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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OCCA responds to Governor's Recommended Budget

SALEM, Ore. – Oregon Governor Tina Kotek this morning released the Governor's Recommended Budget (GRB) for the 2025-2027 biennium, which includes a 6.9 percent increase (a total of \$870.4 million) to the Community College Support Fund (CCSF) compared to the legislatively approved funding for 2023-2025. While this is a \$70 million increase over the current funding level, it is still about \$50 million short of what colleges say they need to maintain current services.

The Oregon Community College Association (OCCA) will advocate for \$920 million for the CCSF during the 2025 Legislative Session. This funding level is essential to cover the rising costs of doing business over the last two years and maintain essential programs and services for the next biennium. At the GRB funding level of approximately \$870.4 million for 2025-2027, many colleges still would face substantial shortfalls, leading to potential program and service reductions and increasing reliance on tuition hikes to bridge the gap.

"While we appreciate the Governor's additional investment in community colleges and higher ed, there remains a large gap to fill," said Dr. Abby Lee, Executive Director of the OCCA. "At the proposed GRB funding level, community colleges will still struggle to meet the needs of students and their communities. Without adequate investment, we risk limiting access to education and workforce training at a time when enrollment trends are rebounding and Oregon's economy needs skilled workers."

This year, fourth week fall term enrollment data from the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) shows that most of Oregon's 17 community colleges have seen increases in enrollment compared to 2023, with a statewide increase of 4 percent. Colleges need additional investment to support the needs of this increase in students.

In addition to advocating for a higher funding level for the CCSF, OCCA is calling for an additional \$150 million investment in the Oregon Opportunity Grant (OOG), the state's largest need-based financial aid program. This increase would expand access to higher education for thousands of low-income and underserved Oregonians, ensuring that cost is not a barrier to pursuing education and workforce training opportunities, particularly as enrollment continues to increase.

The GRB does include a \$28.7 million increase to scholarship expansions to the OOG, the Oregon Tribal Student Grant, and the Oregon National Guard State Tuition Assistance Grant, far short of the increased investment for which OCCA will advocate during the 2025 Legislative Session.

"Oregon's community colleges are critical partners in meeting the state's workforce needs, from training healthcare professionals and skilled tradespeople to supporting emerging industries," Lee said. "With adequate funding, our colleges can provide students with the skills and knowledge

needed to thrive in Oregon’s growing economy.”

The GRB also includes \$20 million for new capital construction projects at community colleges.

OCCA will continue to advocate for the \$920 million needed for the CCSF, the \$150 million increase to the Oregon Opportunity Grant, and other critical investments in community colleges leading up to and during the 2025 Legislative Session, which begins Jan. 21, 2025. These funds are essential to protecting Oregon’s investment in higher education, meeting workforce demands and ensuring that students and communities can thrive.

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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.