

## OCCA Update for College Boards – September 2024

### **Welcome New OCCA Board Reps!**

OCCA would like to extend a warm welcome to new community college board members, as well as a special thank you and welcome to those who have agreed to serve as their college's OCCA representative for the 2024-25 academic year! We look forward to working with you all and having a successful year. Please feel free to reach out to an OCCA staff member at any time with questions.

### **Response to HECC Agency Request Budget**

OCCA, in coordination with the Oregon Council of Presidents (OCOP – the organization that represents the public universities), issued a press release in response to the Higher Education Coordinating Commission's (HECC's) Agency Request Budget that was approved by HECC commissioners on Aug. 8. This joint press release highlighted the significant gap – nearly \$100 million – in the HECC's proposed budget for higher education to meet student needs and continue to offer existing levels of services to students. OCCA Executive Director Abby Lee testified in the hearing about the potential impact of this type of shortfall, while also emphasizing the increasing enrollment at nearly all of Oregon's community colleges. She also pointed out the unique role the colleges play in meeting the state's economic and workforce needs while also addressing its challenges (i.e., housing, mental health). [Click here to read the press release.](#)

Commission Chair Sandy Rowe said during the HECC meeting “we all agree that colleges and universities need and deserve more funding... No one thinks [this budget] is sufficient.” The commissioners also sent a letter to Governor Tina Kotek's office stating as much. [Click here to read the letter.](#)

Next, the Governor will release her proposed budget on Dec. 1, which is used as a starting point for legislators as they begin the legislative session and prepare agency budgets.

### **Revenue report released**

State economists presented their quarterly economic and revenue forecast to legislators this week showing state revenues up \$587 million from the previous forecast also triggering Oregon's unique kicker law. State economists predict Oregon will send roughly \$1 billion dollars back to Oregon taxpayers based on the state's kicker law. The kicker goes into effect when state revenues are over 2% above what state economists predicted at the close of the budget-setting long legislative sessions. When revenues grow over 2% of that forecast, all the additional revenues go back to taxpayers.

While state economists reported the Oregon economic outlook was stable, they pointed to some concerning trends such a significant slowdown in hiring, particularly in industries that are sensitive to high interest rates like construction. Another concern they raised was the effect of major layoffs by large employers such as Nike and Intel.

“Oregon is fortunate to have a positive economic outlook, but with the warning signs on the horizon, we urge state lawmakers to prioritize investments that help get Oregonians skilled-up and back into the workforce,” said OCCA Executive Director Abby Lee. “Community colleges are uniquely positioned to help address these issues.”

### **OCCA Executive Committee holds annual retreat**

The 2024-25 OCCA Executive Committee met for its annual retreat, on Sept. 6 in Salem. The Executive Committee, along with members from the 2023-24 Executive Committee, discussed the evaluation process for new OCCA Executive Director Abby Lee, as well as review the OCCA Strategic Priorities and Objectives. In addition, committee members participated in a facilitated conversation with higher education consultant, Miriam

Friedman around the development of an OCCA Values Statement. The Executive Committee reviewed and approved the Values Statement Process, which will also include the full OCCA Board. The Values Statement is slated to be completed in February for review and approval by the Board.

### **OCCA Board Training**

The OCCA Board Member Training took place on Saturday, Sep. 7, at Chemeketa Community College's Eola Center in Salem. More than 30 board members and presidents took part in the training, which included a comprehensive session on the principles of civil discourse with practical skills to navigate contentious issues respectfully and productively. The training also featured Sonny Ramaswamy, President of the Northwest Commission on Colleges & Universities (NWCCU), who shared best practices and advice on how board members can take a more proactive role in accreditation. Other training topics included how OCCA can serve the needs of colleges and board members, what to expect in the upcoming legislative session, information on public meeting laws, and strategies to combat the looming enrollment cliff. Thanks to all of those who participated!

### **Preview: September Legislative Days**

Legislators will hold their quarterly "Legislative Days" next month (Sept 23-25) where they will hear invited testimony that will provide updates on ongoing and new topics legislators may want to address legislatively in the 2025 Session.

OCCA has worked with the chair of the House Committee on Higher Education to provide an update on emerging community college Bachelor of Science Nursing (BSN) programs. The House Higher Education Committee will also hear an update from the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) on the ongoing work to create more seamless transfer from community colleges to four-year public universities. OCCA has been closely involved in legislative work around better transfer pathways from community colleges to public universities.

This will also be the final "Legislative Days" before the Sept. 27 deadline for legislators to file bills that will be released prior to the start of the 2025 Legislative Session.

### **Upcoming Events & Trainings**

OCCA has a great schedule of events set for 2024-25! [Click here](#) to see an overview of each of these events (or visit our website, <https://occa17.com/calendar/>) and see below for details about events coming this fall that will benefit board members.

- **OCCA Conference:**
  - **Registration Opens Sept. 4** – Early Bird Registration for the OCCA Annual Conference opens on Sept. 4! This special discounted rate will be available on the conference [web page](#) through Oct. 4. Regular registration will then be available through Oct. 18. The conference will take place Nov. 6-8 at Salishan Coastal Lodge in beautiful Gleneden Beach. OCCA has secured a block of rooms at a special conference rate of \$169 +fees per night at the Salishan Coastal Lodge. Visit the OCCA conference web page for details on how to secure this rate: <https://occa17.com/occa-annual-conference/>.
  - **Keynote Speakers announced** – OCCA is excited to welcome two national-level keynotes at the 2024 conference:
    - **Marty Alvarado, SOVA Solutions:** Marty is a passionate advocate for equitable and transformative education with over two decades of experience driving impactful change across education and workforce development systems.
    - **Parfait Bassalé, Parfait Bassalé Consulting** – During his five-year tenure as the

Executive Diversity Officer at South Puget Sound Community College (a 2023 ASPENT Top 10 Community College finalist), Parfait championed a culture of belonging and implemented equity programs that reduced the achievement gap for historically excluded students.

- **Virtual Advocacy Training** – OCCA will host a virtual Advocacy Training on Thursday, October 10, for community college board members, presidents, Campus Advocacy Coordinators (CACs), students, and other college faculty, staff and stakeholders who will serve or are interested in serving as an advocate during the 2025 Legislative Session. In this free training, participants will learn how to be an effective advocate for community college budget and policy issues, the various ways in which you can be an advocate (hint: it doesn't always mean meeting with legislators!), lobbying tips, important messaging for the Session, and the basics of the legislative process. Visit our website this fall for all the details, <https://occa17.com/occa-advocacy-training/>.
- **Registration open for 2024-2025 Lunch & Learn Webinars** – The OCCA Lunch & Learn Webinars were such a hit in 2023-24 that we're bringing them back with a new lineup in 2024-25! These webinars – which are included in OCCA membership – will continue to take place on the last Thursday of each month at noon starting in October (no December webinar due to the holidays). [Click here](#) for the schedule and [click here](#) to get registered for one or all the webinars! The first Lunch & Learn will take place on Oct. 31: "OCCA 101." Attendees will learn how OCCA serves colleges and about key initiatives. [Get registered now!](#)

### **OCCA Digest e-newsletter**

The *OCCA Digest* is a monthly e-newsletter that highlights updates during the Legislative Session, important events, news, and announcements. It's a great way to stay connected with information important to community colleges in Oregon and learn how you can take action to support colleges and students.

To sign up to receive this free e-newsletter, visit <https://occa17.com/resources/newsletter/> and click the "Sign Up" button. The OCCA Digest will come from OCCA Communications Director Casey White-Zollman at [casey@occa17.com](mailto:casey@occa17.com), so be sure to add her email to your contacts to ensure the email arrives in your inbox and not your spam folder.

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*Oregon Community College Association was founded in 1962 with the purpose of providing support to the colleges before policymakers and partners whose actions affect the wellbeing of community colleges across the state. OCCA represents the 17 publicly chartered community colleges and their locally elected board members. 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. Have questions about OCCA and our work to support Oregon's community colleges? Contact [occa@occa17.com](mailto:occa@occa17.com).*