and [sign up to become a FAFSA Plus+ site](#) for free.

OSAC continues our outreach and presentations across the state. Go online to [request support](#) from OSAC at an upcoming event or in a classroom, or to provide training to your students and communities. OSAC outreach is available to students, families, and career/college access staff across Oregon to provide support and guidance. [You can also sign up to receive our e-newsletters here.](#)

- Free Publications and Posters: Order or download free posters and brochures here including the OSAC Poster—a quick reminder for students to apply for financial aid, including the FAFSA/ORSAA, grants, and scholarships. English and Spanish versions available.
- Webinars: OSAC hosts a variety of webinars throughout the year for students, parents, and career/college practitioners. Our webinars provide up-to-date information about programs we serve.

Tribal Access to Oregon Tuition and Fee Waiver: HECC-OSAC continues to be available to ensure eligible tribal foster youth and youth experiencing houselessness have access to the Oregon Tuition and Fee Waiver program, which waives tuition and fees for the equivalent of four years of undergraduate studies after other public grants and any school aid are applied for eligible students under age 25. Learn more about eligibility at [www.oregonstudentaid.gov](http://www.oregonstudentaid.gov). OSAC representatives would be pleased to help any tribal staff. Please contact Anne.Shearer@hecc.oregon.gov.

ASPIRE Program: The ASPIRE program helps educate Oregon students to become career and college ready. ASPIRE offers education, resources, and mentoring opportunities for all students. Student supports include 1:1 and group mentoring, activities that focus on career exploration, career and college research, admissions applications, scholarships, and financial aid. Tribes are welcome to join ASPIRE. [Learn more here.](#)

### **Supporting Learner Pathways, Economic and Community Development, and Student Success**

Transfer Council Approves 19 Courses as Part of Common Course Numbering: On November 21, Transfer Council approved the final group of courses for 2024, as part of Common Course Numbering (CCN) alignment work for the year. These courses will appear in academic catalogs starting 2025-2026. Also included were three math courses from 2023, which were delayed until the recent passage of the CCN Oregon Administrative Rules. This brings the total number of CCN courses aligned thus far to 37. For more on this work, see the Educator Resources-Common Course Numbering webpage, and for a complete list of courses approved see the 2024 List of CCN Courses. Students can learn about the transfer tools [here](#).

Implementation of Future Ready Oregon: HECC is continuing our implementation of Future Ready Oregon, an investment package passed in 2022 that supports the education and training Oregonians need for good-paying jobs and meaningful careers. Future Ready Oregon investments support grants and strategies that center the needs of historically underserved and underrepresented Oregonians, identify and address barriers to education and employment, and expand partnerships between communities, educators, and employers to advance innovation in talent development. [Learn more here.](#)

Future Ready Oregon Industry Consortia: The HECC has convened three statewide Industry Consortia representing the healthcare, manufacturing, and technology industry sectors. Each consortium is comprised of representatives from industry, education, labor, and community-based organizations. Consortia are advisory to the HECC and the Workforce and Talent Development Board. Most recently, the consortia informed priorities for a sector-specific Workforce Ready Grants funding opportunity (see below). Additionally, in 2024, the consortia engaged a consultant to conduct focus groups with employers across the state to better understand their workforce and talent development needs. In Q4, they heard preliminary findings and recommendations related to workforce planning, training, development, and retention. A full report is expected in December. [Learn more here.](#)

Workforce Ready Grants Expand Career Pathways in Healthcare, Manufacturing, and Technology: In a recent [press release](#), the HECC announced the latest round of Future Ready Oregon Workforce Ready Grant awards to support 62 innovative workforce and talent development projects. A combined total of approximately \$42 million has been preliminarily awarded, making this the largest round of Future Ready Oregon grant funding to date. These sector-focused Workforce Ready Grants in Healthcare, Manufacturing, and Technology support collaborative programs that center the needs of Oregon's underserved communities and connect individuals to resources for pursuing good-paying jobs and meaningful careers in key sectors of Oregon's economy. Projects specifically serving members of Oregon's Tribes include:

- The Fostering Oregon's Workforce in Advanced and Restorative Healthcare Program at Portland State University (FORWARD PSU) aims to prepare a cohort of 30 American Indian/Alaska Native undergraduates to pursue a terminal degree in a health professions program—Master of Public Health (MPH), Doctor of Dental Medicine (DMD), Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD), or Doctor of Medicine (MD) .
- Sheridan School District (SSD) will complete next steps in developing the manufacturing pathway at the Barbara Roberts Career Technical Education Center (BRCTEC).
- Oregon Institute of Technology's "Applied Computing Training for Upskilling and Reskilling Professionals" project aims to equip professionals from underserved communities with essential concepts and tools in applied computing, covering topics from system architecture to data science methodologies.
- PSU's collaborative and innovative training program will upskill and reskill tribal members in cybersecurity jobs. This partnership between Hatfield Cybersecurity and Cyber Defense Policy Center, CISCO, Institute of Tribal Government, and Umpqua Technologies of the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Indians will build awareness and lower barriers to pursue careers in cybersecurity with an industry-recognized certification.
- Warm Spring Community Action Team will expand its Grow with Google certificate program to enable Warm Springs community members to complete training and find long-term career opportunities in the technology sector. .

[Read more about these projects.](#)

Workforce Benefits Navigators: Oregon's nine local workforce development boards have launched their Future Ready Oregon Workforce Benefits Navigators (WBN) projects to increase access to benefits and services that help marginalized and underserved communities access workforce education and training opportunities, career coaching, and wraparound supports. The boards are piloting a variety of strategies. For example, Southwestern Oregon Workforce Investment Board is setting up tech resources, including mobile apps, in collaboration with libraries, tribal organizations, and local agencies. This effort is geared towards enhancing accessibility, fostering family-sustaining employment, and contributing to a thriving regional economy. [Read more about WBN.](#)

Benefit Navigators Serve More Than 15,000 Students in 2023-24: Initially launched by 2021 legislation, Oregon helps fund Benefit Navigators: employees at Oregon colleges and universities who help students apply for federal, state and local benefits programs that can support their progress in college. These resources are critical in addressing students' basic needs, including food and housing insecurity, and help close equity gaps for students. The HECC distributes funds to the 17 community colleges and seven public universities for this purpose and supports partnership and policy development. [Learn more.](#)

Academic Program Approvals: At its fall Commission meetings, the HECC approved the following new academic programs at Oregon's colleges and universities. Read more about these programs in recent [meeting materials here](#).

Community College Program Approvals - [Central Oregon CC:](#) STEM in Early Learning, Less Than One-Year Certificate of Completion (CC0). [Chemeketa CC:](#) Tasting Room Management, Less-Than One-Year Certificate of Completion (CC). [Rogue CC:](#) Emergency Services, Associate of Applied Science (AAS). [Clackamas CC:](#) Energy System Maintenance, Less Than One-Year Certificate of Completion (CC); Music Technology, Associate of Applied Science (AAS). [Lane CC:](#) Paraprofessional, Education Assistant and Community Educator, Less Than One-Year Certificate of Completion (CC). [Umpqua CC:](#) Addiction Studies, One-

Year Certificate of Completion (CC1); Front Office Medical, CC1; Human Services, Associate of Applied Science (AAS); Paralegal, AAS; Computer Information Systems, AAS; Cyber Security, AAS; Paramedicine, AAS; Expert Systems: Automation, Machine Learning and Robotics Certificate, CC; Registered Nursing, Associate of Applied Science; Mechatronics Certificate, CC1; Wine Production Certificate, Less Than One-Year Certificate of Completion (CC0); Winery/Tasting Room Management, CC0; Practical Nursing - LPN, Two-Year Certificate of Completion (CC2); Welding, Associate of Applied Science; Nursing Assistant, CC; Trauma Informed Care, CC; Electrical Apprenticeship Technologies, AAS; Business, Associate of Applied Science (AAS); Civil Engineering and Surveying Technology, Associate of Applied Science (AAS); Water Quality Technology, Associate of Applied Science (AAS); Phlebotomy, CC; Umpqua Healthcare Careers Pathway, CC; Medical Assisting, One-Year Certificate of Completion (CC1).

University programs - Southern Oregon University: Ecology & Conservation, Bachelor of Science (BS); Biomedical Science, Bachelor of Science (BS).

## **New Reports and Other Updates**

Fall Fourth Week Enrollment Summary Now Available: The fourth week fall enrollment summary for Oregon public institutions is now available on our website under Featured Research. The total number of students enrolled at Oregon community colleges and public universities rose 3 percent in fall 2024. This year's increase continues the upward trend of total statewide enrollment seen last year.

Oregon Educator Workforce Dashboard: A new interactive data dashboard published by the Oregon Longitudinal Data Collaborative (OLDC) provides insights on new teachers in Oregon public K-12 schools. The dashboard explores licensure recommendations, hiring, and retention for new teachers.

Oregon Makes Strides in Diversifying Educator Workforce: In a press release by the Educator Advancement Council (EAC), partner agencies including the Oregon Department of Education (ODE), Oregon Teacher Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC), and the HECC jointly released the 2024 Educator Equity Report. The report is released every two years and highlights key findings on efforts to achieve a more diverse educator workforce in Oregon. Among other findings, the report says Oregon is making strides in the diversity of early career educators. Over the past decade, Oregon has doubled the proportion of first-year teachers identifying as people of color, reaching 20.6 percent in 2023. However, the report cites continued challenges in numerous areas, and offers comprehensive recommendations to advance progress.

AmeriCorps and OregonServes Expand Partnership to Help Equip Oregon for Natural Disaster Response: State and federal agencies are working together to better equip Oregon to respond to natural disasters. AmeriCorps, the federal agency for national service and volunteerism, highlighted its expanding partnership with OregonServes in a recent press release [here](#).

HECC Modernization Project: Improving Our Information Network with LEARN: As part of HECC's work administering numerous higher education and workforce programs to serve Oregonians, our agency needs to reliably collect and manage information from many partners—from large institutions to small career schools to families. Thanks to state investment, we are making progress on upgrading several core information systems that are critical to our work in helping Oregonians access key programs and services. With the HECC Modernization Project, we are working to create a new integrated IT solution called LEARN—Lifelong Educational Advancement Resource Network. We expect that LEARN will include: improved processes in our work with private institutions; improvements to the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL), and improvements to the financial aid process. HECC teams are working with a vendor to develop the LEARN system, and we expect to begin rolling it out to the first set of users in early 2025. '

Introducing the Oregon Climate Alliance: As part of the American Climate Corps, State Service Commissions like OregonServes is bringing Oregonians together on climate response efforts. On December 3, convened climate partners to outline this national initiative, highlight some state models throughout

the nation, and share our vision for an Oregon Climate Alliance. Organizations or entities who are doing climate and clean energy related work can learn more about this collaborative by contacting Madeline Seghers at [Madeline.SEGHERS@hecc.oregon.gov](mailto:Madeline.SEGHERS@hecc.oregon.gov).

2024 ASPIRE Conferences Convened Participants from 19 Oregon Counties: Thanks to the hundreds of participants and the expert presenters who joined us this month for the ASPIRE Fall Conference, an annual event organized by the OSAC to advance college and career mentoring and access. In 2024, we held two ASPIRE conference events—one in Eugene and one in Bend—providing valuable information to ASPIRE sites, school counselors, and others dedicated to supporting college and career readiness.

2024 "Point of View" Oregon Adult Basic Skills Conference : Thank you to all the partners who joined us for the Oregon Adult Basic Skills (ABS) Conference on November 4-5, 2024, in Salem, Oregon. The theme of this year's conference was "Point of View," emphasizing the importance of recognizing and valuing diverse perspectives of adult learners and those pursuing high school equivalency. We're grateful for the contributions and commitment of all the presenters for elevating the experiences of Oregon's adult learners and engaging participants in exploring strategies for innovative approaches to teaching college and career readiness skills.

#### Other HECC Newsletters and Publications - Recent Issues

- [HECC Collaborations, November 2024 - The Big Picture for Higher Education and Training: Investing in Value for Oregon and Oregonians](#)
- [PRESS RELEASE: HECC Adopts Strategic Plan to Improve Positive Impacts for Individuals, Communities, and the Economy](#)
- [Transfer Update, November 2024](#)
- [Future Ready Oregon Update, November](#)
- [OSAC Newsletter, November](#)
- [OregonServes Newsletter, November](#)

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