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OCCA announces Howard Cherry Award winners

SALEM, Ore. – The Oregon Community College Association is pleased to announce the winners of the annual Howard Cherry Awards, which celebrate the contributions that local advocates, administrators and board members have made to the benefit of community colleges in Oregon.

- **Community College Advocate:** *Senator Bill Hansell (R-Athena)*
- **Community College Administrator:** *Birgitte Ryslinge (President, Oregon Coast Community College)*
- **Community College Board Member:** *Rosemary Pryor (Lane Community College)*
- **Cam Preus Award for Extraordinary Commitment to Community Colleges:** *Dr. Alicia Moore (Central Oregon Community College)*

The Howard Cherry Awards are named for the late Dr. Howard Cherry, a lifelong advocate for education and community involvement. Dr. Cherry was also a founding member of the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) and was a trustee of the American Association of Community & Junior Colleges.

These outstanding individuals will be honored during the Howard Cherry Awards Banquet at OCCA's Annual Conference April 14 in Sunriver.

Community College Advocate: Senator Bill Hansell (R-Athena) – Senator Bill Hansell, who represents the vast District 29 of northeastern Oregon, has become one of the Legislature's strongest champions for community colleges in the state. A former Umatilla County Commissioner now in his third term in the Senate, Senator Hansell went to bat for community colleges during the 2021 Legislative Session. A member of the Community College Caucus and the Joint Committee on Ways & Means, he was a supportive voice for increases to the Community College Support Fund, leading with passion and support for the role of community colleges in Oregon's workforce and economy. Not only did he advocate amongst his colleagues for increased resources for community colleges, but Senator Hansell fought for community colleges to retain management of educational programming and its associated funding in Oregon's state prisons. He also attended every single "Workforce Wednesday" Zoom session during CTE Month in February 2021. He is known for bringing his colleagues from around the state to eastern Oregon and driving to other legislative districts in his pickup truck to encourage working across party lines to collaborate and better serve Oregonians. While Blue Mountain Community College is in his home district, Senator Hansell is a strong, passionate and supportive voice for all community colleges across the state.

Community College Administrator: Birgitte Ryslinge (President, Oregon Coast Community College) – Dr. Ryslinge is a dynamic community college leader with more than 20 years of community college experience and progressive leadership in academic affairs and instruction, first in California and now in Oregon. She has also taught (full-time and adjunct) in the subjects of psychology, management, and leadership. She enjoys working with the external community to advance the role and position of the community college and has been very



successful in that capacity developing important relationships and resources. Throughout her time in education she has been closely involved with workforce and economic development, and partnering and advocacy with external stakeholders including industry, other education (K-12 and other post-secondary) and elected officials. Dr. Ryslinge is the only community college president in the state who has secured independent accreditation for her college from the Northwest Commission on Colleges & Universities (NWCCU), and her work within the higher education sector has benefited all 17 of Oregon's community colleges. From the moment she assumed the OCCC presidency in 2014, she tackled the enormous and critical issue of the college's 30-year lack of independent accreditation head-on, negotiating a path forward with the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities and steering the college through the various and demanding stages of pre-accreditation (typically a 10-year process; Dr. Ryslinge accomplished it in just over five). Under her visionary and strategic leadership, OCCC essentially redesigned every structure, policy, practice, and curricular component within the college.

In addition to bringing about comprehensive institutional change, Dr. Ryslinge's deft management and focus on equitable student success is evident in how the college withstood a potentially devastating cyber attack, adopted new technologies for online course delivery and enterprise management, dramatically expanded programming and fundraising, created new workforce training programs, and cultivated new partnership and educational opportunities within the community and throughout the educational ecosystem. This herculean task strengthened the sector, not just because all 17 community colleges wielded an independent voice for the first time, but because Dr. Ryslinge quickly distinguished herself as a leader in extra-college roles and larger conversations, advocating strongly at the state and federal levels and engaging in efforts that strengthened small colleges, rural colleges, and community colleges as a whole. Dr. Ryslinge knows the transformative power of education first-hand. The child of immigrants to the United States, neither of whom completed high school, she was the first in her family to graduate college. Her passion and drive as an educator and administrator derive from this experience and her unshakable belief that education is the key to creating a more equitable, compassionate, and prosperous world. Her legacy at OCCC shows what one person can do to transform a college and, by extension, an entire community, and her regional and statewide work demonstrates that it is not one effort or strategy, but many, that lead toward positive change, especially for those who are the most vulnerable (e.g., small and rural communities, and racially diverse students).

Community College Board Member: Rosemary Pryor (Lane Community College) – Rosemary Pryor was elected to the LCC Board of Education in 2012 and reelected in 2016 and 2020. She serves in the At Large Position 6. Pryor retired as Chief Marketing and Strategy Officer at Oregon Community Credit Union in 2014 and has over 40 years of experience in marketing, communications, and strategic business planning. During her career, she has served on numerous local boards including Eugene Hearing and Speech, Looking Glass Youth and Family Services, and the Springfield Renaissance Development Corporation. Rosie served 11 years on the Lane Workforce Partnership Board of Directors; two years as Chair of the Board. In June 2010, she was appointed by Governor Ted Kulongoski to the Oregon Workforce Investment Board. A year later Governor John Kitzhaber appointed her Chair of the Board. Rosie was instrumental in the passing of the 2020 Lane Community College Bond Measure. In addition to months of board consideration and work on the bond, she stepped up as Political Action Committee Coordinator and held weekly meetings in her home and then virtually until the May election. She spent countless hours informing the community about the bond, often accompanying the president to community presentations. These efforts led to the voters approving a \$121.5 million bond to fund safety and security updates, seismic retrofitting, expanded Health Professions and Workforce Training Programs, and modernization of classroom technology throughout the district. As board members have come and gone during her tenure, her colleagues have respected Rosie and looked to her for guidance and leadership. She has embraced challenges with candor and strength and used her natural gifts of communication and an understanding of the human spirit to bridge divides and forge solutions. She has raised the profile of Lane



Community College locally, statewide, and nationally, all with the singular goal of helping students transform their lives through education and training.

Cam Preus Award for Extraordinary Commitment to Community Colleges: Alicia Moore (Central Oregon Community College) – Dr. Alicia Moore is the Vice President of Student Affairs at COCC, and has worked in community colleges for the past 27 years with an unflinching commitment to student access and success. During Alicia’s tenure at COCC, she progressed through a series of increasingly responsible leadership positions, and her accomplishments include the development of COCC’s comprehensive strategic enrollment management plan, a one-stop service center and design of the college’s comprehensive first-year experience program as a key contributor to the success of COCC’s first Title III grant. She also played a leadership role in designing COCC’s Campus Center and residence hall, developing partnerships with various high schools and universities, and serving as part of the college’s accreditation team. Thanks to Alicia’s passion for students and her extraordinary work ethic, she has had a positive impact that reaches well beyond Central Oregon to community colleges across the state and nation.

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