

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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STUDENTS, COLLEGES, UNIVERSITIES RESPOND TO HECC'S AGENCY REQUEST BUDGET

Salem, Ore. – Students, alumni, and employee representatives from Oregon's community colleges and public universities urged the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) to reconsider the proposed 2025-27 Agency Request Budget, which would result in a significant gap in operating costs for most of the state's higher education institutions. The Commission met earlier today to discuss and reluctantly approve the HECC's agency request budget.

The proposed budget is nearly \$100M short of the funding requested by colleges and universities to meet student needs and continue to offer existing levels of services to students. It would serve as another obstacle to ensuring Oregon's higher education system remains accessible, equitable, and affordable.

"Oregon's public universities are requesting \$275M more in funding than in the last biennium," said the student body presidents of Oregon's seven public universities. "This budget fails to meet that need, meaning that students will be forced to pick up more costs. It will impact the availability of wraparound services for students that help with access to more affordable housing, childcare, food insecurity, and transportation. It will also jeopardize academic success programs like academic advising, mentoring, early warning systems, and equity-focused programs."

Community colleges and public universities have developed innovative programs and services to support student success, and sufficient state support is critical to continue these programs. The proposed budget will decrease access and affordability for students and halt momentum toward providing increased services to students.

Oregon's community colleges offer affordable and accessible education and workforce training to a diverse student body, and are key to addressing the state's current and future workforce needs. "Accessing education financially is difficult for me," said Lane Community College student Kat Tabor, an Art and Education major from Eugene, Ore. "When I am struggling to meet my basic needs like housing payments and food, it's really hard to keep moving forward. Keeping college education affordable is critical for me to complete my degree, as I'm sure it is for many other community college students in Oregon who have additional needs that I don't face, such as childcare. The more the state can do to support students and make education more accessible, the better. How can I focus on school when I can't guarantee I will be able to pay for my next meal, electricity, water, or rent?"

In response to testimony from students and higher education employees at today's Commission meeting, Chair Rowe said, "We all agree that colleges and universities need and deserve more funding... No one thinks [this budget] is sufficient."

Other HECC Commissioners weighed in with concerns, saying that they would have voted against putting the budget forward were it not for an accompanying [letter](#) from Chair Rowe indicating that the Commission is "seriously concerned that at the funding levels described within our ARB, Oregon will hinder progress toward state goals for postsecondary education and training. If adopted, this budget would further shift the cost of postsecondary education from the State to the students and jeopardize recent progress at improving affordability, equity, and workforce development in Oregon."

Commissioner Sipelii expressed hope that the Legislatively-approved budget would "more effectively meet the needs of [postsecondary] students and staff".

"The fundamental problem is how much state support [for higher education] has declined," said Commissioner Devlin. "The State simply needs to find some way to contribute to the underlying cost of education".

Commissioner Kocher, who voted against approving the budget, said the "budget simply is not enough".

Students, faculty, and staff from Oregon's colleges and universities remain hopeful that Governor Kotek will address the nearly \$100M funding shortage in the Governor's Recommended Budget, which is expected to be released to the legislature ahead of the 2025 Legislative Session.

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