



October 18, 2022

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Casey White-Zollman, Communications Director
casey@occa17.com | 503-502-5642

OCCA announces 2022 Howard Cherry Award winners

SALEM, Ore. – The Oregon Community College Association (OCCA) 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:** *Teresa Alonso León (D-Woodburn)*
- **Community College Administrator:** *Ross Tomlin (Tillamook Bay Community College)*
- **Community College Board Member:** *Stephen Crow (Treasure Valley 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 November 3, 2022, in Sunriver.

Community College Advocate: Teresa Alonso León (D-Woodburn) – Throughout her legislative career, Rep. Alonso León has been a passionate advocate for higher education and community colleges, particularly regarding the students they serve. As the most recent chair of the House Education Committee, she has proven to be an indispensable voice in education policy. In the 2021 legislative session, Rep. Alonso León introduced and successfully championed HB 2590, creating the Joint Task Force on Underrepresented Students in Higher Education. Just as community colleges constantly work to center students in everything they do, this legislation put the voices of systemically marginalized students front and center. The task force created by the Representative's legislation visited community colleges and universities across Oregon to hear from students, education leaders, faculty, business, and other local leaders as well as members of the general public. Rep. Alonso León marshaled the mighty effort forward, pushing for solutions and resources to help the most vulnerable students in our state's postsecondary institutions succeed. She was also chief sponsor of HB2835 – the Benefits Navigator Bill – and has distinguished herself as a strong advocate for Adult Basic Skills education, ensuring that GED tests are considered in the multiple measure matrixes of placement processes at community colleges. The daughter of migrant farmworkers and an immigrant to the United States, Rep. Alonso León became the first in her family to attend college and has, by many measures and against the odds, achieved great success. She brings pride to our state and is a role model for many – women, people of color, those who are Indigenous, and more. What could be just as impressive, however, is her commitment to public service and to making the world better for all those who come after her. And, in many cases, those who come after her are students who attend our state's community colleges. Rep. Alonso León puts these students front and center, and she does everything she does with them in mind.



Community College Administrator: Dr. Ross Tomlin (President, Tillamook Bay Community College) – Dr. Tomlin has served as a senior-level leader in community colleges for over 14 years and as an administrator at four of Oregon’s community colleges – Central Oregon Community College, Umpqua Community College, Southwestern Oregon Community College, and Tillamook Bay Community College (TBCC). Dr. Tomlin has shown outstanding commitment, achievement, and leadership as a community college president in Oregon. He successfully achieved the college’s first seven-year re-accreditation visit, and oversaw the development of 24 new degree and certificate options for students. He has also brought nursing and teacher education to Tillamook County, embodying the spirit of collaboration with fellow coastal colleges in the process. Most recently, he campaigned tirelessly for a 2022 bond measure. It was successful and garnered TBCC \$14.4 million in funds to the county for nursing and allied health programs. Dr. Tomlin’s vision has led to working toward the development of a Registered Nurse program at TBCC, with a goal to double the number of nurses trained locally, and working locally, once the program is in place. Regionally, Dr. Tomlin’s influence has been strategic, positive, and impactful. He has solicited support from industry partners and local superintendents to connect funds to community college programs. He has grown enrollment during the pandemic, an anomaly in Oregon. Dr. Tomlin has been a champion of equity initiatives on campus and in the community by leading the college in responding to national events and contributing locally to advocacy efforts. Dr. Tomlin has been responsive to the community during times of great need, ensuring that local high school juniors and seniors were offered free college courses during the pandemic when dual credit was not able to be taught in high schools. Vigilant and proactive in a high-stakes environment, he found opportunities to innovate in order to keep students on their academic path and extend the reach of the college into the community. Dr. Tomlin has proven himself to be an impactful servant leader, understanding and meeting local needs, engaged authentically and personally in the community, amplifying business and industry efforts, and forging a path forward to lift up his county and community in ways that will be transformative now and into the future. He is also a supportive colleague and team player, contributing to the sector in various and unselfish ways and working to raise all boats in Oregon.

Community College Board Member: Stephen Crow (Treasure Valley Community College) – Stephen Crow has served as a board member for Treasure Valley Community College (TVCC) since 2017, and has served as vice chair during his time, and has served as the OCCA board representative for TVCC during his tenure as well. Despite being the owner of a demanding small business (Salon Salon & The Spa in Ontario, Oregon), Mr. Crow has impressed his colleagues with his ability to balance his responsibilities while continuing to give 110% to the Board. He demonstrates his commitment by increasing his knowledge to be an effective board member through professional development opportunities, OCCA workshops, Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) podcasts, Oregon School Boards Association (OSBA) webinars, economic summits, and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion trainings to understand equity for community college board members. Mr. Crow is an advocate for student success and has been a generous supporter in the work of the TVCC Foundation because he understands the obstacles that students face when paying for school. It is rare when he is unable to attend or support a college-sponsored event, whether it is athletics, a campus fair, student-sponsored event, or theater performance. In the community, Mr. Crow connects with K-12 by attending school board meetings and graduation ceremonies as a representative of TVCC. As immediate Past President of the OCCA Board of Directors, Mr. Crow gained experience and knowledge that has allowed him to stay informed and become a strong advocate for community colleges, never hesitating to contact a legislator for support. He had been Vice President of the OCCA Board only a few short months when unforeseen circumstances propelled him into the presidency. He took the role seriously and with passion, and he led the OCCA Board through the challenges of COVID-19, and virtual meetings and events. He also served as chair of the hiring committee for the new OCCA Executive Director. His passion and belief that an educated workforce leads to a better community is unsurpassed.

###