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State of the Association

2023-2024

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Prepared By
OCCA Staff
May 17, 2024

It's been quite a year...



Jane Reid
OCCA Board President

The theme of OCCA's Annual Conference this year was "Empowering Community Colleges for the Future," an apt rallying point for the Association's activities during the last year. It was a time of transition focused on the goal of moving forward together as we advance the mission of OCCA for the benefit of the students and communities we serve statewide.



Karen Smith
OCCA Interim
Executive Director

This report highlights OCCA's activities over the last year as we build for the future. While there is still work to be done, we made significant advances in telling the story of community colleges through our advocacy, student success initiatives, board training and development, and partnerships with others around the state who share our commitments. Guiding this work were OCCA's 2021-27 Strategic Priorities and Objectives adopted by the OCCA Board and revised in October 2023.

In the 62 years since the founding of OCCA, community colleges have come together with a shared statewide vision for the benefit of all Oregonians. Acting statewide as a single voice in support of our students is not common across the country, and OCCA appreciates the support of our members in this continued endeavor. We remain steadfast in the importance of OCCA's mission today just as much as the original founders of the Association were.

The state of the association is strong, and our important work continues. We thank you all for your support and engagement this last year.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane V. Reid".

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen M. Smith".

Mission

Leading with racial equity, we advocate, communicate and collaborate to strengthen community colleges for the benefit of Oregonians, particularly those historically underserved or systemically marginalized in higher education.

OCCA Staff



Karen Smith
Interim
Executive Director



John Wykoff
Deputy
Director



Elizabeth Cox Brand
Student Success
Center Director



Katie Archambault
Director of
Operations



Casey White-Zollman
Communications
Director



Julie Flynn
Executive Support
Specialist

Advocacy

Priority 1: Advocate to secure sufficient and stable state funding & advance policies that support positive student-centered outcomes.

Building Momentum & Empowerment

After a successful 2023 Legislative Session where community colleges saw a 14.9% increase in funding, funding for the Oregon Opportunity Grant was increased by \$100 million, and colleges received legislative authority to offer Bachelor of Science degrees in Nursing, OCCA went into the February 2024 Legislative Session with considerable momentum.

The OCCA Board identified two legislative policy priorities for the short session – a legislatively-created work group to support and accelerate the adoption of corequisite education at Oregon community colleges, and a change to how decisions regarding the Oregon Opportunity Grant are made at the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC). **Both concepts passed as part of the Senate Education Omnibus Bill, SB 1552.**

OCCA used several tools to **empower board member involvement in advocacy efforts**. This included:



Community College Day of Action

CONSISTENT MESSAGING

235 advocates sent **434** emails to **71** legislators about the **Oregon Opportunity Grant** during a One-Click Politics campaign on February 13.



Direct Legislative Advocacy

MESSAGING ON PRIORITIES

Board members, advocates & staff **engaged with legislators** through **direct meetings, written testimony, and in-person presentations** during several informational hearings regarding corequisite education and the Oregon Opportunity Grant.



Advocacy Toolkit

ADVOCACY & MESSAGING TOOLS

OCCA refined the online Advocacy Toolkit with **resources** for board members and advocates to use during the Legislative Session, building upon the 2023 Toolkit, which in March won a **Gold Paragon Award from NCMPR** for Best Government Campaign.



Virtual CTE Month

FEBRUARY 2024

OCCA worked with college marketing and public relations staff and Campus Advocacy Coordinators to **highlight and promote college CTE programs and career pathways** during National Community College CTE Month on social media and websites.

Advocacy

2025-27 Biennial Budget Request Development

OCCA convened two workgroups during Winter-Spring 2024 to develop budget requests for the 2025-27 biennium. The two workgroups included elected board members, presidents and other community college administrators. One group focused on developing the Current Service Level ask and the other focused on identifying and developing the five additional areas of investment, also referred to as Policy Option Packages (POPs).

The request included a minimum of a 14.9% biennial increase to the Community College Support Fund (CCSF) to maintain current service levels along with recommendations for additional funding in five specific areas. They include:



Corequisite Workgroup

Total Cost: \$1 million (one-time)



Applied Baccalaureate Program

Total Cost: \$2.5 million (one-time)



Adult Reconnect

Total Cost: \$10 million (ongoing)



Cybersecurity

Total Cost: \$3.57 million (ongoing)



8th Quarter Payment

Total Cost: \$100-\$115 million to fully restore (one-time)

Federal Advocacy

At the federal level, OCCA organized visits on Capitol Hill during the ACCT National Legislative Summit in early February 2024 and helped to secure Senator Merkley's co-sponsorship of two important community college bill priorities – The Job's Act with short-term Pell provisions, and a bill to make Pell Grants tax-free to benefit low-income students.

[Click here](#) to review the federal legislative priorities for community colleges.



Community college representatives meet with Oregon Senator Ron Wyden.

Advocacy

Positive Media Coverage

Throughout the course of the year, OCCA received positive media coverage in **statewide newspapers**, **national online media**, and **radio broadcasts**. Highlights included stories related to the:

- **Corequisite** student support model
- Changes to the **distribution of Oregon Opportunity Grant** and negative impact on community colleges
- The **economic impact** community colleges have on communities around Oregon
- Efforts to **expand student access to Applied Baccalaureates** offered by community colleges

Be sure to check out the links to these stories in the appendix at the end of this document.

Economic Impact: In August 2023, economic modeling firm Lightcast released results of a commissioned study on the economic impact of Oregon's community colleges. The statewide study found that:



1 out of every 22 jobs in Oregon is supported by the activities of community colleges & their students



The **total annual impact** of Oregon's community colleges is **\$9.6 billion** - that's 117,970 jobs



For every \$1 students invest in their community college education, they **gain \$5.20 more** in lifetime earnings

**Data from the statewide study results. Each individual college also received their own institutional report. Check out the OCCA website for even more details from the report: www.occa17.com/economic-impact/*

Student Success

Priority 1: Advocate to secure sufficient and stable state funding & advance policies that support positive student-centered outcomes.

Success Center at OCCA leads transformative change

Oregon community colleges have a long history of implementing student success-focused initiatives and promising practices. The Student Success Center, housed at OCCA, **leads transformative change** by translating emerging trends, research, and innovative practices to cultivate student-ready colleges; communicating a statewide vision of student success; and inspiring cultural change on campuses to improve student outcomes and close opportunity gaps. During this year of transition, **OCCA fully integrated the work of the Student Success Center into all aspects of operations and advocacy goals and objectives.**

Student success highlights this year include:



Corequisite Education

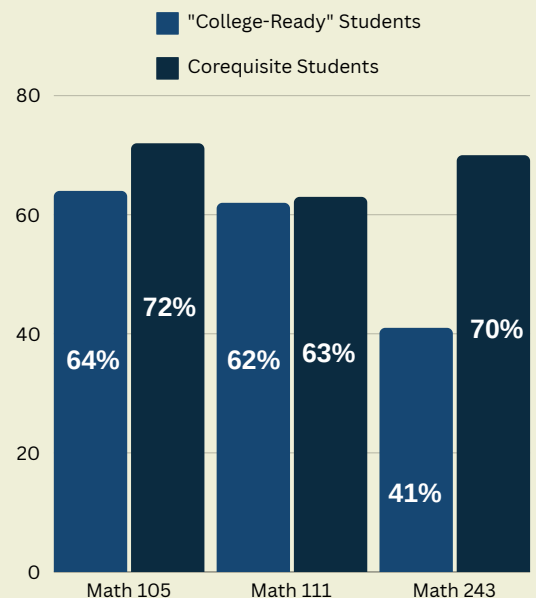
Collaboratively developed and passed legislation (SB 1522) that created a workgroup that will make recommendations to the HECC for how **best to support and accelerate the transition** to a corequisite model to **support students and ensure success** in college-level courses.

- **Co-facilitating SB 1522 workgroup** with CCWD Director



Partnerships & Collaboration

- Partnered with CCWD to sponsor convening of credit & non-credit math faculty and administrators for **Building Better Math Pathways** - smoothing the transition from Adult Basic Education/GED to college credit programs.
- Worked with New America and Student Ready Strategies to survey students at all Oregon community colleges to gather data to be used in the future to **advance the Bringing Adults Back initiative.**
- Partnered with the Oregon Alliance of Independent Colleges & Universities to **engage faculty in the Oregon Transfer Pathways to Liberal Arts** TEAGLE grant.
- Facilitated MDRC selection of Oregon as a site for its **Multiple Measures for Assessment project.**
- Facilitated Community College Research Center (CCRC) selection of Oregon community colleges for participation in a professional development course, **Using Technology to Support Postsecondary Student Learning.**



Student Success



Other Highlights

- The Success Center partnered with the Arizona and Washington Success Centers to continue the **monthly webinar series focused on the four pillars of guided pathways**. The series, in its fourth year, featured practitioners and promising practice from one of the three partner states along with national speakers. Survey results from the April webinar showed 94% of respondents indicated they learned something new and 100% of respondents are likely to attend future webinars, with 82% indicating they are “extremely likely” to attend future webinars.
- Offered a third cohort enrolled in Association of College & University Educators (ACUE) **micro credential “Fostering a Culture of Belonging” program**.
- Supported two cohorts of **Trauma Informed Resilience training** for college administrators, faculty and staff.
- Secured funding from the Ford Family Foundation to support **cultural competency certificate facilitator training** for the Rural Community College Consortium colleges.
- Published the annual **Early Momentum Metrics statewide summary** highlighting how students are faring on four key areas:
 - Completing gateway courses (math & writing);
 - Reaching momentum & milestone points (earning 12 & 30 credits);
 - Staying enrolled; and
 - Achieving success (completion or transfer)



Board Training & Development

Priority 2: Empower stakeholders & provide leadership to effectively represent Oregon's community colleges with a collective voice.

Advancing Opportunities for Board Training & Development

2023 was an election year for community college boards of education. OCCA Interim Executive Director Karen Smith welcomed new board members around the state in a letter that invited them to attend OCCA's annual board training in September and shared OCCA resources as they assumed their new roles.

Advancing opportunities for board training and development is one of the OCCA Board's priority goals. Highlights of our work this year included the following events and education opportunities:



All Board Member Training - September 2023

September Board Training held at Chemeketa Community College's Eola Center. Speakers included special guest Jee Hang Lee, President of the Association of Community College Trustees. Attending board members and presidents had the opportunity to meet and network at dinner the night prior to the training.



OCCA Annual Conference - November 2023

The 2023 Annual Conference was held at Sunriver Resort in Central Oregon. A record number of attendees came together to network, hear from keynote speakers about student success and the future of Artificial Intelligence, and attend informative breakout sessions around the conference theme of "Empowering Community Colleges for the Future." Highlights from the conference included an inspiring panel of students from Central Oregon Community College and the Howard Cherry Awards dinner. Senate President Rob Wagner was honored as Outstanding Community College Advocate, while retired Chemeketa Community College Board Member Ed Dodson was honored with the Chuck Clemans Award for Outstanding Contributions to OCCA, Linn-Benton Community College Board Member Dick Running was honored as Outstanding Board Member, and Chemeketa President Dr. Jessica Howard was named Outstanding Administrator.

Board Training & Development



Lunch & Learn Webinar Series - Monthly

OCCA launched a Lunch & Learn Webinar Series in October 2023 as a benefit of OCCA membership with a session on the role of board chairs and vice chairs and concluding with a session on civil discourse. Recordings are available on the [OCCA website](#). We look forward to continuing the series in 2024-25.



Individual College Board Trainings - as needed

OCCA staff conducted individual college board trainings and shared best practices at several colleges around the state as requested.

Partnerships

Priority 1: Advocate to secure sufficient and stable state funding & advance policies that support positive student-centered outcomes.

Priority 2: Empower stakeholders & provide leadership to effectively represent Oregon's community colleges with a collective voice.

Strengthening Relationship with the HECC

This year provided an opportunity to re-build and strengthen partnerships with key organizations.

In order to ensure statewide coordination of the initiatives on which OCCA was focused this year, the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) was of great importance. OCCA renewed its focus on communicating the importance of community colleges in the state's education continuum to the HECC Commission and the agency.



Partnerships

Highlights of this partnership work with the **HECC** included:

- Sending a **joint letter with the Oregon Presidents' Council articulating expectations around statewide priorities** and to better support students and our respective missions.
- **Building connections to commissioners** by inviting them to attend the OCCA Annual Conference, providing public testimony at all Commission meetings, presenting on co-requisite student supports and how the work colleges are doing connects to HECC strategic priorities.
- Providing **written and oral comments** on recent HECC Administrative Rule Changes related to Major Transfer Map rules, capital construction project requests, and implementation of the student success funding distribution model.

Relationship Building with Business Community

OCCA continued efforts to build relationships with the Oregon business community. We joined as a **partner with higher education, government, and business partners** to support Oregon State University's planning grant application to the National Science Foundation titled "Securing America's Semiconductor Technology Future and Growing the Northwest's Regional Economic Prosperity." In December 2023, OCCA worked with the **Oregon Business Council** to facilitate the inclusion of Central Oregon Community College student, Petra Marmon, as the featured student at the **Oregon Business Summit**.



K12 Connections

Early in 2024, OCCA Interim Executive Director Karen Smith and several community college presidents met with the **Oregon Department of Education (ODE)** Director Dr. Charlene Williams. The purpose of the meeting was to **connect around issues of common interest with K-12**. This included working together to create a stronger college going culture in Oregon, encouraging better partnerships between community colleges and school districts around Career and Technical Education pathways, and increasing FAFSA completion rates.



Partnering on Legal Issues Impacting Education

OCCA organized key education partners from **public and private universities and the Oregon School Boards Association** to file two amicus curiae briefs in support of Southwestern Oregon Community College's appeal in the Gililand v. Southwestern Oregon Community College District case pending in federal court. The decision included issues of concern around the lower court's finding that college policies create contractual obligations, and the awarding of non-economic (pain and suffering) damages in a breach of contract claim. In a recent decision memorandum, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals vacated the \$1 million non-economic damages award as contrary to Oregon law.

Partnerships

All-Oregon Academic Team

A key partnership continues with both public and private universities to **support student transitions to 4-year institutions**. Highlights of the year include the always inspiring **All-Oregon Academic Team Luncheon**. This year, OCCA's 30th Anniversary of the event, 55 students from all 17 Oregon community colleges were recognized. State Representative Tawna Sanchez was the keynote speaker at the luncheon and inspired students to dream big and know that anything is possible. Four outstanding students were selected to speak at the event. As always, their stories touched the hearts of attendees as they shared the obstacles they overcame to complete their community college education journeys. 15 Oregon colleges and universities offer scholarships to these students.



2024 All-Oregon Academic Team



Association Activities

Priority 3: Advance the association by implementing best practices for effective and efficient operations with a focus on continuous improvement.

Continuous Improvement

The Association carries out its work through the Board's standing committees and efforts of a small, but mighty staff. Committee membership consists of OCCA representatives, presidents, other elected board members, and college staff. Highlights of OCCA committee work over the course of the year included:

- Development of a **survey of member colleges** around OCCA services
- Creation of the monthly noon **Lunch & Learn Webinar series**
- Formulation of **OCCA legislative advocacy** in support of the Oregon Opportunity Grant, the 2024 legislative agenda, and development of the budget request and policy option package priorities for the 2025 Legislative Session
- Adoption of an **equity lens tool** to review legislation throughout OCCA's bill review process
- Continued discussion of hot topics around diversity, equity, and inclusion to provide tools and resources to boards in carrying out OCCA's **Equity Call to Action**

In June 2023, a comprehensive **Member Feedback Survey** was conducted to seek input from board members, presidents, affinity group staff, and executive assistants to better understand OCCA's current strengths and areas that require attention. We not only wanted to get a fuller sense of the organization's performance and effectiveness, but also whether people knew about the wide variety of services the Association offers and how often members engage in and utilize those services. **Most respondents indicated they find value in OCCA membership.** This feedback was considered by the Board and helped to inform areas of focus during the year. A summary is included below.

What OCCA is Doing Well

Advocacy

Coordination & Communication

Providing/Sharing Information

Legal Support

OCCA Areas for Improvement

Leadership

Timely Communication & Response

Strategic, Long-Term Plan

Association Activities

Addressing Areas for Improvement

OCCA appreciates the responses in the member survey, and is actively taking steps to enhance areas of excellence and further development areas identified as in need of improvement.

- OCCA has not had **stability in its leadership** for several years, and the Board initiated the search for a permanent Executive Director in December. Search consultants, Human Capital Enterprises, were selected to assist with the search process. An eight-member Search Committee was charged with leading the search and recommending a finalist to the full OCCA Board. **The new Executive Director will join the OCCA Team this summer.**
- OCCA Interim Executive Director Karen Smith brought in a facilitator to guide staff through **team building**, helping staff to **strengthen their team dynamic**, provide **timely responses**, and **address challenges effectively & efficiently** as a team.
- OCCA is working to make sure efforts from staff, Board and committee work aligns with the **2021-27 Strategic Priorities & Objectives** updated and adopted by the Board in October 2023. This helps keep our work focused on identified priorities.

“There is a customer service orientation in the staff at OCCA. They are also able advocates for the community colleges, and respected in Salem.”

~ Member Survey Response

Board Policy & Procedure Program Growth

OCCA’s Board Policy and Procedure Program continues to be of value to the **13 subscribing community colleges**. The **more than 370 board policy and procedure templates** support colleges in meeting federal, state and accreditation related requirements. An annual legal update was issued in November and a workshop was held as a pre-conference session at the 2023 OCCA Annual Conference. Workshop participants reviewed strategies and best practices related to the policy-making role of boards through the adoption of legally compliant policies. A special legal update will be issued in early summer to address the new Title IX rules recently finalized and effective on August 1.

OCCA Staff Visit Colleges

During the year OCCA staff focused on getting out to visit member college campuses to connect with board members, presidents, college faculty and staff, and students. At least one staff member visited nearly every community college campus. These visits provided the opportunity for OCCA staff to see firsthand the innovative work in which colleges are engaged. Having this understanding allows us to carry the community college story in our advocacy efforts and as we continue to develop partnerships statewide.

At Right: OCCA Student Success Center Director Elizabeth Cox Brand visits Columbia Gorge Community College in October for the college’s fall kickoff. She’s with Board Member Lucille Begay (left) and CGCC President Dr. Kenneth Lawson.



Association Activities

Board Communications

OCCA provides information to the Board through a variety of communications throughout the year. Below is a summary of those types communications*.

- **OCCA Digest:** If you haven't already, make sure to sign up to receive the *OCCA Digest* e-newsletter. This electronic publication is published monthly, and then switches to weekly editions during the legislative session. The *Digest* provides timely updates on what's happening in the current legislative session, community college news and information, a calendar of events, announcements, and other important information for community college board members, administrators, staff and stakeholders. Sign up at <https://www.occa17.com/>.
- **Monthly Board Representative Talking Points:** OCCA sends talking points via email to OCCA Board Representatives at the end of each month. Board reps are then able to utilize these talking points during their respective college board meetings to help keep other board members at their institutions apprised of OCCA events and training opportunities, OCCA updates, important community college information, legislative updates and more.
- **OCCA Board Meeting Recaps:** OCCA emails all of its board members a recap of highlights from the quarterly OCCA Board meetings. These recaps are typically sent to members within one week following the Board meeting.
- **OCCA Legislative Update Calls:** During the legislative sessions, OCCA hosts weekly Zoom meetings for Board members, presidents, administrators and government relations staff (i.e., Campus Advocacy Coordinators) to keep everyone up to speed on the latest developments and provide updates on bills OCCA is tracking.
- **Email Communications:** OCCA will also send emails as needed to keep Board members updated on any important information related to OCCA business, upcoming events and trainings, or community college issues. These emails can also include communications regarding standing OCCA committees on which you serve.

**Note: If you are not receiving these communications, please contact OCCA to make sure we have an accurate email on file, occa@occa17.com.*

“Communication keeps getting better and better. It’s important to be up-to-date with what is going on in the community college ‘scene’ throughout the state.”

~ Member Survey Response



OCCA Board of Directors

Blue Mountain Community College

Dr. Mark Browning, President
Scott Wallace, Board Member

Central Oregon Community College

Dr. Laurie Chesley, President
Alan Unger, Board Member

Chemeketa Community College

Dr. Jessica Howard, President
Ken Hector, Board Member

Clackamas Community College

Dr. Tim Cook, President
Jane Reid, Board Member

Clatsop Community College

Teena Toyas, Interim President
Lloyd Mueller, Board Member

Columbia Gorge Community College

Dr. Kenneth Lawson, President
Kim Morgan, Board Member

Klamath Community College

Dr. Roberto Gutierrez, President
Kate Marquez, Board Member

Lane Community College

Dr. Stephanie Bulger, President
Austin Fohnagy, Board Member

Linn-Benton Community College

Dr. Lisa Avery, President
Kristin Adams, Board Member

Mt. Hood Community College

Dr. Lisa Skari, President
Andrew Speer, Board Member

Oregon Coast Community College Dr.

Birgitte Ryslinge, President
Debbie Kilduff, Board Member

Portland Community College

Dr. Adrien Bennings, President
Kien Truong, Board Member

Rogue Community College

Dr. Randy Weber, President
Pat Fahey, Board Member

Southwestern Oregon Community College

Dr. Patty Scott, President
Susan Anderson, Board Member

Tillamook Bay Community College

Dr. Paul Jarrell, President
Betsy McMahon, Board Member

Treasure Valley Community College

Dr. Dana Young, President
Stephen Crow, Board Member

Umpqua Community College

Dr. Rachel Pokrandt, President
Steve Loosley, Board Member

Ex-Officio Members

Fernando Rojas-Galvan - Higher Education
Coordinating Commission

Traci Hodgson - Oregon Education
Association/UNISERV

Emily Smith - Oregon School Boards Association

Vacant - Oregon Community College Student
Association



Appendix

Media Coverage

- [Corequisite courses gain momentum](#) - Inside Higher Ed, 7/19/2023
- [A \\$100 million bump in the Oregon Opportunity Grant will help low income students. Here's how](#) - The Oregonian/OregonLive, 8/15/2023
- [Oregon community colleges drive \\$9.6B economic impact and foster job growth](#) - Cannon Beach Gazette, 8/20/2023
- [Oregon's community colleges generate billions for the economy, report says](#) - OPB, 8/21/2023
- [Oregon's community colleges generate billions for the economy, study says](#) - University Business, 8/22/2023
- Opinion: *Community Colleges worth the investment* (by OCCA Board President Jane Reid) - featured in:
 - [Baker City Herald](#), 11/9/2023
 - [The Daily Astorian](#), 11/10/2023
 - [The Outlook](#), 11/10/2023
 - [Portland Tribune](#), 11/10/2023
 - [Redmond Spokesman](#), 11/21/2023
 - [East Oregonian](#), 12/9/2023
- [A new way to help students catch up in Oregon's community colleges begins in Salem](#) - OPB, 1/17/2024
- [Oregon's college students call for more state funding to meet basic needs](#) - OPB, 2/9/2024
- [Podcast: Degree of Success: New Bachelor's degree from Lane Community College a dynamic new option](#) - KLCC, 2/22/2024
- [How a new approach in Oregon helps students realize they are 'college material'](#) - OPB, 3/4/2024
- [College Transfer Process is 'DIY' for many students](#) - Inside Higher Ed, 3/14/2024
- [Remedial education gets big overhaul in US](#) - Times Higher Education, 3/27/2024
- All-Oregon Academic Team news
 - [Oregon Community College Association announces 2024 All-Oregon Academic Team](#) - KTVZ, 4/8/2024
 - [OCCA names honor students](#) - Elkhorn Media, 4/9/2024
 - [Two local students named to All-Oregon Academic Team](#) - East Oregonian, 4/14/2024
 - [Clatsop Community College students selected for honors, scholarships](#) - Daily Astorian, 4/18/2024
 - [Three COCC students on Oregon Academic Team](#) - My Central Oregon, 4/20/2024

