

OCCA Update for College Boards – May 2025

Legislative Session Update: OCCA pushes legislators for \$920M for CCSF

Community colleges work for Oregon. That was the recurring message throughout OCCA's presentation advocating for \$920 million for the Community College Support Fund (CCSF) in SB 5525 in front of the Joint Ways & Means Subcommittee on Education on April 21 and 22. SB 5525 is the overall funding for the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) agency budget, which includes the CCSF.

OCCA Deputy Director John Wykoff presented on behalf of the colleges with data, testimonies, videos and information about how community colleges work for Oregon, students, the economy and communities. In addition to Wykoff, presidents, students and staff, as well as community partners from several colleges spoke of their experiences during the presentation. Legislators who serve on the Joint Ways & Means Subcommittee on Education were especially moved by the student speakers and praised OCCA for including them in the presentation. Legislators also said they were impressed and inspired by the overall presentation.

[Click here for OCCA's presentation](#)

[Click here for the recording link to the Monday, April 21, presentation](#)

[Click here for the recording link to the Tuesday, April 22, presentation](#)

Next, community college advocates and stakeholders had an opportunity to testify in person or remotely during the community college public hearing on SB 5525 on April 28. Twenty-seven people testified in support of funding OCCA's \$920 million budget request. Those who testified included presidents, board members, students, staff, faculty, and community partners. Thank you to everyone who showed their support for community colleges by testifying or submitting written testimony.

CALL TO ACTION – Community College Day of Action: May 13

Oregon's Community College Day of Action will take place on May 13. On this day, OCCA will encourage as many community college advocates and stakeholders to contact legislators through OCCA's One Click Politics platform to urge them to include \$920 million in the Community College Support Fund (CCSF). In the past two years, OCCA has held a similar Day of Action with great results. Board members, students, faculty, staff, presidents, alumni, community/industry partners and others are encouraged to submit messages. OCCA is working with the Campus Advocacy Coordinators (CACs) at each college to get as many people as possible to submit messages and possibly host events on campus. Stay tuned in the coming weeks for more details in the *OCCA Digest* newsletter.

AOAT Luncheon

Thank you to everyone who attended the All-Oregon Academic Team (AOAT) Luncheon honoring outstanding community college students on April 18 at Chemeketa Community College's Eola Center in Salem. This event recognized 55 high-achieving community college students, and

nearly 130 people attended. OCCA would also like to thank Representative Ricki Ruiz for attending and delivering an inspiring keynote speech to the students. In addition, OCCA would like to thank this year's featured student speakers for their willingness to share their stories: Maria Garcia Villalobos (Linn-Benton CC), Makayla Vick (Mt. Hood CC), Gina Ferguson (Portland CC) and Robert Shingleton (Treasure Valley CC).

Photos from the event are now available to view! [Click here for the album.](#)

UCC suffers heartbreaking losses

Our hearts are heavy and our sincere condolences go out to Umpqua Community College (UCC), which suffered heartbreaking losses April 18 when the UCC softball team was involved in a fatal accident on Highway 42 while traveling back from a double-header in Coos Bay. Head Coach Jami Strinz of Roseburg and student-athlete Kiley Jones of Nampa, Idaho, lost their lives in the crash, while several others were hospitalized with injuries. UCC President Rachel Pokrandt released the following statement following the crash:

“UCC hearts are breaking with this news, and we ask the community to keep the families and all of those affected in their thoughts and prayers. These individuals were cherished members of our campus—an exceptional student-athlete and a passionate and talented coach. Our entire community is grieving this tragic loss, and our heartfelt condolences are with their families, teammates, and loved ones. We ask that you keep them in your thoughts and offer privacy for the families during this difficult time. Support services are available to all students, faculty, and staff. Please join us in holding space for grief and reflection as we honor these individuals.”

OCCA's thoughts are with all who are impacted, and we stand united in offering our support wherever it may be needed.

OCCA mourns the death of Senator Aaron Woods

OCCA is mourning the passing of Senator Aaron Woods last Saturday morning following a battle with cancer. Senator Woods was not only a dedicated legislator and champion for education but also a longtime board member at Clackamas Community College, where his contributions left a lasting impact. Our thoughts are with his family, the legislature, and the Clackamas Community College community as we remember his legacy and service.

Please [click here](#) for the message from Clackamas Community College regarding Senator Woods' passing.

OCCA May 16 Board Meeting

The OCCA Board of Directors will hold their final meeting of the 2024-2025 academic year on Friday, May 16. The meeting will be hybrid, with those in person attending at Chemeketa Community College in Salem. The agenda will include board action on the nominees for the OCCA Executive Committee for 2025-2026. Nominees include:

- President – Andrew Speer, Board Member, Mt Hood Community College
- Vice-President – Pat Fahey, Board Member, Rogue Community College

- Secretary – Jessica Howard, President, Chemeketa Community College
- Treasurer – Rachel Pokrandt, President, Umpqua Community College
- At-Large (2024-26) - Kristin Adams, Board Member, Linn-Benton Community College
- At-Large (2025-27) – Susan Anderson, Board Member, Southwestern Oregon Community College
- Past President – Austin Felnagy, Board Member, Lane Community College

In addition to these officers and Executive Committee members, there will be two Ex-Officio members who serve on the Executive Committee by virtue of their positions:

- Oregon Presidents' Council Chair – Mark Browning, President, Blue Mountain Community College
- Office of Community Colleges and Workforce Development Director – Donna Lewelling

Upcoming Events & Education

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 the upcoming Lunch & Learn webinar on May 29.

What's Happening in Washington: A Federal Update with ACCT – Join us for an exclusive federal policy update featuring our national partners at the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT). This timely webinar will provide an in-depth look at recent developments in Washington, D.C., including insights into the federal budget process, newly issued executive orders, and emerging priorities impacting community colleges. This is your direct line to the latest federal updates —straight from our partners on the ground in the nation's capital. Don't miss this opportunity to gain critical context, ask questions, and better understand the evolving federal landscape shaping higher education.

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.

Community College Board Leadership & Governance Summit

Join us in Salem on Saturday, September 6, for OCCA's annual Community College Board Leadership & Governance Summit. This is a great opportunity for college board members to learn about OCCA and the statewide higher education structure, board member responsibilities, public meeting law, president/board member relationship, advocacy and community college funding, and hear from a panel of your experienced peers regarding best practices. The event is ideal for both new and current board members, as well as presidents. It will take place at Chemeketa Community College's Eola Center. Stay tuned this summer for more information.

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 is 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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The 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.