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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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# Governor's Recommended Budget increases funds for community colleges, but additional investment needed

SALEM, Ore. – Oregon Governor Tina Kotek this morning (Jan. 31, 2023) released the Governor's Recommended Budget (GRB) for the 2023-2025 biennium, which includes a 6.4 percent increase to the Community College Support Fund (CCSF) over what was legislatively approved for 2021-2023. This would increase the CCSF to \$759.7 million.

"We recognize and appreciate that the Governor provided colleges increased funding in an increasingly challenging budget environment while still leaving room for her investments in housing and homelessness, childcare and education, and mental health and addiction care – all of which are issues community college students regularly face," said Morgan Cowling, Executive Director of the Oregon Community College Association. "However, there is still work to be done to fill a large hole in community college budgets. The pandemic hit community college students hard, and when those students left school to care for their families, the colleges lost significant tuition revenue. Even though students are beginning to return to campus, our colleges are still recovering from that."

The Oregon Community College Association is advocating during the 2023 Legislative Session for \$855 million, which is needed just to cover the increase in the costs of doing business over the last two years for the next biennium. At the GRB funding level of roughly \$760 million, colleges would be well below what is needed to avoid program and service reductions. To fill the gap, colleges could face programmatic and service cuts while placing even more pressure on tuition, even as enrollment across the state is now trending upward.

The GRB did not include a requested one-time \$50 million investment, which OCCA supported, to help the colleges transition away from federal pandemic support, which required colleges maintain staffing levels despite decreased enrollment. The HECC's Agency Request Budget included the \$50 million to support community colleges as they transition out of the pandemic.

"We need to maintain capacity at the institutions as students return to school so that colleges can support these students' increasing needs as they work on their education," Cowling said.

The GRB did recognize students' needs for increased financial support as it includes a significant increase of \$100 million to the Oregon Opportunity Grant, Oregon's largest need-based financial aid program. This would bring the total investment in the Oregon Opportunity Grant to \$300 million for the biennium.

*(more)*



In addition to the Oregon Opportunity Grant, the GRB also continues a \$40 million allocation to the Oregon Tribal Student Grant. OCCA has recognized the need for these investments and applauds the Governor's effort to support student access.

"We appreciate that Governor Kotek heard the call from colleges that we need to do more for our students," Cowling said. "An additional investment in the Opportunity Grant will expand access to postsecondary education to more students across the state."

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