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OCCA Update for College Boards – October 2025

Governor's Agency Budget Message & Interim Legislative Days

Budget – On Sept. 16, Governor Tina Kotek issued a letter to state agency leaders signaling that Oregon faces a significant budget shortfall for the next two years. The legislature just approved a budget bill for the 2025-27 biennium in June, and already the state expects to be about \$327 million short of \$37.3 billion budgeted from the state general fund. This deficit is due in large part to expected impacts from the federal H.R. 1, the budget reconciliation bill the President signed into law on July 1. As a result, the Governor directed agencies to immediately scale back spending and noted that budget reductions should be expected during the 2026 short legislative session. While these cuts will immediately require action by state agencies, HECC Director Ben Cannon has indicated that the reductions to the HECC operational budget will not impact the Community College Support Fund (CCSF) at this time.

Given that Oregon expects additional budget impacts due to changes in federal policy as H.R. 1 is fully implemented, OCCA continues to prepare for the short session and will intensify our advocacy to protect the Community College Support Fund (CCSF) to the greatest extent possible. Preserving the CCSF is essential to ensuring our colleges can continue to serve students and support Oregon's workforce and communities during challenging fiscal times.

Interim Legislative Days – Interim Legislative Days will take place at the Capitol September 29-30 and October 1. OCCA has been asked by both the Senate and House Education committees to present at an informational hearing during that time to discuss the effects on financial aid by the federal H.R.- 1. Both committees have expressed deep concerns about some of the impacts of the federal law on Oregon's colleges and universities. OCCA plans to include a community college financial aid director to provide these details, as well as a president to address the broader impacts of the law on colleges. No date/time has yet been set for this informational hearing. Be sure to read the October 2 *OCCA Digest* for a recap.

OCCA Annual Conference Announces Keynotes – Register Now!

[Registration](#) for the 2025 OCCA Annual Conference Nov. 5-7 in Hood River is now open! This year's theme is "Winds of Opportunity", setting the stage for an energizing three-day event packed with valuable keynote sessions, engaging workshops, and meaningful networking opportunities. This year's conference will explore how we navigate, lead, and grow in a world shaped by evolving challenges and new possibilities.

- **Keynotes**

OCCA is also excited to announce the two keynote speakers, along with the Welcome Dinner speaker, for the conference:

- **Dr. Tim Cook**, President of Clackamas Community College (CCC), along with CCC Executive Director of College Relations Lori Hall, CCC Foundation Executive Director Debra Mason, CCC Director of College Advancement Haley Stupasky, and Tim's wife Paddy Cook will discuss the success of the Running for Oregon Community College Students (ROCCS) campaign. Dr. Cook completed a 1,500-

mile marathon run across Oregon over the summer with stops at each of the state's 17 community colleges and to raise awareness for student basic needs.

- [Dr. Demetri L. Morgan](#), Associate Professor at the University of Michigan, focuses on how higher education shapes democracy through student activism, governance, and the organizational dynamics that drive institutional change. His work offers powerful insights into the evolving role of colleges and universities.
- **Jee Hang Lee**, president and CEO of the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT). Jee Hang provides national leadership to the over 500 governing boards who oversee the majority of community colleges throughout the United States and internationally. He will speak about the role of board members and provide a brief federal update.
- [Helen and Dave Edwards](#), co-founders of the Artificiality Institute, explore how humans and AI co-evolve, not just for efficiency, but for meaning. With deep experience in tech, leadership, and research, they bring a unique perspective on human-AI symbiosis and the future of intelligence.

- Breakout Sessions

OCCA has announced a diverse lineup of breakout sessions led by community college colleagues and partners from across the state. Sessions relate to the following tracks: Innovation, Equitable Career Pathways, Board Equity, Student Achievement, Community Engagement, and Policy & Procedure. Check out the full line-up on OCCA's Conference web page, <https://occa17.com/conference/>.

- Howard Cherry Awards Banquet

OCCA has announced the winners of the annual Howard Cherry Awards, as well as two additional awardees who will all be honored during the Howard Cherry Awards Banquet on November 6 during the conference. The Banquet is included with your conference registration and additional guest tickets are also available for purchase. Congratulations to the 2025 winners – the press release with details can be found on OCCA's [website](#):

- **Chuck Clemans Award** – Diane McKeel, Board Member, Mt. Hood CC
- **Howard Cherry Outstanding Administrator** – Dr. Tim Cook, President, Clackamas CC
- **Howard Cherry Outstanding Board Member** – Ken Hector, Board Member, Chemeketa CC
- **Howard Cherry Outstanding Advocate** – Senator Janeen Sollman (D-Forest Grove)
- **Cam Preus Award** (awarded by the Oregon Presidents' Council)– Dr. Bruce Clemetsen, VP of Academic & Student Affairs, Oregon Coast CC
- Dedicated Service Awards

▪ Pat Fahey Rogue CC 8 Years ▪ Roger Stokes Rogue CC 8 Years	▪ Betsy McMahon Tillamook Bay CC 8 Years ▪ Mary Faith Bell Tillamook Bay CC 12 Years
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Commented [KA1]: Technically, these awards are for 2024-25 - so not sure if we want to reference the retired part. She is now, so can go either way.



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Board Leadership & Governance Summit – Thank You!

The 2025 Board Leadership and Development Summit (formerly known as OCCA Board Training) on Saturday, September 6, was a great success. More than 40 attendees came to the Chemeketa Eola Center in Salem, including nine newly elected board members. Highlights of the day included a presentation on accreditation and governance from Northwest Commission on Colleges & Universities (NWCCU) President Selena Grace, a visit from Oregon Senator Lew Frederick, and a panel of board members sharing their wisdom and experience with the attendees. The Summit ended with an Oregon Government & Ethics Commission (OGE) certified training on Public Meetings Law, given by OCCA Senior Policy Advisor & General Counsel Karen Smith. Thank you to all who took the time to attend!

First Lunch & Learn Webinar of 2025-26 Set For October 30

OCCA will launch its third year of the Lunch & Learn Webinar Series on October 30, with a session on PERS. PERS is often in the news, yet it is generally not well understood. You've learned the basics of PERS at recent OCCA conferences, so we've invited Carol Samuels and Brendan Watkins from Piper Sandler & Co. to lead this Lunch and Learn to share some hot topics related to PERS that could impact community college budgets in the coming years. PERS rates are set for the 2025-27 biennium, but changes are coming to the administration of "side accounts" which could have direct implications for community colleges. These "PERS gurus" always make the topic of PERS as exciting as possible, and we encourage board members, presidents, and college business officers to attend this session to learn more about how these hot topics may impact 2027-29 rates.

All Lunch & Learn webinars are included with your OCCA membership and will take place on the last Thursday of each month (except December) through June. To register, visit <https://occa17.com/lunchandlearn/>.

Public Meeting Minute – Prohibited Serial Communications

Each month, OCCA Senior Policy Advisor & General Counsel Karen Smith will provide guidance for boards related to public meetings law. This month's Public Meeting Minute focuses on prohibited serial communications.

Oregon Public Meetings Law requires governing bodies to deliberate and decide matters in open public meetings. The Oregon Government Ethics Commission (OGE) recently released a [Frequently Asked Questions](#) resource titled "Prohibited Serial Communications" to help governing bodies, like community college boards of education, navigate when a quorum of the board might be engaged in serial conversations that may violate Public Meetings Law. It is important for all community college board members to understand the law and rules around serial communications.

OGE administrative rules effective October 1, 2024, state that a quorum of the board shall not use a series of communications of any kind, directly or through intermediaries, for the purpose of



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deliberating or deciding on any matter that is within the jurisdiction of the governing body outside a meeting conducted in compliance with Public Meetings Law. As a reminder, a quorum of a community college board of education is four (4) board members. Serial communications may include in-person conversations; telephone calls; videoconferencing (like Zoom or FaceTime); written communications including email, text, and other written electronic communications; and using intermediaries to convey information among board members on matters that may come before the board. Prohibited communications among a quorum of the board can occur outside a public meeting as well as during a public meeting if a quorum of the board is discussing matters outside the public's view such as in a private text group.

As an OCCA best practice, we recommend that you avoid communicating the views of other board members to fellow board members outside a properly noticed public meeting. Also, ensure that the board engages in deliberation and discussion in full in all public meetings. Please do not hesitate to contact OCCA's Senior Policy Advisor & General Counsel Karen Smith if you have any questions about prohibited serial conversations.

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 Thursday of each month, *except 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.