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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OCCA announces 2024 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:** *Senator Rob Wagner (D-Lake Oswego)*
- **Community College Administrator:** *Dr. Jessica Howard (President, Chemeketa Community College)*
- **Community College Board Member:** *Dick Running (Linn-Benton 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 have demonstrated exceptional leadership and dedication in advancing the mission of Oregon’s community colleges,” said Karen Smith, Interim Executive Director of OCCA. “Their passion, innovation, and advocacy have not only transformed educational experiences but have also inspired others to join the important cause of shaping the path for brighter futures. We are immensely proud to recognize their contributions and look forward to witnessing the continued positive impact they will undoubtedly make on students and communities throughout the state.”

In addition to the annual Howard Cherry Awards, OCCA will also honor retired Chemeketa Community College Board Member Ed Dodson with the **Chuck Clemans Award**. The Chuck Clemans Award is intended for current or former OCCA board members who have shown exceptional dedication to and support of the Association and its advocacy efforts. It is named after the late Dr. Charles A. “Chuck” Clemans, who was elected three times to the Clackamas Community College (CCC) Board of Directors and served two terms as president of OCCA, while lobbying Oregon legislators for many years on behalf of community colleges.

These outstanding individuals will be honored during the Howard Cherry Awards Banquet at OCCA’s Annual Conference November 2, 2023, in Sunriver.

Community College Advocate: Senator Rob Wagner (D-Lake Oswego) – Senator Wagner, who serves as the Oregon Senate President, is deeply dedicated to the Oregon community college sector and mission. He worked for many years to support faculty and academic professionals as American Federation of Teachers Oregon director of political/legislative affairs and to support Portland Community College, first as government relations manager and lead lobbyist and then as AVP of Advancement (overseeing the Foundation, Marketing and Public

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Relations areas of the college). His other demonstrations of commitment to education in the state include serving as a Board Member and then Chair for the Lake Oswego School Board and being an educational consultant with Portland State University.

In his role in the Oregon Senate, Senator Wagner has consistently supported legislation advancing community colleges and the students they serve, including efforts to improve transfer. He served as Chair of the Education Committee and was instrumental in passing the 2019 landmark legislation – SB 3, which granted Oregon community colleges the ability to offer applied baccalaureate degrees. Most recently, Senator Wagner was instrumental in significantly increasing funding for the Community College Support Fund over the 2023-25 biennium.

“Throughout his career, Senator Wagner has demonstrated his steadfast commitment to public education in Oregon,” Portland Community College President Adrien Bennings wrote in her nomination letter for Senator Wagner. “During the 2023 Legislative Session, Senator Wagner worked tirelessly to secure historic investments in the Community College Support Fund, which will allow students to continue to have access to critical community college education and supports.”

Community College Administrator: Dr. Jessica Howard (President, Chemeketa Community College) – Dr. Howard arrived at Chemeketa Community College in 2019 following four years as the Southeast Campus president of Portland Community College. She has championed student success at both Chemeketa and around the state through her work on Guided Pathways, workforce development, applied baccalaureate and Bachelor of Science in Nursing degrees, and more. Dr. Howard’s passion for students and their success shines through whether she’s at an event, leading a meeting, or participating on Zoom. Dr. Howard is an Aspen New Presidents Fellow and serves on the Campus Compact Board of Directors. In 2019 she received President of the Year award from the Association of College Unions International, and regularly serves on state councils, workgroups, and taskforces associated with equity, higher education, and workforce.

Dr. Howard is also a well-respected leader among her colleagues in the Oregon President’s Council – which is comprised of the 17 community college presidents in the state – helping to establish camaraderie and a shared sense of purpose among the Presidents.

Community College Board Member: Dick Running (Linn-Benton Community College) – Since 1974, when he began teaching classes at LBCC, Dick has been an outstanding advocate for higher education and job training in the greater Albany community. During his 16+ years as an elected board member for Linn-Benton Community College, he has served with integrity and compassion, never taking his eyes off the goal of serving students and the needs of his community. Dick’s influential leadership includes extensive service as a small business owner, a college educator, and a college board member. Dick’s positive impact has left a significant mark on Albany, and we are fortunate to have his continued service as a longtime member of the Board of Education of Linn-Benton Community College.

On the Board, Dick is not afraid to ask tough questions, and he sets a very high standard for professional board membership. Importantly, he also attends many LBCC events to cheer on students, faculty, and leaders. Dick has been an outstanding ambassador for the college over the years. In particular, he has helped make sure that the college’s programs are relevant and responsive to local industry partners, which adds to the viability of LBCC

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graduates in the local economy. Prior to his board service, Dick also taught Accounting at LBCC, aided by his experience as a small business owner and tax expert. A military veteran (24 years in the US Navy), Dick often shares his military experience with student veterans at LBCC.

Chuck Clemans Award: Ed Dodson (Retired, Chemeketa Community College Board) - Ed Dodson has shown unwavering support of students through his work, philanthropy, and advocacy for decades in Oregon. His career in education spans more than 40 years, during which he has consistently championed the advancement of local schools (he's retired from the Salem-Keizer School District), the quality of community college students' education, and the betterment of his community. He served on the Chemeketa Community College Board of Education for 24 years, and on the Chemeketa Foundation Board for more than 20 years.

Besides his exemplary contributions to Chemeketa, Ed also has made a significant impact statewide through his dedication to all of Oregon's students as a member of the Oregon Community College Association (OCCA) Board of Directors. Ed served as the OCCA Board Representative for Chemeketa beginning in 2006. During his tenure, Ed served as President, Vice President, Past President and an At-Large Member on the OCCA Executive Committee. He was a strong advocate during legislative sessions, regularly reaching out to legislators and meeting with them at the Capital in Salem. His voice was a respected one on the OCCA Board, and he helped to guide new leaders with his extensive experience and passion for supporting students.

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The Oregon Community College Association (OCCA) represents the 17 publicly chartered community colleges and their locally elected board members in Oregon. Founded in 1962, OCCA's purpose is to support the colleges before policy-makers and partners whose actions affect the well-being of community colleges across the state.