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OCCA announces 2025 Howard Cherry Banquet honorees

SALEM, Ore. – The Oregon Community College Association (OCCA) proudly announces the recipients of the 2025 Howard Cherry Awards, which are Oregon’s highest recognition for individuals whose leadership, advocacy, and service have made a lasting impact on community colleges and the students they serve. In addition, OCCA has announced the recipient of the Chuck Clemans Award, which is bestowed upon a community college board member who has shown exemplary dedication statewide.

- **Community College Advocate:** *Senator Janeen Sollman (D-Forest Grove)*
- **Community College Administrator:** *Dr. Tim Cook (President, Clackamas Community College)*
- **Community College Board Member:** *Ken Hector (Chemeketa Community College)*
- **Chuck Clemans Award:** *Diane McKeel (Retired, Mt. Hood Community College)*

The Howard Cherry Awards are named for the late Dr. Howard Cherry, a lifelong champion of education and community involvement. Dr. Cherry was a founding member of the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) and served as a trustee of the American Association of Community & Junior Colleges, leaving a legacy of advocacy that continues to inspire leaders today.

The Chuck Clemans Award is intended for current or former OCCA board members who have shown exceptional dedication to promoting and advocating for community colleges statewide. It is named after the late Dr. Charles A. “Chuck” Clemans, who was elected three times to the Clackamas Community College (CCC) Board of Directors and served two terms as president of OCCA, while lobbying Oregon legislators for many years on behalf of community colleges. This is not an honor that is awarded annually, but rather at the discretion of OCCA.

“These extraordinary individuals embody the very best of Oregon’s community college mission,” said Abby Lee, Executive Director of OCCA. “Through their leadership and advocacy, they have expanded opportunity, elevated student success, and strengthened the connection between colleges and the communities they serve. OCCA is honored to recognize their outstanding contributions and the positive, lasting impact they continue to make across our state.”

(MORE)

These outstanding individuals will be honored during the **Howard Cherry Awards Banquet** at OCCA's Annual Conference **November 6, 2025**, in Hood River, Ore., at the Best Western Plus Hood River Inn.

Community College Advocate:

Senator Janeen Sollman (D-Forest Grove) – Senator Sollman has represented Senate District 15 for over 30 years as a resident and community leader. She has spent more than 26 years with Vernier Science Education and previously served on the Hillsboro School Board. Her focus is on building strong partnerships between schools, businesses, and communities to strengthen Oregon's future workforce.

In the 2025 Legislative Session, Senator Sollman served on the Senate Education Committee and co-chaired the Joint Ways and Means Committee on Education, underscoring her commitment to student success and education.

Senator Sollman has been a steadfast champion for investments in workforce education, specifically in semiconductor workforce training. Senator Sollman's efforts in securing state investments have made it possible for community colleges to upgrade technology and strengthen industry partnerships, and ensure Oregon remains competitive for rapidly evolving workforce needs.

Community College Administrator:

Dr. Tim Cook (President, Clackamas Community College) – President Dr. Tim Cook has more than 35 years of experience working in higher education as an advisor, counselor, faculty member and administrator. A native of Oregon City, he joined Clackamas Community College as its president in 2018. A first-generation college student, President Cook understands how community colleges provide economic mobility for students and the communities where they live.

This summer, President Cook ran more than 1,400 miles over 50 days to all 17 of Oregon's community colleges to raise funds and awareness for student basic needs. He ran to highlight that community college students are the backbone of Oregon's workforce, and they deserve every opportunity to succeed.

In the words of U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, "Every so often, someone comes along who embodies not just leadership, but heart, and what I call the 'Oregon Way' of working together to lift people up. Clackamas Community College President Tim Cook is somebody who epitomizes all those qualities and more."

Community College Board Member:

Ken Hector (Chemeketa Community College) – Ken Hector has dedicated his career to public service, including 12 years on the Chemeketa Community College Board of Education. A strong advocate for student success and workforce development, Ken is the 2025 Pacific Region Trustee Leadership Award recipient from the American Association of Community College Trustees

(ACCT). A former mayor of Silverton and lifelong public servant, Ken has been a driving force in legislative advocacy at both the state and national levels. His efforts have been instrumental in advancing applied baccalaureate degrees for Oregon's community colleges, securing critical funding for infrastructure, and championing initiatives that support student success and workforce development. Ken lives and breathes the cause of community colleges in Oregon. He has twice served as Chair and Vice Chair of the Chemeketa Board of Education and served on the Chemeketa Foundation Board as a liaison to the Board of Education.

Through Ken's leadership, Chemeketa Community College has been able to connect more effectively with the community, and he played a pivotal role in the college's successful \$140 million bond campaign in 2024. The authentic camaraderie he brings to all his endeavors creates a welcoming and engaging space for everyone in the community.

Chuck Clemens Award:

Diane McKeel (Retired, Mt. Hood Community College) – Diane McKeel served on the Mt. Hood Community College Board of Education from 2017 to 2025. Throughout her time on the board, Diane has been a strong advocate for student access, equity, and affordability. Diane's leadership also extends beyond her role as a trustee. At the national level, Diane is an active participant in the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT), where she has presented at their national conferences.

Throughout her career, Diane has exemplified the best of public service and what it means to lead with compassion. Diane's leadership had a measurable impact on the college during the campaign for Mt. Hood Community College's historic \$136 million bond. This bond, the first passed in 50 years, and was the culmination of years of effort and leadership. Diane's tireless community advocacy on behalf of the college built the momentum for the bond's success.

The Oregon Presidents' Council – comprised of the presidents from all 17 Oregon community colleges – will also award the **Cam Preus Award for Extraordinary Commitment to Community Colleges** to Bruce Clemetsen, Vice President of Academic & Student Affairs at Oregon Coast Community College. This award is intended for a current or former employee of an Oregon community college with a proven track record of extraordinary commitment to student access and success, at least 15 years of service in the field, and significant positive impact within the Oregon community college sector. The award recognizes individuals whose work has demonstrated statewide reach. Dr. Cam Preus, now retired, was the director of Oregon Department of Community Colleges & Workforce Development (2000-2013), president of Blue Mountain Community College (2013-2018), and executive director of OCCA (2018-2021).

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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.