

OCCA Update for College Boards – March 2025

Legislative Session Update

At its February 7 regular board meeting, the OCCA Board took positions on the following proposed bills that could impact community colleges:

- **SB 478** – This bill would change four aspects of Community College governance:
 - Requires each community college board to include a full-time student as a voting board member
 - Requires community college boards to vote on whether the college can join any state or national associations
 - Allows community college board members to receive a monthly stipend of \$500
 - Requires board members to have a publicly available college email address

The Legislative Committee recommended the Board oppose this bill unless substantially amended, notably the sections requiring a full-time student as a voting board member who is not elected by the college district voters and requiring the Board to vote on whether the college may join state or national organizations. The Board was also concerned that community colleges were not consulted before this bill was published, despite the fact that the bill directly addresses community college governance.

Since the Board meeting, OCCA has made strides in potentially having favorable amendments to the bill, including changing the voting full-time student member of the board to an ex-officio non-voting student member who is half-time/part-time (instead of full-time) and is selected by a student government election process. Colleges remain concerned about the impact on local control and governance with the additional requirement for boards to vote on any state or national association membership. This appears to single out community colleges and is not required for any other locally elected board or university boards. Abby Lee and John Wykoff continue to meet with legislators to hear their perspective and share OCCA's concerns.

The Board voted to oppose SB 478 unless favorably amended.

- **HB 2669** – This bill is a priority for the OEA and American Federation of Teachers and would require community colleges to pay part-time instructors at the same hourly rate as full-time instructors, regardless of the difference in responsibilities. This bill will go to the Joint Committee on Ways and Means (Subcommittee on Education) because it includes the appropriation of funds to cover this mandate's cost, so OCCA is collecting information to estimate the fiscal impact. Potential favorable amendments to the bill would include permissive language to give community colleges the option to pay all faculty the same hourly rate to teach, or to create a salary pool which colleges can draw from to pay part-time faculty for additional responsibilities such as committees.

The Board voted to oppose HB 2669 unless favorably amended.

- **HB 3220 (-2 amendment)** – The original bill language required nursing clinical programs to have a student to faculty ratio of 10:1. The current ratio is 8:1. Brett Rowlett from Lane Community College spoke with the bill's sponsor, Representative Nancy Nathanson,

about some concerns, including that some clinical sites are unable to accommodate a 10:1 ratio, which would limit the clinical sites available. In response, Rep. Nathanson put forward a proposed amendment with permissive language allowing, but not requiring, a ratio of up to 10:1. Community college nursing directors have said they appreciate the amended permissive language.

The Board voted to support HB 3220 with the -2 amendment.

Legislative Summit Registration

The OCCA Legislative Summit is set for March 5! This important event is a great opportunity for college presidents, board members, campus advocacy coordinators, students and other advocates to learn more about how proposed bills could impact community colleges during the Legislative Session. You'll hear from legislators, experienced community college advocates, and students. OCCA is excited to announce that Senate President Rob Wagner will serve as the day's keynote speaker. In addition, the Summit will conclude with a Legislator Reception, during which legislators and their staff come to mingle with Summit attendees. Delectable and hearty appetizers will be created and served by students in Southwestern Oregon Community College's Oregon Coast Culinary Institute, and complimentary wine will be provided by the wine studies and viticulture programs at Chemeketa Community College and Umpqua Community College. In addition, this year's reception will feature a showcase of CTE programs at our colleges. Don't miss it!

Register now at <https://www.occa17.com/legislative-summit/>.

Following the Summit, there will be a Community College Lobby Day at the Capitol on March 6. Colleges should schedule their own meetings with local legislators for this day. This is a great opportunity to advocate for community colleges with your legislators!

OCCA Receives Clean Audit

Toby Roth, with Grove, Muller & Swank, REDW Advisors & CPAs, presented the OCCA Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Audit Report to the Board. The audit was clean, and the financial statements were accurate and free from error. There were also no significant concerns with the organization's financial procedures, and no significant deficiencies or material weaknesses were identified. Board members expressed their appreciation to OCCA Director of Operations Katie Archambault for her work on the audit and OCCA's financials throughout the year.

National Legislative Summit

In February, community college leaders from across the country -- including a contingent from Oregon -- convened in Washington, D.C., for the Association of Community College Trustees' (ACCT) National Legislative Summit (NLS) — an annual event that amplifies the critical role of community colleges in shaping federal policy. With nearly 1,400 attendees, the summit provided a powerful platform for advocating on behalf of students and institutions nationwide.

Oregon was well represented, with board members, presidents, students, and college leaders from eleven institutions traveling to the nation's capital to engage in vital discussions with lawmakers. Participants met with members of the Oregon Congressional delegation to address key federal priorities, including support for short-term Pell Grants; solutions for food and housing insecurity; the taxation of Pell Grants, and the potential implications of recent Executive Orders affecting higher education. To read the full list of ACCT's federal priorities for the 119th Congress, please click [here](#).

A highlight of the trip was the participation of 11 community college students representing Clackamas, Lane, Linn-Benton, and Portland community colleges, who brought firsthand perspectives on the challenges and opportunities facing today's students. Their voices added essential depth to the conversations with legislators, reinforcing the real-world impact of policy decisions on Oregon's community colleges.

[Click here](#) to see the photos from the trip!

Upcoming Events & Trainings

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

- **Lunch & Learn Webinars**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) – Get registered for the March 27 OCCA Lunch and Learn on Artificial Intelligence (AI). AI is transforming education, workforce development, and institutional operations. As AI, especially Generative AI, continues to evolve, it presents both opportunities and challenges for higher education leaders. Join us for an OCCA Lunch and Learn session to explore how AI is shaping learning experiences, student success, and decision-making in community colleges. It will also address the broader implications of AI on workforce readiness, ethical considerations, and institutional strategy. Attendees will gain insights on how to proactively adapt to AI's impact and lead their institutions through this period of rapid technological change. Join presenter Saby Waraich, Chief Information Office/Dean of Technology at Clackamas Community College, for a thought-provoking discussion on the role of AI in shaping the future of community colleges.

Register for this and other Lunch & Learn webinars on the OCCA website: <https://occa17.com/lunchandlearn/>. You can also find recordings from past Lunch & Learn webinars on this page.

- **2025 All-Oregon Academic Team Luncheon – April 18, 2025**

The AOAT Luncheon honoring outstanding community college students is set for April 18, 2025, at Chemeketa Community College's Eola Center in Salem. This event recognizes high-achieving community college students who demonstrate academic excellence and

intellectual rigor combined with leadership and service that extends their education beyond the classroom to benefit society. Be on the lookout in early spring for details on how to register to attend this inspiring event.

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. The newsletter is published the first Friday of each month, *except for during a legislative session, at which time it becomes a weekly publication that comes out on Thursdays.*

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, 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.