



Legislative Commission on Indian Services 2025 ANNUAL REPORT



Legislative Commission on Indian Services Annual Report, 2025. *January 2026*, developed by the Higher Education Coordinating Commission, Office of the Executive Director.

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Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

Higher Education Coordinating Commission

3225 25th Street SE

Salem, OR 97302

www.oregon.gov/HigherEd

Patrick Flanagan, Executive Director
Legislative Commission on Indian Services
900 Court Street NE, Room 167
Salem, OR 97301
December 2025

Dear Mr. Flanagan,

I am pleased to present the 2025 Legislative Commission on Indian Services Annual Report of the Higher Education Coordination Commission (HECC).

We honor the sovereignty of the nine federally-recognized Tribes in Oregon and deeply value the opportunities we have had to work cooperatively with the educational representatives of the Tribes over the last year. This report summarizes the actions and initiatives the HECC has undertaken in 2025 to foster postsecondary education and training opportunities and pathways for tribal students and learners in Oregon. The HECC is actively serving and partnering with Tribes in Oregon in numerous ways to best address specific needs and promote opportunities for Oregon's tribal students. We are dedicated to building strong relationships with our tribal partners through consultation, communication, concrete actions, and the fulfillment of our commitments, and look forward to continuing and expanding our work together in the coming year.

This has been a year of change and complexity, and through it all, the postsecondary education and workforce system continues to spark hope, innovation, and prosperity for Oregonians and their communities. In the coming year, we are looking forward to partnering on Governor Kotek's recently announced Prosperity Roadmap, an economic development strategy for Oregon that includes an emphasis on fostering workforce development opportunities for living-wage jobs. Our Strategic Plan continues to drive our work at HECC for increased responsiveness to meet Oregon's workforce and community needs, intentional actions to foster equity and belonging for all, and an increased focus on postsecondary education's role in economic development. I look forward to working closely with our Tribal partners on the activity that this plan will galvanize. The HECC continues in our efforts to foster an accessible, affordable, equitable, and coordinated network of college and career training programs, and we are pleased to report on more in this report.

Should you have questions or comments regarding this report, please direct them to Rudyane Rivera-Lindstrom, Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility and HECC Tribal Liaison, at (503) 689-4309.

Respectfully,

Ben Cannon, HECC Executive Director

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ABOUT THE HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING COMMISSION

Agency	Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) www.oregon.gov/highered
Key Contacts	Ben Cannon, HECC Executive Director ben.cannon@hecc.oregon.gov 971-273-9222 Rudyane Rivera-Lindstrom, Director of DEIA & Tribal Liaison rudyane.rivera-lindstrom@hecc.oregon.gov 503-689-4309
Major Areas	<p>The Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) mission (from HECC Strategic Plan 2024-2029) is as follows.</p> <p>Through strategic coordination, funding, outreach, services, reporting, and leadership for systems change, the HECC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drives equitable postsecondary access and success for all Oregonians; • Anticipates and meets workforce and economic needs; and • Strengthens Oregon’s collective future by fostering research, innovation, learning, civic engagement, and cultural contributions.
Agency Statement	<p>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. (from HECC Strategic Plan 2024-2029).</p> <p>Established in 2011 and vested with its current authorities in 2013, the HECC is a 15-member volunteer commission appointed by the Oregon Governor and confirmed by the Oregon State Senate, with funding and policy responsibilities for higher education and the workforce statewide. The HECC supports postsecondary education by administering the statewide higher education and workforce budget of about \$2 billion per year; authorizing programs and degrees; administering statewide financial aid, workforce, and educational programs; and providing strategic guidance to state leaders. We also directly serve Oregonians by awarding grant and scholarship aid to students and connecting Oregonians with workforce and training resources. Our work is driven by the State of Oregon’s educational attainment goals for youth and adults, and by our Commission’s goals. To guide that work, we use the Equity Lens to help close system and opportunity gaps to achieve equitable outcomes for all.</p> <p>Oregon’s Strategic Plan for Postsecondary Education and Training was</p>

	<p>finalized in October 2024. The new plan focuses on lowering costs and increasing benefits of higher education and training for individuals, employers, communities, and the economy. The new plan establishes five action-focused strategic goals to advance systems change through intentional strategies: RELEVANCE, ALIGNMENT, AFFORDABLE ACCESS, BELONGING, AND LEADERSHIP.</p> <p>The Commission is supported by the state agency by the same name, comprised of <u>eight distinct offices</u> led by Executive Director Ben Cannon.</p>
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HECC INITIATIVES AND ACTIVITIES, 2025

The HECC coordinates activities with tribal partners, the Governor's Office, the Oregon Department of Education, and numerous other education partners to foster postsecondary pathways and student success. The following are significant activities HECC has undertaken in 2025 that support postsecondary education pathways for, and honor our relationships with, the nine federally recognized Tribes in Oregon.

HECC 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 were presented at the November 6, 2025 public HECC meeting. This update focused primarily on work underway to advance eight initial strategies identified in 2025.

HECC Budget and Legislative Highlights:

2026 Session Preparation: As the Oregon Legislature prepares for potential budget cuts in the 2026 Legislative Session, higher education and workforce training face the potential of state budget reductions to the current biennial budget during the 2026 legislative session. In October, the Legislative Fiscal Office (LFO) asked the HECC and other state agencies to submit an approach to making 2.5 and five percent reductions to our 2025-27 budget. The HECC's assignment was to model and present the impacts of cuts for the Legislature's possible consideration during the February 2026 session. Since the HECC responded to this exercise, there has been a more favorable state revenue forecast; however, there is one additional revenue forecast that will be made in February, which the Legislature will use as a basis for their budget decisions.

HECC provided budget reduction options to LFO and presented these to the Joint Interim Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education with other agencies on November 18, 2025. The HECC emphasized that cuts would be deeply challenging at a time when many institutions are already grappling with budget shortfalls. As a \$4.4 billion agency that dedicates almost all of its funding to colleges, universities, workforce organizations, and students, the modeled cuts would inevitably impact access, opportunity, and support for learners seeking postsecondary education and training.

2027 Session Preparation: The HECC is responsible for advising the Oregon Legislature and the Governor on higher education policy and for developing budget recommendations for public postsecondary education and workforce training in Oregon. During each legislative session and continually, we work closely with many of our partners on the legislative and budget development process. HECC staff play a key role in developing the legislative concepts (LCs) and policy option packages (POPs), which HECC ultimately pursues during legislative sessions. The 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. More information will be available in early 2026, when

the Governor's office usually releases agency expectations for policy and budget proposals, and HECC begins the process of sharing draft concepts with partners.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESSIBILITY

Many of our partners have questions about the federal administration changes and the postsecondary landscape. While we continue to assess the potential impact of federal directives over the past year, 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. The HECC created a [federal changes webpage](#) where partners can keep informed on HECC's work in relation to federal changes.

Equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility continue to be centered for the HECC in all our work, and we stay committed to fostering our connections and collaborations between HECC and the nine federally recognized Tribes in Oregon. The HECC continues to apply our Equity Lens and utilizes its tools to evaluate funding decisions, policies, and proposals. This lens and its tools will be updated and strengthened in 2026 to better align with the current research in equity strategies and approaches.

To continue in our equity work, HECC is also beginning its efforts to update and enhance our state's postsecondary attainment goal. For more than a decade, Oregon has been working toward two state education goals: the ambitious statewide 40-40-20 goal for young adults, and the more recently adopted adult attainment goal, focused on credential attainment. In addition, there are numerous other goals in Oregon statute for the HECC related to economic, workforce, cultural, civic, and community goals. The HECC and partners plan to revisit current statutory goals, and to develop a proposal to replace Oregon's current 40-40-20 education attainment goal, which has an end date of 2025. A timely opportunity arrived that would allow Oregon to join the Lumina Foundations State Attainment Collaborative. Oregon was selected along with 12 other states. 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.

In addition to benefiting from the multi-state collaborative, the HECC has recently convened an Oregon steering committee to advise staff on Oregon's new goal. The committee includes representatives from the Oregon Legislature, community colleges, universities, K-12 education, workforce partners, economic development leaders, business and community leaders, partner agencies, and others.

Continued Participation in Government-to-Government Education Cluster and Convenings & Oregon's Tribal Cultural Items Survey:

The HECC executive director has prioritized participation in the Government-to-Government (G2G) Education Cluster and has committed that either he or his appointee will attend each quarterly

gathering. Over the past year, Executive Director Ben Cannon and Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Rudyane Rivera-Lindstrom continue to attend Education Cluster meetings, to which the agency provides thorough written updates on recent activity. The [HECC's regular update to the G2G](#) are available on our website [here](#).

In regard to the renewed efforts of the mandate to identify cultural items that may be found in public institutions and state agencies, the HECC has only had opportunity to connect with university representatives seeking support in identifying any cultural items in Oregon's institutions. A presentation was shared during an Education Cluster Government to Government meeting earlier in 2025. The HECC is committed to supporting creating awareness and identifying key leaders that could help in the work moving forward.

Other Collaborations:

HECC staff also continue their visits and collaborations around the state. This allows us to strengthen existing relationships and work directly with tribal partners on grant programs and awards, such as the Future Ready Workforce Readiness Grants, Oregon Tribal Student Grant and the Oregon Youth Corps (OYC). HECC staff hope to continue finding ways to collaborate and improve our processes. We are grateful for the new opportunities to connect. The HECC also continues serving on the Oregon Department of Education's American Indian/Alaskan Native State Plan Advisory Committee providing supports and post-secondary perspective as needed.

Equity Leadership:

With new federal cuts and directives impacting higher education in Oregon and nationally, 2025 proved to be more difficult for the state's diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility efforts. HECC's strong DEIA team, comprised of three employees who support the agency's equity work internally and externally, were given full support and allowed to stay the course in our collective work. Rudyane Rivera-Lindstrom, Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility for the HECC along with her DEIA team, continues working with and collaborating with our partners and staff on HECC's internal and external goals and initiatives related to racial justice and equity. Internally, agency leadership and staff continue working towards our equity goals. We continue in the consistency and accountability of HECC's work and operationalizing of our Equity Lens.

The HECC continues its intentional examination of its equity processes, levels of understanding of how to authentically engage in the work and identifying what is needed to strengthen the agency's long-standing commitment to equity and partnership with higher education institutions and other state agencies. As we begin processes for the next legislative sessions, we continue to expand and deepen our engagement work. Externally, collaboration and network building continue with consistent participation in virtual events and the creation of spaces that allow for new relationships to be formed and for our work to continue. The HECC not only collaborates with our postsecondary partners but also supports and takes part in the equity and racial justice work along with other state agencies. The HECC also continues to reach out to the nine federally recognized Tribes individually in the effort to continue building relationships that move beyond the Education Cluster meetings.

REPORTING DATA AND ANALYSIS ON POSTSECONDARY TRENDS, DISAGGREGATED BY RACE/ETHNICITY

The HECC Office of Research and Data has numerous resources collect, analyzes, and reports research and data on postsecondary education and training to help inform decisions and guide progress toward state goals. [View HECC research and data here.](#) Some key resources include:

- [HECC's Key Performance Measures](#)
- [Data Dashboards](#)
- [Statewide Snapshots](#)

In addition to the extensive data resources at the links above, the HECC issues fall fourth week enrollment reports. In 2025, total Fall enrollment across all public institutions showed an increase. Oregon saw a 3.7 percent increase at Community Colleges and a 0.6 decrease at Public Universities, resulting in a combined 1.5 percent increase across all public institutions. The HECC Office of Research and Data collects fall fourth-week enrollment data from Oregon institutions and reports the fall enrollment snapshot under our Featured Research page to keep partners informed on recent enrollment trends. The following is a summary of 2025 Fall Enrollment Data:

Please note that while the fall fourth week reflects our most recent statewide enrollment data, this data reflects a snapshot in time for fall term, so it does not reflect the final enrollment total for the full academic year. The HECC also reports enrollment data for the full academic year through its data dashboards.

In the fourth week of fall term, the number of learners at community colleges was 94,898, and is higher in 2025 than in 2024, rising 3.7 percent. Enrollment rose at ten of the 17 colleges. Statewide enrollment has risen since fall 2022, gaining significant ground against the large drop in enrollment that followed the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of students is now 14.5 percent lower than in fall 2019.

At Oregon's seven public universities, the number of public university learners was 100,205 this fall, slightly lower in 2025 than in 2024, falling 0.6 percent. This slight decline compares to slight increases since fall 2021 but is consistent with generally stable enrollment over the past decade. Enrollment rose at three of the seven universities. The number of admitted university undergraduates is 0.1 percent lower in 2025 than in 2024; the number of admitted graduate students is 1.1 percent lower. With the number of students 1.1 percent lower in 2025 than in 2019, enrollment at universities remains close to pre-pandemic levels. The data featured here is headcount enrollment; the summary also has full time equivalent student data and information on enrollment by institution.

Continued Administration of the Oregon Longitudinal Data Collaborative (OLDC):

The [OLDC](#) is an inter-agency program located in the Higher Education Coordinating Commission. It looks at the intersections of K-12, postsecondary education, workforce training, and employment to examine how these sectors influence and impact each other. This work focuses on the impact of education programs, policies, and investments to help individuals and communities in Oregon thrive.

In the Fall, a new Director of the OLDC was selected.

Other HECC Reports and Data:

The HECC has numerous ongoing legislative reports that are due at the end of the calendar year, and our partners can find all [most recent legislative reports on our website here](#), including reports on Future Ready Oregon, Credit for Prior Learning, Transfer, Oregon Administrative Rules, and more. We also summarize numerous reports in our agency HECC Collaborations newsletter. In addition to ongoing legislatively required reports, a budget note in the agency's 2025-2027 budget bill directed HECC to develop a report on the issue of cost efficiency at public colleges and universities. After reviewing developing drafts at public meetings this fall and consulting with partners, we expect that the Commission will approve and submit this report in early 2026.

FUNDING AND POLICY FOR EQUITY AND STUDENT/LEARNER SUCCESS

State Higher Education and Training Budget for 2025-27, Preparing for the 2026 Legislative short Session:

Our work to serve Oregonians in higher education and workforce training is driven by policy and investment decisions made by the State of Oregon Legislature and Governor. Every two years, the HECC informs these decisions by developing recommendations for the higher education and training system. The HECC presents to legislative committees and advises the Oregon Legislature and the Governor on topics of critical concern to Oregon postsecondary education and training. On our [website legislative resources section](#), our partners can stay informed on HECC legislative presentations, testimony, and documents designed to inform decisions on legislative and budgetary decisions in the 2026 Legislative Session.

Oregon maintained a largely Current Service Level (CSL) postsecondary budget for 2025-27, while featured bills expanded access to some postsecondary programs. We appreciate 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.

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.

HECC also 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.

RECENT EQUITY AND STUDENT SUCCESS INITIATIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The HECC's commitment to equity informs policy decision making, funding recommendations, ongoing programs as well as special initiatives.

Sustaining the Equity Work:

In 2025, the HECC continued in our commitment to support the statewide Community Table comprised of community members throughout Oregon. The Community Table works in collaboration with Parakata Consulting, CAPACES Leadership Institute, Oregon Community Foundation, the Lumina Foundation and others to help transform Oregon's postsecondary higher education institutions to better serve underserved students. In the summer, the Community Table hosted a virtual event that included a keynote from HECC's executive director covering Oregon's postsecondary landscape. Joined by legislators and other community members, participants were able to engage in visioning discussions and planning for the next legislative session.

HECC facilitates Oregon's Hispanic Serving Institutions 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.

The Sexual Misconduct Survey Council:

The [Sexual Misconduct Council](#), established in 2024, developed, piloted, and released to schools the content for the first state-wide survey of higher education students. An Implementation Guide accompanied the survey to guide schools in administering the survey. Results from the survey will help Oregonians understand the scope of sexual harassment, partner violence, stalking, and sexual assault among college and university students, and develop better resources to prevent misconduct and support students who experience it. HECC developed administrative rules to provide clarity for schools in meeting the requirements of ORS 350.335-346.

COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY AND ACCESS

The HECC continues working to protect and expand college affordability through our ongoing administration of financial aid and access programs as well as new initiatives. Go to OregonStudentAid.gov to learn more and apply for grants and scholarships administered by the HECC Office of Student Access and Completion (OSAC).

Oregon Tribal Student Grant:

The [Oregon Tribal Student Grant \(OTSG\) program](#) was continued and funded at \$26 million for the 2025-2027 biennium. The OTSG pays most or all public undergraduate college-related expenses, including tuition, housing, books, and other costs not covered by other grants—for eligible students who are enrolled members of Oregon’s nine federally recognized Tribes. 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 proposed legislation that was passed in 2023 (HB 3565) that made the Oregon Tribal Student Grant (OTSG) a part of Oregon law.

In spring 2025, the HECC issued a press release and student profile stories about the [positive impact of the grant in its first three years](#), reporting that the grant is supporting student success for hundreds of students. In conjunction with the announcement, the HECC published short profiles of four student grantees, who were interviewed by the HECC about how the OTSG has made a difference for them. In the first two years alone, 215 grantees earned credentials at community colleges and public universities. In addition to the credentials earned so far, HECC analysis is showing that university students with the OTSG are more likely to return after their first year than students without the grant. In its first three years, the OTSG has been awarded to tribal students from all nine federally recognized Tribes in Oregon: Burns Paiute Tribe, Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians, Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Coquille Indian Tribe, Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians, and Klamath Tribes. The largest percentage of recipients were first-year college students, and the grant also serves students throughout their path toward undergraduate and graduate degrees, including students pursuing certificates, associate degrees, bachelor’s, master’s, PhDs, MDs and JDs.

The HECC has seen growing participation in the OTSG, and we are very glad to see that the growth trend continues. We thank all the tribes for all their hard work and cooperation for making the 2025-2026 year another record-breaking year in applications. Due to record-breaking applicant numbers, the 2025-26 application for the [Oregon Tribal Student Grant](#) is now closed. The application for 2026-27 is now open.

OSAC has received over 900 viable applications for 2025-2026 and we have approved over 700 students to receive the Oregon Tribal Student Grant. 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.

The 2026-2027 Oregon Tribal Student Grant application opened December 1, 2025. Students 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.

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 Opportunity Grant:

The HECC is continuing to implement the [Oregon Opportunity Grant \(OOG\)](#) for the 2025-2027 biennium. The OOG is Oregon's largest state-funded, need-based grant program for college students. The grant provides funding to more than 30,000 Oregon resident students each year. OOG is a need-based grant awarded to Oregon residents of all ages who are pursuing their first associates degree or bachelor's degree at an [eligible public or private institution](#). Award amounts vary based on student's financial need and type of institution the student attends. There is not a separate application for the OOG. To be considered for the grant, students must submit their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or the Oregon Student Aid Application (ORSAA) as soon as possible each academic year. Awards are first-come, first-served until funds are depleted.

OSAC Scholarship and Grant applications Open for 2026-27 School Year:

OSAC has officially opened its OSAC Scholarship Application for the 2026-2027 academic year. Learn more at OregonStudentAid.gov. The State of Oregon has made accessing scholarships easy for Oregon students with its central site for more than 600 scholarships. Through the application, students can apply for many awards at one time. Those who submit their scholarship application by the early bird deadline of February 17, 2026, will have the chance to win a \$1,000 scholarship, and the final deadline is March 2, 2026.

Also on the OregonStudentAid.gov site, students can learn about and apply for numerous state and federally funded grant programs such as the Oregon Opportunity Grant (OOG), Oregon Promise Grant, Oregon Tribal Student Grant, Oregon Student Child Care Grant, and more. Students should plan to complete any required applications and the key forms that determine eligibility for need-based aid.

The 2026-27 FAFSA and ORSAAA are now open

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). New and returning students should complete one of these two applications to be considered for federal and/or state financial aid such as the Federal Pell Grant, the OOG, and more. Resources on financial aid form completion can be found using the links below. Learn more and find deadlines and applications at OregonStudentAid.gov.

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

Oregon Narrowed the Gap in FAFSA/ORSAA Completion: With the late roll-out and challenges introduced by the new federal form in 2024, there was serious concern in Oregon and nationally about FAFSA completion falling far behind previous years. We are pleased to report that our latest Oregon data on financial aid form completion shows the results of Oregon partner outreach efforts. In November 2025, Oregon high school senior completion rates were 0.4 percent above where they were in 2023 in completion of the FAFSA or ORSAA. We congratulate all students who have completed the form, and thank all who support them, including the HECC Office of Student Access and Completion (OSAC) team, the Oregon Department of Education, school districts, high school educators, counselors, college access and community-based organizations, tribes, and many others. To support FAFSA/ORSAA completion efforts, OSAC organizes FAFSA completion events and travels across the state to help students. Our ASPIRE program also assists schools in hosting financial aid events serving students statewide. OSAC also hosted numerous training events, webinars, and videos facilitating professional development opportunities for schools and communities.

OSAC Continues Outreach and Presentations Across the State:

Go to OregonStudentAid.gov to request support from OSAC at an upcoming event, in a classroom, or providing training to your students/communities. You can also sign up to receive our e-newsletters.

- **Webinars:** OSAC hosts a variety of webinars throughout the year for students, parents, and career/college practitioners. Our webinars are to provide up-to-date information about programs we serve.
- **Free Publications and Posters:** Individuals can order or download free posters and brochures. English and Spanish versions available.

Tribal Access to Oregon Foster Youth Tuition and Fee Waiver:

HECC-OSAC continues to be available to ensure eligible tribal foster youth and youth experiencing homelessness 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. OSAC representatives would be pleased to help any tribal staff. Please contact Anne.Shearer@hecc.oregon.gov.

Tribal Partners Continue to be Invited to Join the FAFSA Plus+ program:

FAFSA Plus+ is a year-round program that includes FAFSA completion activities, events, and support, financial literacy information, scholarship resources, award letter help, and other college access information. OSAC continues to share student-level FAFSA data and best practices with sites, allowing site staff to provide targeted assistance to their students who need to complete and submit a FAFSA, make corrections, and notify students who have been selected for verification. Since the expansion, HECC has entered into data-sharing agreements with the NAYA Early College Academy, the Southern Oregon Indian Education Program (SOIEP), and The Klamath Tribes.

Partnering with High Schools and Partners Statewide on Pre-college Mentoring and Outreach:

OSAC works to prepare students of all backgrounds for success in college and career, through Oregon ASPIRE, community outreach presentations and more.

EXPANDING DIVERSE LEARNER AND WORKER PATHWAYS

We continue our work to expand and streamline learner pathways to better serve the needs of diverse students today, including collaborative campus efforts to streamline the community college to university transfer pathway, working to improve affordability and time to degree for students—including low-income, first-generation, and underserved learner groups—and to support employment and workforce success.

Transfer Council Focused on Streamlining Transfer Pathways:

Through faculty-led collaboration, the HECC, community colleges and public universities are working to create numerous statewide transfer policies and agreements. This work, which is guided by legislative mandates and HECC priorities, is intended to save students time and money, reduce barriers to completion, and improve equitable pathways. The faculty collaboration, public processes, and consensus-building work needed to develop statewide transfer articulation policies is currently performed by the Transfer Council, a 15-member committee that advises the HECC on establishing transfer agreements. The Transfer Council has made considerable progress on work to streamline the credit transfer process from two to four-year institution. Since convening in October 2021, the Council and its subcommittees have focused on developing a common course numbering system, advancing the work on Major Transfer Maps and other credit transfer-related issues.

At its December Commission meeting, the HECC approved a public-facing vision statement for transfer that is intended to guide the next phase of transfer work in Oregon and affirm the HECC's commitment to a seamless student-centered transfer system. In addition to the vision statement, the Commission reviewed a proposed four-phase work plan to operationalize this vision. The largest focus area is centered on improving statewide alignment, which will require legislative action in 2027 to achieve.

In addition, the Transfer Council continues to advance new agreements for Common Course Numbering (CCN) and Major Transfer Maps (MTMs). With 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 between all public institutions in Oregon and nine major-specific transfer degrees that transfer coursework to count toward a bachelor's degree in a specific major.

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.

Direct Admissions:

In 2024, Oregon Senate Bill 1552 directed the HECC and the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) to create a statewide [direct admissions system](#) for public colleges and universities, with private institutions now joining the work as well. The goal is to let academically qualified high school seniors know they have been admitted to certain colleges without having to complete the usual application process. To make this possible, HECC and ODE are building a shared way for student data to be used, and HECC is also working with OSAC so that, in the future, students can receive early information about both their admission and their state financial aid in one place. The project is moving forward through a phased rollout, early pilot partnerships, and ongoing input from colleges, universities, and a planned youth advisory group to ensure that the system is designed with students at the center.

Future Ready Oregon Implementation:

The 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.

HECC's Office of Workforce Investments, has been appointed to lead the Future Ready Oregon work, bringing the Future Ready team into the Office of Workforce Investments (OWI) beginning in January 2026. Community-based organizations (CBOs) are key partners in Oregon's implementation of the historic Future Ready Oregon investment, offering a breadth of innovative services that support Oregon's diverse learners and workers. Forty-four CBOs have received one or more Future Ready Oregon grant awards from the HECC, representing a combined total of \$48.8 million – more than any other organizational type. Additionally, many of HECC's other Future Ready Oregon grantees collaborate with CBOs on their grant-funded initiatives.

CBO grantees such as Centro Cultural de Washington County advocate for communities as they engage and collaborate with other organizations within the ecosystem. CBOs such as Northeast Oregon Network conduct outreach, recruit community participants for workforce education and training programs, and provide enrollment supports and advising services. Others such as Oregon TRIO Association support career awareness, exploration, and advancement opportunities.

With their in-depth connections to communities, a number of HECC's CBO grantees, such as Hacienda CDC, focus on developing bilingual, bicultural curriculum and programs. Some CBOs conduct training directly, including earn-and-learn, non-credit, and hands-on opportunities. Others coordinate registered apprenticeships and bring training opportunities to communities through, for example, mobile delivery. Finally, CBO grantees also support participant retention in education and employment through services that include stipends, wages for work experience, wraparound services,

culturally responsive programming, and strategies for career advancement.

Future Ready Oregon Industry Consortia:

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. 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.

Beginning last fall, the Industry Consortia 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).

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.

Continued Administration of Workforce Programs as well as Administration of Adult Basic Skills:

We work with partners statewide to train returning students, adults, dislocated workers, and all

Oregonians with the skills they need for gainful employment. The HECC is the administrative entity for several federally funded workforce and education programs, including those authorized by Title I and Title II of the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). In 2024 the HECC and other workforce system partners collaborated to revise the WIOA Plan and align it with other statewide work and strategies, including the Career and Technical Education (CTE) State Plan to support adults in the transition between adult basic skills and credit CTE programs.

Supporting Dislocated Workers:

The HECC Office of Workforce Investments (OWI) continues its extensive work to mitigate challenges for workers and employers. The OWI works with the Oregon Employment Department, partner agencies, and community-based organizations to coordinate Rapid Response services supporting affected workers and businesses during reported layoffs. The OWI continues to support businesses and Oregon's nine Local Workforce Development Boards in their service.

Federal Grants Support Registered Apprenticeships

In 2025, Oregon was awarded a total of approximately \$5.8 million in federal grants from the United States Department of Labor (DOL) through the State Apprenticeship Expansion Formula 3 (SAEF 3) Grant. With this funding, the HECC will support expanding registered apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship opportunities in early learning and care, K-12 education, and behavioral health careers. This funding will support creating innovative, new registered apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs and scaling up established programs. [Read more about this work in our announcement here.](#)

Oregon Youth Works – Investments with Tribal Communities:

Oregon Youth Works (OYW) is an initiative charged with empowering Oregon's youth by supporting workforce and positive youth development programs that cultivate practical skills, foster community engagement, and drive sustainable growth. This is achieved through a variety of programs and service models to meet participant and community needs. Through increased engagement and visits, OYW is partnering with eight of Oregon's nine federally recognized sovereign tribal nations. Staff have been better at connecting, learning, and engaging with each tribe about their tribal specific approaches. Funds and strategies are supporting young people in education and workforce, and considerations that help lead to new opportunities for growth and access. **Federal Initiatives:** Statewide Tribal Youth grant was awarded to HECC for investing in tribal youth employment, in conjunction with Bureau of Land Management (BLM) projects in the Lakeview and Burns BLM Districts.

- **State Agency Collaboration:** Collaboration with Youth Development Oregon to coordinate Tribal Youth Workforce partnerships and funded agreements to improve alignment, implementation, and coordinate reporting.

Oregon Youth Works consists of five programs described below. All OYW programs apply the HECC Equity Lens in awarding grants by identifying and supporting populations with greater vulnerability including communities of color, indigenous communities, communities with members who have

limited proficiency in English and communities with lower-income members.

Oregon Conservation Corps (OCC):

The HECC has awarded nearly \$6 million in grant funding for the 2025-2027 biennium. OCC is serving youth from the following federally recognized sovereign tribal nations: Burns Paiute Tribe, Confederated Tribes of the Siletz, Confederated Tribe of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Indians, Klamath Tribes, Fort Bidwell Indian Community, and Pit River Tribe. OCC partnerships focus on reaching youth from diverse cultural backgrounds, identities, and abilities and plan to serve upwards of 300 young adults in the 25-27 grant cycle. OCC partners operate through a crew-based model to reduce the risk wildfire poses to communities and critical infrastructure, help to create fire-adapted communities, and engage young adults in workforce training. Tribal youth not only administer fuels mitigation, but they also participate in the delivery and care of their tribal elders through delivering wood and hardening homes from wildfire risk simultaneously learning cultural history and essential employability skills. On average, 15% of OCC participants identify as American Indian/Alaska Native.

Oregon Youth Corps (OYC):

Oregon Youth Corps (OYC) opens stewardship focused opportunities for young people to develop employability skills, connect with their community, learn about themselves, and grow interest in what comes next in life. OYC delivers funding and resources to youth workforce training providers through a variety of mechanisms, including intergovernmental agreements and grants awards.

- Intergovernmental Agreements: Provided \$600,000 in funds to support Oregon Youth Works Federal BLM projects and Tribal Workforce and Reengagement Agreements with Tribal Nations..
- Grant opportunities: OYC is providing program grants in 2025 with a goal to provide youth workforce and development experiences to Tribes and local workforce providers, within each of Oregon's 36 counties. The grants emphasize the teaching and practicing of workforce skill development and are modeled through stewardship focused work-based learning experiences for youth and young adults. HECC has released over \$3.6 million in funding thus far in the 25-27 biennium. In FY 24/25, the \$3.2 million released supported over 1,100 workforce opportunities for young people throughout Oregon, and it is expected to increase over each of the next two years.

Oregon Youth Employment Program:

The HECC continues to enhance opportunities for Oregon's youth by supporting both the Oregon Youth Corps and the Oregon Youth Employment Program (OYEP). The OYEP program is designed to deliver equitable and inclusive access to meaningful experiences for youth aged 14-24. By prioritizing skills training, work experience, career development, and youth development, it not only empowers young people but also strengthens the collaborative impact within communities.

To ensure the program effectively serves those most in need, at least 75% of participants come from

historically underrepresented groups, including communities of color, rural areas, and those affected by generational poverty. Additionally, a minimum of 20% of program funds is dedicated to organizations with proven experience serving communities of color, ensuring targeted and impactful delivery of services.

Department of Human Services (DHS) Youth Employment Program:

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Youth Employment Program (YEP) operates year-round to provide meaningful employment opportunities for youth participating in the JOBS Program. By focusing on TANF-eligible youth aged 16-24—including teen parents, non-parenting teens, young parents, and youth connected to the Child Welfare Independent Living Program and Vocational Rehabilitation Program—YEP empowers participants to build critical skills, gain work experience, and achieve greater self-sufficiency. These programs sunset at the end of the 2023-25 biennium.

Oregon WIOA Youth Programs:

The Oregon WIOA Youth Programs play a vital role in preparing young people aged 14-24 for successful careers by providing transformative workforce development opportunities through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). These programs serve both in-school and out-of-school youth, offering access to hands-on job experiences such as summer and year-round employment, pre-apprenticeships, internships, job shadowing, and on-the-job training.

Beyond employment opportunities, the programs equip youth with skills for lifelong success through concurrent education and workforce preparation, leadership development, and personal supportive services. Participants also gain critical insights through labor market information and are guided toward postsecondary education and advanced training pathways.

By bridging education, employment, and career development, WIOA Youth Programs empower young people to overcome barriers, build brighter futures, and contribute to the strength and resilience of their communities. During the 2024-25 fiscal year WIOA Youth programs served over 2,400 youth.

Oregon Career and Technical Education:

In April 2024, the State Board of Education approved the [2024-27 Oregon CTE State Plan](#). This strategic plan for CTE in Oregon is developed and implemented jointly by the Oregon

The Oregon Department of Education and the Higher Education Coordinating Commission work in collaboration with regional CTE partners and Oregonians. The development of this plan included significant community outreach and engagement to vet the proposed outcomes and strategies, and the plan meets the US Department of Education's requirements for federal funding through the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V, 2018).

CTE is an essential component of Oregon's education system and a means to improve equitable workforce development and support business and industry vitality. The CTE State Plan identifies

opportunities for focused support to school districts, colleges, community partners, and regions to improve the quality and consistency of CTE in the state. It also continues the important work of integrating career connected learning into our education and workforce development system to expand access and opportunities to high-wage, in-demand occupations.

Advance CTE Equity Project:

Starting in 2024 and continuing into the middle of 2025, a team from Oregon's Office of Community Colleges and Workforce Development (CCWD) was chosen to take part in a project with six other states, offered by Advance CTE, a national advocacy and professional development organization. The project asked states to identify an equity gap or area of concentration and develop a project that helps address that gap. The project the team developed involves Tribal high school students who are taking career and technical education (CTE) courses at the high school level and helps facilitate their transition into a community college CTE program to continue their education. To that end, the team members have focused on using Perkins data to see how many Native American high school students who are taking CTE courses in their high schools continue with their CTE program at an Oregon community college CTE program, and of those, how many go on to earn a degree or certificate. The project with Advance CTE continued until March 2025. Plans to continue the efforts to make college CTE more accessible and attractive to tribal students are incorporated into the new joint effort by HECC and ODE to implement the new National Career Clusters® Framework. Projects completed in 2025 included:

- Data Product - Opportunity Gap Data Analysis for ANAN Students and Presentation – Presented Internally
- Training Product - Trainer Presentation Slides – Presented to Career Connected Learning System Navigators Meeting in January of 2025
- Additional Benefits of Work – This work group has continued to develop and catalyze inter-agency relationships between ODE, and HECC.
- CTE Resource Toolkit – Print Cost and Design Quote, and Draft Proof, for Reimbursement Consideration
- Oregon Tribal Student Grant Informational One Pager – final design, printing, and alignment to the new National Career Clusters® Framework.
- Recruitment Toolkit/Program Listing – Content collection and verification with Community Colleges will occur after completed design, needs funds to complete
- CTE Resource Toolkit Description: The ODE/HECC work team have spent many hours preparing, reviewing, and collecting feedback on the pieces to be included in the resource toolkit. Once printed, the team plans to provide Train-the-trainer sessions on how to use it, while gaining feedback for future versions of the toolkit.

Additional 2026 work to continue this effort will be identified during inter-agency deliberations regarding how ODE/HECC will implement the new National Career Clusters® Framework.

- Outreach and engagement
 - Identify and attend conferences and events that involve educators, students and communities to share materials and present at sessions
- Professional development opportunities
 - Continue planning to offer trainings for counselors, advisors, and CCL System Navigators using the foundational documents A Toolkit for Tribal Consultation 2.0 and Essential Understandings of Native Americans in Oregon (created by Office of Indian Education, ODE)
- Using data to understand CTE transitions
 - Examined K-12 CTE data incorporating new ODE/OIE data points for Tribal affiliation
 - Examined community college CTE data

College Credit while in High School – Accelerated Learning:

Educational experiences that allow high school students to earn college credit while in high school are known in Oregon as “accelerated learning” programs. The HECC works with educators across the state to ensure that students may access quality accelerated learning programs while in high school. Students participating in accelerated learning usually start on a pathway to a college degree or certificate. These programs aim to provide bridges that support and encourage career and college preparation. They can smooth the transition into a college or university by enabling high school students to successfully earn college credit and participate in programming to orient and motivate them for postsecondary degrees and certificates. The HECC coordinates closely with the Oregon Department of Education, community colleges, and public universities to implement the state’s equity lens through the state standards for college credit in high school. In 2025, the HECC and Oregon Department of Education have been working together and gathering public input to develop a statewide vision for college credit in high school in Oregon.

Adult Basic Skills Annual Conference:

This year’s Oregon Adult Basic Skills (ABS) Conference – held virtually on October 28, 2025 – was a great success. The theme, "Growing and Enriching Foundations," emphasized our commitment to cultivating innovative, inclusive, and effective educational practices that empower learners and educators alike. The conference aimed at empowering educators and leaders to transform adult education by growing and enriching foundational practices and preparing learners for both post-secondary education and career success. This year’s conference brought together educators from across the state to discuss topics such as standards-based instruction, andragogical techniques for supporting language and literacy skills building for learners with diverse needs, digital literacy and resilience, implementing effective GED® programs that retain and transition students through college and career, data in Oregon’s adult education programs, and more. The Oregon Adult Basic Skills Conference is an annual event that brings together professionals committed to advancing Adult Basic Skills and high school equivalency education. While the conference shifted to virtual, participants were still able to attend thought-provoking sessions, collaborate, learn, and exchange ideas.

Statewide Administration of Oregon's High School Equivalency Program:

Oregon's High School Equivalency Program, administered by the HECC, plays a critical role in preparing students for college and career readiness, aligning with the state's adult attainment goals. This comprehensive program encompasses GED® test preparation, instruction, testing services, processing, and hosting a national conference for educators to share best practices and innovations in adult education. Through these efforts, HECC empowers adult learners to achieve their GED® credentials and equips them with the skills and resources needed to transition seamlessly into college and career pathways. By addressing barriers holistically, Oregon is making significant strides in fostering a more educated and skilled workforce, contributing to the state's long-term economic growth and social equity goals.

OregonServes and AmeriCorps in Oregon:

OregonServes is Oregon's federally designated state service commission, operating since 1994 and guided by Governor-appointed members. The commission develops a three-year State Service Plan focused on equity, reducing barriers to service, and aligning programs with community needs. OregonServes administers roughly \$2.8 million in AmeriCorps State funding each year, supporting programs in education, environmental stewardship, economic opportunity, public health, emergency response, and youth and veteran services. Recruitment emphasizes local talent so communities most affected by challenges help design the solutions. OregonServes also distributed an additional \$485,000 in planning grants to local partners to develop initiatives focused on economic opportunity, youth services, healthy communities, and disaster and climate preparedness.

AmeriCorps is open to individuals 17 and older and offers hands-on experience, workforce training, credentials, a living stipend, health benefits, childcare support, and an education award for college or student loan repayment. For tribal communities, individuals may serve as AmeriCorps members, and tribes can also establish their own programs through OregonServes-administered grants or federal Tribal Grant opportunities.

OregonServes has also launched the Youth Mental Health Corps, leveraging AmeriCorps federal funding with a \$500,000 grant from the Schultz Family Foundation and Pinterest to build youth service-to-career pathways in Oregon's mental and behavioral health fields. The first investment under this fund is with Stronghold, a peer-led tribal organization in Southern Oregon supporting youth leadership, cultural healing, and community-based behavioral health strategies.

Oregon also secured a planning grant through the National Governors Association (NGA) to participate in their Service-to-Career Pathways Policy Academy. This technical assistance effort helps states align partners, develop shared data and metrics, and design workforce pathways for underserved youth, complementing the Youth Mental Health Corps and strengthening statewide coordination across education, health, climate, and workforce partners.

Overall, OregonServes remains focused on equity, access, and dismantling systemic barriers. Through these youth and workforce investments, deeper tribal engagement, and multi-sector partnerships, OregonServes aims to strengthen workforce pipelines, respond to urgent community needs, and ensure all Oregonians can benefit from service.

Continued Approval of New Academic Programs:

The HECC continues to approve new academic programs at the community colleges and public universities, and these are announced regularly in our G2G updates and in our agency newsletter.

New HECC Commission Leaders:

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.



3225 25th Street SE, Salem, OR 97302
www.oregon.gov/HigherEd