

OCCA Update for College Boards – November 2025

OCCA Conference

The OCCA Conference is set for November 5-7 in Hood River, with more than 150 people registered to attend. The conference, which has the theme “Winds of Opportunity”, will feature four keynote speakers:

- Clackamas Community College President **Dr. Tim Cook** will highlight his epic Running for Oregon Community College Students (ROCCS) campaign during the Welcome Dinner;
- Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) President **Jee Hang Lee** will offer a federal update on key issues impacting colleges today, along with insights into how trustees can amplify local stories, elevate student and community voices, and lead with impact;
- **Dr. Demitri Morgan**, Associate Professor at the University of Michigan, will focus on how higher education shapes democracy through student activism, governance, and the organizational dynamics that drive institutional change; and
- **Helen and Dave Edwards**, founders of the Artificiality Institute, will explore how humans and AI co-evolve, not just for efficiency, but for meaning.

The popular **Student Voices Panel** will also return, as will a **legislative panel** and a variety of impactful and relevant breakout sessions. Learn more at:
<https://www.occa17.com/conference/>.

OCCA will offer a pre-conference session at the OCCA Annual Conference on November 5 on Public Meetings Law, which meets the new Oregon Government Ethics Commission (OGEC) mandatory training requirements for all board members. The session will be facilitated by OCCA Senior Policy Advisor & General Counsel Karen Smith. Her presentation was approved by OGEC to meet the requirements for board members. This training was originally provided during the OCCA Board Governance & Leadership Summit in September and is being offered again at the OCCA Conference as a pre-conference session so that board members unable to attend the Summit have another opportunity to complete the required training.

Register Now: PERS Lunch & Learn

Join fellow Oregon community college leaders for a timely Lunch & Learn session on Nov. 20 focused on the fiscal challenges ahead in the 2026 Legislative Session. This briefing will explore the key budgetary pressures facing the state and what they might mean for community college funding. Participants will gain insights into the legislative outlook (what we know so far) and strategic steps colleges can take now to advocate effectively and prepare for possible impacts. Let's get informed, aligned, and ready to lead through what's next.

A recording of the session will be posted on the OCCA website for viewing later if you miss the live webinar. 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/>.

Budget Update & Revenue Forecast

The next Oregon revenue forecast is set to be released on November 19. The September 2025 state Economic and Revenue Forecast projected a significant decline in revenues. General Fund revenues for 2025–27 are expected to drop by about \$888.2 million. Lottery revenues are also expected to fall by nearly 6%, leaving a \$39 million shortfall in the Economic Development Fund. As a result, the Joint Committee on Ways and Means anticipates that the 2025-27 budget will need to be rebalanced during the 2026 legislative session.

For higher education, the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) has already reduced administrative spending and is preparing potential cuts across nearly all funding areas, including the Community College Support Fund (CCSF), Public University Support Fund (PUSF), OHSU support, and other state programs. OCCA has worked with all 17 colleges to collect information on how these reductions could impact staffing, programs, and students to help inform HECC.

The November 19 revenue forecast will provide a clearer picture of the state's budget outlook. In the meantime, OCCA is preparing for the February 2026 short legislative session and will continue to advocate strongly to protect the CCSF, which is essential for maintaining access, supporting students, and sustaining Oregon's workforce and communities during uncertain times.

Coming in December: OCCA Board Meeting

OCCA's Board of Directors will meet virtually on Friday, December 5. The Board is expected to vote on proposed changes to the OCCA policies and bylaws, of which they had a first reading during their October meeting. **OCCA is seeking feedback from college boards on these proposed revisions.**

Many of the suggested revisions are intended to clarify and make language more consistent or to update and align with new Oregon laws. Other recommended changes include:

- *OCCA Standing Committees* – These proposed changes are to help make operations more efficient. The recommendation is to reduce the number of committees from seven to five. The Executive Committee recommends removing the Student Success Advisory Committee as a standing committee as the Success Center is now fully incorporated into OCCA operations. The OCCA Executive Committee also recommends removing the Howard Cherry Committee as a standing committee and moving it under the Awards section of the OCCA Policies. The Board policies would be updated to reflect the process of choosing committee members to select the winners from the submitted nominations. For the five remaining committees, recommendations include revising the policy language to ensure consistency in how committee chairs are selected and how the number and composition of committee members are determined.
- *Values Statement Review* – It is proposed that OCCA align the review schedule for its values statement with the Strategic Priorities & Objectives, conducting both reviews at least every six years or once every three biennia.

- *OCCA Board Forum* – The Executive Committee recommends removing the separate reference to the OCCA Board Forum and instead incorporating time for informal connection into quarterly board meetings. This ensures all members have space to build relationships and share ideas within the meeting itself.
- *Executive Director Duties* – Updates to the language in policies and bylaws regarding the duties of the Executive Director are needed to reflect the current board-adopted job description.
- *Financial Management* – It is proposed that language regarding financial management at OCCA be updated to reflect current practices by updating language regarding membership dues, contingency fund, and capital contingency fund. The recommendations also simplify the check signing process by replacing paper checks with electronic ones. Approval from the OCCA Treasurer or President will still be required, but physical signatures would no longer be necessary.

Public Meeting Minute – What is the Purpose of Oregon Public Meetings Law?

Each month, OCCA Senior Policy Advisor & General Counsel Karen Smith will provide guidance for boards related to public meetings law.

Last month's Public Meetings Law Minute focused on prohibited serial communications between a quorum of board members. This month I want to take a step back and review the intent of the law and why board members should comply with it. Oregon's Public Meetings Law was designed for openness and transparency so that the public is aware of the deliberations and decisions of governing bodies of public bodies. This includes an awareness of the information governing bodies use in their deliberations and when making decisions. As a reminder, the governing body of a community college is the board of education. The public body is the community college district.

It is the intent of Oregon's Public Meetings Law that decisions of governing bodies "be arrived at openly" (ORS 192.620). All the legal requirements of the law flow from this intention, and that includes notice, minutes and recording requirements, and public accessibility requirements. These requirements apply to regular meetings, special meetings, emergency meetings, executive sessions, and work sessions/ workshops involving a quorum of the board.

In 2023, the Legislature granted the Oregon Government Ethics Commission (OGE) expanded authority to enforce the requirements of Oregon Public Meetings Law. Prior to this, the law was enforced only through the filing of a lawsuit in Oregon Circuit Court. OGE now has the power to enforce all aspects of the law and board members, not the public body, are personally liable for any violations of the law. If a violation is found, OGE can issue a letter of education or civil penalties of up to \$1,000 against each board member. Oregon law prohibits the public body from paying or indemnifying board members for any civil penalties imposed.

Next month, I'll share more about the new Public Meetings Law grievance and complaint process.

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.