

# Government to Government Tribal Education Update

December 2025

## Higher Education Coordinating Commission - Quarter Four Updates

The Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) honors the sovereignty of Oregon's Tribes and seeks to collaborate on all postsecondary initiatives that may have an impact on their communities. In this quarterly agency report to the Government to Government Tribal Education Cluster, we report on our ongoing work and new initiatives to support Oregon learners and communities. Tribal partners can find previous quarterly updates, as well as other information on work and initiatives, in the [Coordination with Tribes section](#) of our website.

### MONITORING FEDERAL CHANGES

Many of our partners have questions about the federal administration changes and the postsecondary landscape. While we assess the potential impact of federal directives, HECC remains committed to our mission to advance equitable access and success in postsecondary education and training, meet workforce needs, and strengthen Oregon's collective future. We have a web page where partners can keep informed on [HECC's work in relation to federal changes](#).

### OREGON STUDENT TRIBAL GRANT APPLICATION OPEN FOR 2026-27

Please note that due to record-breaking applicant numbers, the 2025-26 application for the [Oregon Tribal Student Grant](#) is now closed. **We thank all the tribes for all their hard work and cooperation for making the 2025-2026 year another record-breaking year for the OTSG. The application for 2026-27 is now open.** Please see full updates in the Affordable Access section of this report.

## About the Higher Education Coordinating Commission

**About Our Work:** *The Higher Education Coordinating Commission is a state commission and agency working to drive postsecondary access and success for all Oregonians, meet workforce needs, and strengthen Oregon's collective future. The HECC envisions a future where all people benefit from the economic, civic, and cultural impact of high-quality postsecondary education, training, and workforce development. Learn more at [www.oregon.gov/highered](http://www.oregon.gov/highered).*

**Contacts:** **Ben Cannon**, Executive Director; **Rudyane Rivera-Lindstrom**, Tribal Liaison, Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access, [rudyane.rivera-lindstrom@hecc.oregon.gov](mailto:rudyane.rivera-lindstrom@hecc.oregon.gov), 503-689-4309. To sign up for other updates and newsletters, [join our mailing list](#).

**Upcoming Meetings:** Higher Education Coordinating Commission Public Meeting: December 10-11, 2025. For other upcoming public meetings of the HECC and affiliated boards (WTDB, others), [see our website here](#). For email notices of upcoming public meetings, [join our mailing list](#).

**Funding Opportunities:** See [Grant and Contract Opportunities](#).

## HECC LAUNCHES ACTIVITIES DRIVEN BY ITS NEW FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

The HECC's [Strategic Plan, adopted in October 2024](#), describes the vision, mission, goals, and strategies that the Commission intends to guide its work over the next three to five years. In recent months, the agency has initiated numerous activities to advance toward these goals. Updates on implementation of the strategic plan are provided at [public meetings of the HECC](#). The most recent public documents on the strategic plan implementation, presented at the November 6, 2025 public HECC meeting, are available below. This update focused primarily on work underway to advance eight initial strategies identified in 2025.

- [Strategic Plan Implementation Update \(Q3, 2025\)](#)
- [HECC Strategic Plan Implementation Report Q3 2025](#)

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATES ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE TRAINING

**Outcomes of 2025 Session:** Oregon maintained a largely Current Service Level (CSL) postsecondary budget for 2025-27, while featured bills expanded access to some postsecondary programs. Thank you to all who engaged with the HECC on the needs of Oregon learners during the 2025 legislative session. We are pleased to share summaries of key budget and policy outcomes from the recently concluded legislative session.

- The [Fact Sheet on the HECC 2025-27 Legislatively Adopted Budget \(LAB\)](#) provides a short overview of budget outcomes.
- The [2025 Legislative Session Summary](#) summarizes the budget in more detail and describes outcomes of 26 legislative bills pertaining to the postsecondary education and workforce system, as well as some upcoming implementation steps.

**Budget Exercise for 2026 Short Session:** Higher education is bracing for the potential of budget reductions during the 2026 legislative session. In October, the Legislative Fiscal Office asked the HECC and other state agencies to submit an approach to making a five percent reduction to our 2025-27 budget. The Legislature is months away from making any decisions, and our assignment at the HECC was simply to model and present the impacts of such a cut, in the event it is considered. However, it is important to be clear that about 98 percent of HECC's General Fund budget goes to public universities, community colleges, workforce/employment programs, and student grant aid programs, and there is no way to reduce our \$4.2 billion budget by five percent without impacting our institutions and their learners. At LFO's request, HECC provided budget reduction options, and that [information was presented to the Education Subcommittee in November](#). In this exercise, as explained in the introductory letter, the HECC deliberately submitted options that do not include cuts to the Oregon Tribal Student Grant or the Oregon Opportunity Grant. **No final decisions regarding funding have been made by the Legislature.**

**Planning for 2027 Session:** HECC is already in the early stages of planning for 2027 legislative concepts and budget proposals, having started an internal idea generation and collection period. Shortly after the start of the new year, HECC will develop a list of proposals for further consideration and engagement with external partners, leading into a period of final consideration over the summer and fall.

## OREGON JOINS LUMINA FOUNDATION'S STATE ATTAINMENT COLLABORATIVE

Oregon has joined 12 other states in Lumina Foundation's State Attainment Collaborative. The HECC is excited to be part of this multi-state effort to help Oregon update its state postsecondary attainment goal. Through this collaborative, we will be working with education, business, civic, nonprofit, and policy

leaders from across Oregon and other participating states — Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Missouri, Nevada, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Utah, Washington and West Virginia. Together we will explore what makes a credential truly valuable, consider updates to our statewide educational attainment goals, and align policies and programs to support today's students. Read more about this new initiative in [Lumina's press release here](#).

## INTERIM DIRECTOR OF OSAC ANNOUNCED

We are pleased to announce that Kerry Thomas, current deputy director of Future Ready Oregon, has been appointed as the interim director of the HECC Office of Student Access and Completion, starting Monday, December 1, 2025.

## Supporting Affordable Access

### OREGON TRIBAL STUDENT GRANT UPDATES

**2025-2026:** The OTSG application is still closed, and OSAC does NOT anticipate reopening the current year's application. OSAC has received over 900 viable applications for 2025-2026 and we have approved over 700 students to receive the Oregon Tribal Student Grant. Schools have or are working on submitting Fall 2025 disbursement information and OSAC hopes to have Fall 2025 numbers available by the end of December 2025. Please keep in mind that 2025-2026 includes the terms/semesters of Fall 2025, Winter 2026, and Spring 2026. Funds for Summer 2026 will NOT be available, and students are encouraged to work with their school's financial aid office for alternative aid sources if they plan to attend Summer 2026. \*If students have questions about their 2025-2026 application status, they should email Jake Logan, the Tribal Student/Learner Access Analyst, at [jacob.logan@hecc.oregon.gov](mailto:jacob.logan@hecc.oregon.gov).

**2026-2027:** the 2026-2027 Oregon Tribal Student Grant application opened December 1, 2025! Students can now and are encouraged to apply for the 2026-2027 academic year (Fall 2026, Winter 2027, Spring 2027). Students will need to complete the 2026-2027 OTSG Application, once they submit their application they will be prompted to complete the Tribal Enrollment Verification form, this is needed each academic year. Students will also need to complete the 2026-2027 FAFSA or 2026-2027 ORSAA.

**About the OTSG:** 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. To date, the OTSG has served students pursuing all levels of postsecondary education, including certificates, associate degrees, bachelor's, masters, PhDs, MDs and JDs. To be eligible for the program, students must be an enrolled member in one of the nine federally recognized tribes in Oregon. Students must also be enrolled or accepted for enrollment at an Oregon-based college or university and complete a valid FAFSA or ORSAA. Additional eligibility information can be found on the [Oregon Tribal Student Grant web page](#).

### OTHER STATE FINANCIAL AID AND AFFORDABILITY UPDATES

**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). Resources on financial aid form completion can be found using the links below.

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

OSAC Scholarships: Students can explore more than 600 scholarships through the OSAC Scholarship Application. The application is open November to March each year.

Chafee Education and Training Voucher Program: The 2025-2026 Chafee Education and Training Voucher Program application is now open. Visit our application eligibility requirements and submit an application.

Oregon Promise Grant: Visit the Oregon Promise Grant here for all information on eligibility and applications, including an FAQ. For new applicants this year (Class of 2025), OSAC has set a Student Aid Index (SAI) limit of 18,000 for eligibility due to available funds and high numbers of eligible applicants.

Oregon Tribal Student Grant: The 2026-2027 Oregon Tribal Student Grant application opened December 1, 2025. Students can now and are encouraged to apply for the 2026-2027 academic year (Fall 2026, Winter 2027, Spring 2027).

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. The Tuition and Fee Waiver ensures remaining tuition and fees are waived after other public grants and any school aid are applied. Eligible students can start receiving the waiver for the equivalent of four years of undergraduate studies until they turn 25. Learn more about eligibility at [www.oregonstudentaid.gov](http://www.oregonstudentaid.gov). OSAC representatives would be pleased to help any tribal staff help eligible young people receive the waiver. Please contact [Anne.Shearer@hecc.oregon.gov](mailto:Anne.Shearer@hecc.oregon.gov).

## **OREGON TEACHER SCHOLARS PROGRAM GRANT ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA UPDATES**

This year, the Oregon Teacher Scholars Program Grant underwent important updates to its eligibility requirements. The updated criteria focus on candidates who have experiences with diverse populations and a commitment to ongoing cultural competency. These updates ensure the grant continues to support students preparing for licensure in teaching, school counseling, social work, and school psychology, while aligning with Oregon's goals for an equitable educator workforce. The grant remains a critical pathway for students committed to serving diverse student populations across Oregon. [Learn more about The Oregon Teacher Scholars Program Grant](#).

## **OSAC OUTREACH AND SUPPORT**

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 are 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 administer.

## ASPIRE PROGRAM

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.](#)

## Fostering Learner Pathways and Equitable Opportunity

### ACADEMIC PROGRAM ACTIONS

At recent public meetings (October 8 and November 6, 2025), the HECC **approved the following new academic programs** and/or new program locations at the public community colleges and universities. View details in Commission materials here.

#### Community College Program Approvals:

- Chemeketa CC: Emergency Medical Services, Associate of Applied Science (AAS); Chemeketa CC: Emergency Services, Less-Than One-Year Certificate of Completion (CCO)
- Columbia Gorge CC: Integrated Agriculture Science and Technology, Associate of Applied Science (AAS)
- Treasure Valley CC Facilities Maintenance Specialist, Associate of Applied Science (AAS); Treasure Valley CC: Advanced Energy Systems, Associate of Applied Science (AAS)

#### Public University Programs Approvals:

- Oregon State University: OSU Bachelor of Science in Computer Science – Applied (BS); OSU Bachelor of Arts + Bachelor of Science in Sports Business (BA+BS); OSU Bachelor of Science in Data Science (BS)

### DIRECT ADMISSIONS

The HECC is working with K-12, community college and university partners on direct admissions, a recent state initiative to make the college admissions process more accessible for students. In 2024, the Oregon Legislature passed Senate Bill 1552 requiring HECC to establish a direct admissions program with all Oregon public higher education institutions. In addition to the ongoing planning for this program, HECC has worked with a communications contractor and partners to establish the name and design branding identity for this statewide program. [Learn more about the initiative status here.](#)

### RESOURCES RELATED TO PRIVATE POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

The HECC Office of Academic Policy and Authorization would like to share several resources related to private postsecondary education. Please note that HECC has a [consumer alerts page here](#) where we announce any school closures or regulatory changes with regard to licensed and authorized schools. We also have webpages where we [list all authorized private degree granting institutions](#) and [all licensed private career schools](#). Both offices are regulatory in nature but also have a focus on consumer protection. If students have complaints, more information can be found at our [student complaints webpage here](#). They can also reach out to: 503-400-4759 or [HECC.Complaints@hecc.oregon.gov](mailto:HECC.Complaints@hecc.oregon.gov). If students have any questions about private institutions in Oregon, they can reach out to: 503-947-5716 or [info.pps@hecc.oregon.gov](mailto:info.pps@hecc.oregon.gov).

## TRANSFER UPDATE: NEW COMMON COURSE NUMBERING (CCN) APPROVALS

The HECC and public institutions, through the Transfer Council, are working together to [streamline the transfer of credits](#) between Oregon's 17 community colleges and seven public universities. We are pleased to announce that 10 courses were recently approved for Common Course Numbering in Biology, Chemistry, and Spanish. With the recent approvals, Oregon now has a total of 50 common lower division courses that are aligned and approved for Common Course Numbering to help students transfer credits.

- Institutions can find details on these agreements, including effective dates and catalog requirements, on our [CCN web page](#).
- Students can learn how to take advantage of active agreements under [Tools for Transfer here](#). Students can easily identify available CCN courses in catalogs because they all end in a Z.

## YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH CORPS

OregonServes, in the HECC Office of Workforce Investments, is working on a grant-funded initiative to help strengthen Oregon's mental health workforce by creating clear entry points into behavioral health careers. Tribal leaders who are interested to learn more about this innovative initiative can contact OregonServes' Youth Mental Health Corps coordinator, Madeline Seghers, at [madeline.seghers@hecc.oregon.gov](mailto:madeline.seghers@hecc.oregon.gov)

## Responding to Workforce and Community Needs

### INDUSTRY CONSORTIA: RECENT ACTIVITIES AND OCCUPATION AND WAGE PROFILES

The Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC), in partnership with the [Workforce and Talent Development Board](#), has continued to convene statewide Consortia in three of our state's key industry sectors—healthcare, manufacturing, and technology. [On our web page here](#), You can find details on the Industry Consortia, including public meeting materials, [on our web page](#). Annually, each Consortium convenes outside the Portland Metro/Salem area for one of its quarterly public meetings. This summer, the Technology Consortium convened in Pendleton to hear from local employers, Future Ready Oregon grantees, and their partners about strategies for building on the strengths of rural communities to develop Eastern Oregon's tech workforce. Presenters included representatives of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR), which received a Future Ready Grant from the HECC in 2023 for its Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS/drone) training program. A meeting update and article on CTUIR's grant-funded project were featured in a [recent issue of HECC's Future Ready Oregon newsletter](#).

### OCCUPATION PROFILES AND WAGE DATA

Beginning last fall, the Industry Consortia have participated in informing the development of occupation and wage profiles. Occupation profiles and wage data share typical education and training requirements and wage and employment data for high-skill, high-demand, and high-wage jobs in Oregon's healthcare, manufacturing, and technology sectors. The Industry Consortia are using this information to advance sector-specific workforce development strategies, which include the following.

- understanding each sector's talent supply and workforce demand for skilled occupations
- identifying the related education, training, and career pathways that are available in Oregon

- sharing wage information to increase transparency for people who are training for these jobs

Prepared by HECC staff in collaboration with the Oregon Employment Department, the profiles fulfill expectations of HECC's Industry Consortia detailed in [House Bill 3306 \(2023\)](#). The final versions as now posted on the HECC's [Industry Consortia web page](#).

## OREGON TALENT SUMMIT - SAVE THE DATE FOR MAY 19, 2026

We are excited to announce that the Oregon Talent Summit, hosted by the Workforce & Talent Development Board (WTDB) in collaboration with the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC), will be held on May 19, 2026, at the Salem Convention Center. Since 2018, the Talent Summit has been a cornerstone event for shaping and advancing Oregon's workforce and education strategies, bringing together leaders from business, education, community-based organizations, state agencies, policymakers, and others from across the state. Please save the date, and share this with your networks to encourage statewide participation. You can also join the Talent Summit mailing list, [available on the WTDB website](#), to stay informed on this event.

## PARTNERSHIP INVESTMENTS FOR REENGAGEMENT/WORKFORCE TRAINING

Oregon Youth Works, housed in the HECC, and Youth Development Oregon (YDO) recently announced the official Partnership for Tribal Workforce and Reengagement. The partnership is coordinated through an Interagency Agreement, which established a path for HECC/YDO to partner with Tribal Sovereign Nations. Tribes opting to partner will be able to access over one million dollars invested across the nine Federally Recognized Tribal Nations in Oregon for the 2025-2027 biennium. **We are pleased to report that many of the federally recognized tribes in Oregon are now participating in this, and the opportunity is still open.** Staff at HECC/YDO continue to work directly with contacts to develop agreements and support the partnership. Tribes interested that are not yet in conversations are welcome to connect. 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).

## New Reports and Other Updates

### FALL FOURTH WEEK ENROLLMENT SUMMARY FOR PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

The total number of students enrolled at Oregon community colleges and public universities rose 1.5 percent overall in fall 2025 compared to 2024, with differences by sector and institution.

- The number of learners at community college is higher in 2025 than in 2024 (94,898), rising 3.7 percent. Enrollment rose at 10 of the 17 colleges.
- At Oregon's seven public universities, the number of public university learners is slightly lower in 2025 than in 2024 (100,205), falling 0.6 percent. Enrollment rose at three of the seven universities.

[Read the full summary of Fall 2025 Enrollment Data.](#)

## RECENT REPORTS TO THE OREGON LEGISLATURE

### HIGHER EDUCATION EMPLOYEES, 2025



The HECC has released its annual report on employment at Oregon's public higher education institutions, available [here](#). Each year, HECC conducts a review of employment at Oregon's seven public universities and 17 community colleges.

## **TUITION EQUITY, NONRESIDENT VETERAN AND DEPENDENT FEE REMISSION, AND QUALIFIED VETERAN DEPENDENT WAIVERS AT OREGON PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES, 2025**

The Higher Education Coordinating Commission has released its [annual report on tuition remission programs at Oregon public universities, available here](#). This report examines the participation in, and financial impact on universities of, three tuition remission programs serving overlapping groups of Oregonians: the Tuition Equity program, the Nonresident Veteran and Dependent fee remission program, and the Qualified Veteran Dependent full tuition waiver program.

## **OREGON CONSERVATION CORPS ANNUAL REPORT, 2025**

The Higher Education Coordinating Commission has released its [annual report on the Oregon Conservation Corps program, available here](#). The Oregon Conservation Corps (OCC) is a youth-focused wildfire risk reduction and workforce development initiative that has been operating for nearly four years. OCC engages youth from underserved communities in fire fuels mitigation efforts while providing job training and relevant certifications.

## **Other HECC News**

### **WELCOME TO COMMISSIONERS DEMBROW, LAWSON, NJUE, and DAVIS-BOUCHER**

We are pleased to welcome four new commissioners who recently joined the HECC. In October, the Oregon Senate confirmed Governor Kotek's nominations of **Michael Dembrow, Devon Lawson, and Erick Njue**, and in November, the Oregon Senate confirmed the Governor's nomination of **Demetrius Davis-Boucher**. Commissioner **Greg Hamann** and Commissioner **Arnel Fajardo** were also confirmed for reappointment to their four-year terms. [Read more about the Commissioners on our web page here](#).

### **HECC FACILITATES OREGON HISPANIC-SERVING-INSTITUTION CONSORTIUM**

Through a new inter-institution consortium, representatives from Oregon's colleges and universities are working collaboratively to better serve Latine/Hispanic students and support a culture of student success for all students. The OR HSI Consortium is a hub for resources and best practices where higher education professionals can learn from one another, share evidence-based strategies, and collectively influence institutional practices and initiatives to support student success. Learn more about the collaborative work of the [OR HSI Consortium](#).

### **HECC EMBARKS ON REVIEW OF FUNDING DISTRIBUTION MODELS FOR PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS**

At its October public meetings, the HECC Commission previewed a proposed process for review of the state funding distribution models for Oregon community colleges and public universities. The detailed plans were presented by Jim Pinkard, director of the HECC Office of Postsecondary Finance and Capital. Collaborative workgroups will review the institution funding models for 2026. After the Oregon Legislature and Governor make the state's biennial investment in Oregon's postsecondary institutions, HECC distributes these funds to the seven universities and 17 community colleges according to formulas,



specifically the [Community College Distribution Model \(CCDM\)](#) and the [Public University Student Success and Completion Model \(SSCM\)](#). The HECC has statutory authority to manage the student success-focused formulas that guide this distribution. [Read more about the review process here.](#)

## **OTHER HECC PUBLICATIONS**

- PRESS RELEASE: Students are Encouraged to Apply Now for 2026-27 Scholarships and Grants at OregonStudentAid.gov, November 2025
- OSAC Monthly Newsletter, November
- Subscribe to other HECC newsletters or update your subscription preferences here.