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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OCCA Board selects Abby Lee as new Executive Director

SALEM, Ore. – The Board of Directors for the Oregon Community College Association approved the selection of Dr. Abby Lee as its next Executive Director. Lee was chosen following a nationwide search over the past several months and is expected to begin her new role on July 1.

Lee has spent the last 25 years at Treasure Valley Community College (TVCC) in Ontario, Ore. For the past 17 years she’s served as the Associate Vice President of College and Public Relations. Prior to that, she spent three years as the Regional Center Director for Eastern Oregon University at TVCC, following five years as TVCC’s Director of Public Information and Executive Director of the TVCC Foundation. In addition to her role at TVCC, Lee has also spent the last decade as a 5-term Idaho State Senator (District 9), retiring this year as the Senate Assistant Majority Leader who was known for her bipartisan work on many issues.

“After a rigorous search process, we are so pleased to welcome Abby Lee as OCCA’s next Executive Director,” said Jane Reid, President of the OCCA Board of Directors. “Her strong experience and background with community colleges, as well as her history of listening and bringing people together, will provide skills needed to guide OCCA into the future.”

Lee will take the Executive Director reigns from OCCA’s Senior Policy Advisor and General Counsel Karen Smith, who has served as interim in the position since April 2023 following the departure of former Executive Director Morgan Cowling.

“I am thrilled to join the talented team at OCCA and I am eager to bring my experience as a champion for community college students to this statewide role,” Lee said. “I especially look forward to supporting locally elected community college board members and college presidents in their work. Each community college is an incredible example of how education changes lives and communities. I’m excited to share these success stories to advocate for increased support and opportunities for all 17 Oregon community colleges.”

Lee, who currently lives just over the Oregon-Idaho border in Fruitland, Idaho, and will make the move to Salem, has a PhD in Public Policy and Administration from Boise State University, where she successfully defended her dissertation in March 2024 on “Oregon Community College Trustee Survey: A look at community college board members’ initial motivation to run for elected office.” Lee also has a Master of Science degree in Instructional and Performance Technology from Boise State University, as well as a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communications and Public Relations from Brigham Young University.

While at TVCC, Lee was responsible for developing and implementing legislative and community relation strategies, producing college marketing and information materials, advising the TVCC president on community relations and public affairs, developing crisis management plans, and providing crisis response leadership. She also served as a member of TVCC’s Diversity Committee, where she coordinated and

promoted *Diversity Dialogues*, a series of monthly campus and community events focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion. In addition, Lee co-authored a \$1.8 million Title III Grant designed to strengthen institutions by improving access and performance of community colleges through improved student intervention, new institutional research, and enhancements to gateway courses to increase student success; she served as the Title III Coordinator for the grant.

Lee has also served as an adjunct and community education instructor for TVCC and was twice awarded the TVCC Outstanding Student Services Support Award by students. She was also honored by Idaho Children Are Primary in 2021 with the Primary Legislator Award. As a state senator, Lee served on the Governor's Higher Education Taskforce, was co-chair of the Joint Legislative Child Protection Oversight Committee, was on the Governor's Taskforce on Opioid Abuse Prevention and the Western States Legislative Forestry Taskforce.

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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.