



Legislative Report for HB 2353 (2015-2016) National Career Readiness Certificate Program

November 28, 2016

Section 5 of HB 2353 (2011) requires a report to provide data and recommendations on the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) program. This report provides 1) the number of students enrolled in an Oregon community college who utilized the services provided by the program during the 2015-2016 academic year, and 2) recommendations for improving the program.

Current Status

Certified Work Ready Communities

Certified Work Ready Communities (CWRC) is an overarching workforce strategy to enable Oregon's communities to demonstrate the skilled workforce necessary for local business expansion and for companies to locate and prosper in Oregon. Ongoing support of the Oregon CWRC initiative is critical as it provides an independent endorsement of the quality of the workforce and the community's ability to meet business growth demands.

One of the key criteria for CWRC at the county level is the participation of local businesses and organizations using the NCRC. Certified Work Ready Communities empower counties and states with actionable data and specific workforce goals that drive economic growth. All 36 counties in Oregon are participating in the work ready community initiatives. Counties which have reached certification include:

- Baker
- Clatsop
- Crook
- Deschutes
- Douglas
- Jackson
- Jefferson
- Josephine
- Lane
- Marion
- Union
- Wasco

National Career Readiness Certificate

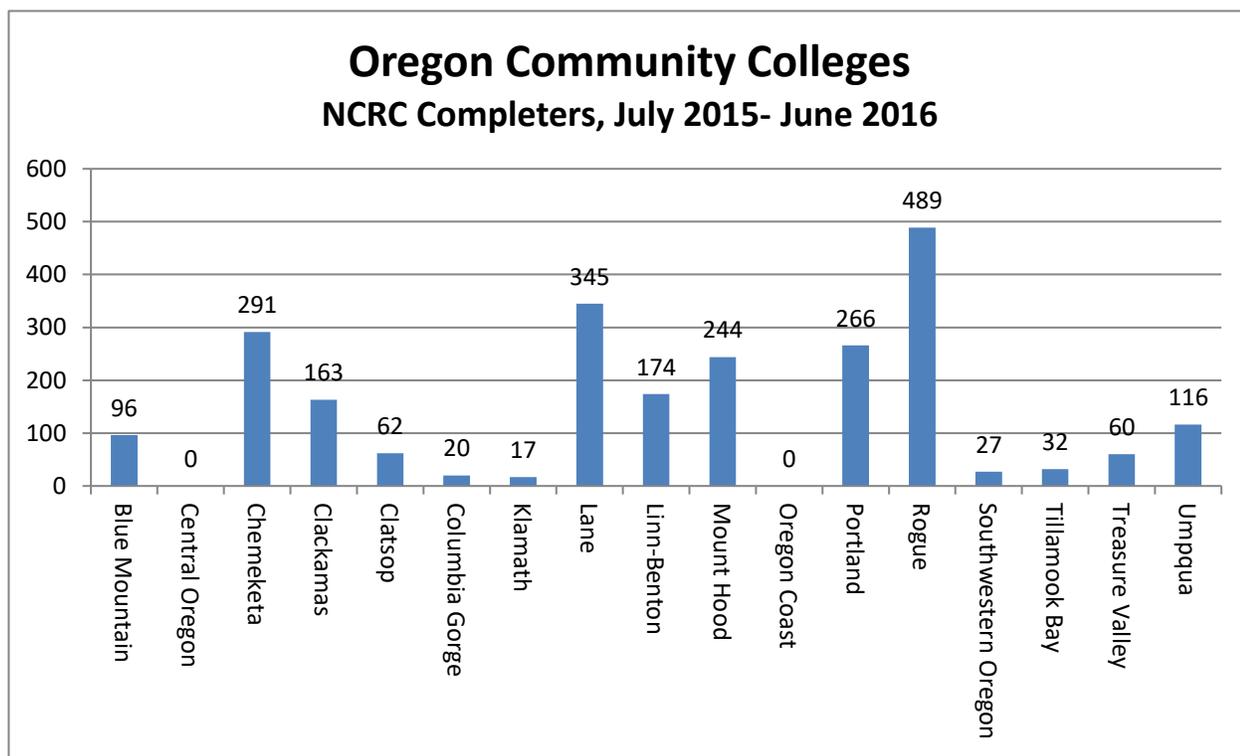
The NCRC is a critical tool of the CWRC initiative; to date, over 57,000 individuals across Oregon have earned a NCRC. The NCRC is a valuable, portable certificate that verifies three foundational workplace skills: Applied Mathematics, Reading for Information, and Locating Information. Through certification by earning an NCRC, workers can demonstrate they have the

foundational skills to be able to succeed in and grow with the companies in their communities. It helps job applicants stand out from the crowd and assures employers that applicants have the foundational skills needed to be successful on the job.

Through the work of local staff in the WorkSource Oregon Centers, 2,726 Oregon employers have signed letters of support indicating a preference and/or recognition of the NCRC as a valuable credential in their hiring and recruitment practices.

Student Engagement

Of the 10,247 individuals who earned an NCRC during the 2015-2016 academic year, 2,427 were enrolled in an Oregon community college. The graph below shows student completers by college:



Moving Forward in 2017:

The Higher Education Coordinating Commission recommends the following actions for the CWRC initiative:

- Continue to support community colleges in their pursuit to award college credit for the NCRC as endorsed by the American Council on Education (ACE);
- Connect the NCRC to Adult Basic Education and GED programs;
- Continue to build strong partnerships with high schools, alternative youth programs, Educational Service Districts, and Career Technical Education programs;
- Expand the number of community organization testing sites and testing capacity through trained proctors and testing availability opportunities;
- Launch the NCRC in Spanish and make it accessible, attainable and applicable for employers and job seekers in appropriate work settings;
- Continue to increase employer engagement as it relates to CWRC, preferring and recognizing the NCRC, and capturing impact on business performance.

Changes and Challenges

- ACT is updating and enhancing the NCRC in June 2017. The new version (NCRC 2.0) will include skill assessment related to newer technology (mobile products and screen based information).
- The introduction of a new administrative platform will bring a much needed update for the NCRC assessment, but will require updated curriculum and re-training of proctors in the field.
- The Oregon Department of Education will need to evaluate NCRC 2.0 to confirm that it still meets the Essential Skills requirements for high school graduation.

Funding Status

This program was formerly funded entirely by federal Workforce Investment Act funds but due to on-going federal budget reductions it is now resourced through federal and state funding streams. **The 2013 Oregon Legislature allocated funds to a Workforce Initiative through House Bill 5019,** which included funding for the Certified Work Ready Communities initiative, the NCRC and associated preparatory online courseware.

Recommendations for Improving the Program:

- 1) Advocate for strong partnerships in your local legislative districts to help build the Certified Work Ready Communities initiative.
- 2) Continue to fund Oregon's Certified Work Ready Communities initiative.
- 3) Continue to provide funding that allows for all Oregon students to earn an Oregon National Career Readiness Certificate at no cost to them or their school.

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