

Talking Points: COVID-19

Short Term Urgent Priorities

The immediate focus of community colleges is on taking measures for the safety of our students, employees and communities, and continuing teaching and learning activities through remote learning.

Loss of work or other income due to the coronavirus could not only disrupt a student's education but also their ability to maintain basic necessities such food and housing. Community college students already face unacceptably high rates of housing and food insecurity.

Colleges will work to continue offering essential services and provide online learning to maintain academic continuity for our students to the greatest degree possible. Depending on the duration of the prohibition on face-to-face learning, many career and technical and hard science programs will face significant obstacles to offering the necessary hands-on learning those programs require.

In the short term, we urge legislators to ensure that new measures to help Oregonians left vulnerable by the COVID-19 outbreak include students at community colleges. Measures such as:

- Expanded Health Care Access
- State Supported Expanded Unemployment Insurance
- Rental Assistance
- Expansion of access to benefits like SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and TANF (Temporary Assistance of Needy Families)

Medium to Long Term Recovery Priorities

Much of the financial impact to colleges will depend on enrollment, and the magnitude of the impact will be dependent on the duration. The longer this goes, the more likely it is the institutions will face major impacts financially (i.e. layoffs and other actions).

Colleges are also incurring higher costs to move courses online and make other changes necessary to respond to the crisis.

The longer it is necessary to prohibit face-to-face learning, the bigger the impact will also be to career and technical programs which may have to temporarily or permanently shut down.

Because of the large number of CTE and other types of lab-based programs community college leaders believe enrollment could easily drop 30 percent or more depending on the duration of the outbreak. Such a loss could lead to severe workforce shortages in critical fields.

As we move out of the most urgent phase of this crisis, we urge legislators to recognize the critical role colleges play in rebuilding local economies and critical workforce and educational pipelines.

Further Background:

A March 19 Executive Order (EO 12-09) from Governor Kate Brown directed Oregon's colleges and universities to do the following:

- Cease in-person classroom, laboratory, and other instruction from March 21, 2020, through April 28, 2020, unless that period is extended or terminated earlier by the Governor.
- Colleges and universities are exempt from the in-person prohibition on instruction only for the purpose of providing clinical, laboratory, or other in-person instruction associated critical workforce needs during this crisis such as healthcare and programs that are essential to emergency response and resiliency needs such as truck driving, summer forest fire suppression, and critical health and safety needs.. If no remote or online alternative is practicable, institutions must employ strict social distancing measures.
- From March 21, 2020 through April 28, 2020, colleges and universities must limit on-campus operations only to essential functions and employ strict social distancing measures for all on-campus employees and residents. Essential functions may include, but are not limited to, the operation of dormitories, dining services, general administrative services, safety programs, childcare centers, research, and medical facilities.