

**NCHEMS Oregon Higher Education  
Landscape Study  
Questions & Answers  
October 2022**

Here are some questions that may be asked by reporters, or higher education partners. Please refer to one of the three major takeaway areas: affordability, equity and economic development as indicated below. Many of these questions could be geared toward university or community colleges and we've pulled out answers for each sector.

Likely Questions and Answers

The Community Colleges and Universities that commissioned the NCHEMS report collectively agree that key themes identified by the NCHEMS report identify a vital and urgent pathway to advancing Oregon. We are committed to accelerating collaboration with each other and with other key state stakeholders to build a better Oregon with focused attention to affordability, equity and prosperity of our state.

*Questions aimed at Institutions*

**1. Institutions may continue to see enrollment losses. How do institutions plan to address declining enrollment?**

**See affordability.**

It is clear that decreasing enrollments could be addressed, in part, by a better college-going rate in Oregon. Right now, the high school to postsecondary participation rate is among the lowest in the country. Here are a couple of examples of what we are doing at \_\_\_\_\_ institution to enroll new students and retain the students we have:

\_\_\_\_\_

**2. What are universities doing to help students transfer?**

**See affordability.**

We agree with the need for clear expectations and timelines to support students. The Higher Education Coordinating Commission is convening over 80 faculty members from a variety of disciplines to make sure that learning outcomes are aligned. This will help students keep the credits that they earn regardless of the institution they attend.

**3. Would you be open to annual reports on affordability?**

**See affordability.**

*University response:* Yes, particularly if it were coupled with an assessment of the adequacy of funding for each institution including funding from state, local and tuition sources.

*Community college response:* Yes, colleges already work to ensure potential students understand the total cost of attendance. Basic needs such as housing and food security are increasingly a barrier to education.

**4. If the state stepped up with increased institutional investments, would you cap tuition?**

**See affordability and equity.**

*University response:* As the report describes, Oregon's funding of higher education is far below the national standard and it would take a tremendous amount of investment for the state, rather than students, to be in the driver's seat for funding higher education. During the next Legislative Session, we are seeking investments in student financial aid and a \$1.05M investment in universities to improve affordability and avoid tuition increases.

*Community college response:* Setting tuition rates is a local control issue for community colleges and we'd have significant concern about the state setting a cap. Individual boards of education would ultimately make those decisions.

**5. Do you intend to create additional shared services?**

**See affordability.**

We are always looking for areas to curb costs, and collaborating with other institutions to save money and support students is important. State incentives to support these efforts is also welcome. For universities, there is already regular engagement with the University Shared Services Enterprise that allows universities to be agile and creative. For community colleges, we continue to look for opportunities to collaborate with other colleges when it saves money and improves outcomes for students.

**6. What are community colleges doing to improve retention and completion rates?**

**See equity.**

*Community College response:* With community college enrollment declining at many colleges, it is very important to be supportive of the students who have already

decided to enroll. Programs like Benefits Navigators support students who struggle with basic needs so they can continue to pursue education.

*University response:* Here are a couple of examples of what we are doing at \_\_\_\_\_ to enroll new students and retain the students we have: \_\_\_\_\_

*Community College Specific*

- 7. This report suggests that the Community College Support Fund distribution use performance incentives and be more outcomes focused. Do you support changes to the current distribution formula?**

The Higher Education Coordinating Commission has pulled together a workgroup to look at the distribution formula and identify strategies to align the formula to support student success. Community college presidents, business officers and other college leadership are engaged in that important work.

*Public University Specific*

- 8. If funding is dedicated to enhancing research universities, how does that mesh with the recommendation to fund regional universities that have an expensive array of support services for low-income and URM students?**

**See economic impact.**

The bottom line is that public investment in Oregon public universities ranks 45th nationally. It is important to value the missions of all of Oregon's unique institutions. While Oregon lags the nation in spending on research activity of all kinds, all institutions must address the conundrum of the increasing costs to support students.

- 9. Why are significant university institutional remissions being given to out-of-state students?**

**See economic impact.**

The report has an in-depth analysis of out-of-state student enrollment. It is clear that Oregon benefits from the contributions from out-of-state students who stay and work in Oregon after graduation. We believe that the associated contributions to economic and workforce development should be recognized and valued by the state.

*Aimed at HECC*

**10. Is HECC's statewide strategic roadmap a helpful tool? Should it be revised?**

**See economic impact.**

The HECC is an important voice in articulating the role institutions play in stimulating and supporting economic development. While the HECC can serve the critical function of helping to coordinate the application of university expertise to statewide problem, we agree that they are likely not the agency to host the development of a robust economic development plan for the state.

**11. Do you think there should be an economic development blueprint for the state? Who should set establish and maintain that?**

**See economic impact.**