

OCCA Board of Directors Meeting Takeaways – October 3, 2025

On Friday, October 3, 2025, the OCCA Board met for its first quarterly meeting of 2025-2026. The hybrid meeting was held at Clackamas Community College in Oregon City and on Zoom for those joining remotely. Here are some takeaways from the meeting that you are encouraged to share with your local community college board members during your respective monthly college board meetings. OCCA hopes these takeaways will help guide your conversations at your college board meetings and elicit feedback, engagement and discussion.

Board Member Roles & Responsibilities

OCCA Board President Andrew Speer and Executive Director Abby Lee welcomed seven new members to the OCCA Board, which is composed of all 17 community college presidents and 17 elected college board members – one from each college. Speer and Lee provided an orientation covering board roles and responsibilities, introduced the OCCA staff, and shared key resources including the annual calendar and board directory. Experienced board members also offered guidance, encouraging OCCA board members to share OCCA updates, statewide issues, and legislative developments with their respective college boards. This practice not only keeps local boards informed but also creates a channel for feedback, questions, and concerns to flow back to OCCA. Members were also encouraged to participate in OCCA trainings and events throughout the year to stay engaged and informed.

Revisions to OCCA Board Bylaws & Policies – First Reading (feedback requested)

The Board heard from OCCA Senior Policy Advisor/General Counsel Karen Smith regarding proposed revisions to OCCA's board policies. This was a first reading, and the proposed revisions will be brought back to the Board in December for adoption. *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.

Board Appoints 2025-2026 Committee Members

The Board unanimously approved the appointment of members to OCCA standing committees for 2025-2026.

The Board approved the slate of nominees for OCCA standing committees, including the Budget, Legislative, Member Services, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI), and Nominating committees. Updated membership can be found on the OCCA website:
<https://occa17.com/about/governance/occa-committees/>.

OCCA 2025 State of the Association

OCCA Communications Director Casey White-Zollman presented the 2025 OCCA State of the Association report. The report provides an overview of OCCA activities, initiatives, outreach, and support to board members over the course of the academic year. Each section of the report – advocacy, student success, board development, partnerships, and association activities – is connected to an OCCA Board-approved Strategic Priority. OCCA Executive Director Abby Lee will provide printed copies to board members later this year, but the report can also be found on OCCA's website: <https://occa17.com/about/>.

Running for Oregon Community College Students (ROCCS) Presentation

Clackamas Community College President Dr. Tim Cook shared highlights from the ROCCS campaign, his 1,500-mile run across Oregon to visit all 17 community colleges and raise awareness for student basic needs. Over 52 days, he completed 53 marathons, raised \$177,295 from 850 donors across 25 states, and earned national recognition – including a shout-out from U.S. Senator Ron Wyden and more than 100 media interviews. Dr. Cook will deliver the Opening Keynote at the OCCA Annual Conference on November 5 and plans to write a book about the journey.

Interim Legislative Update

Interim Legislative Days took place September 29-October 1 at the Capitol in Salem. OCCA was asked by both the interim Senate and House education committees to provide information about the impacts of H.R.1, also known as the federal "Big Beautiful Bill," on higher education in Oregon. OCCA coordinated with Peter Goss, Portland Community College's Dean of Financial Aid & Veterans' Benefits, who testified at the informational hearings last week about the bill's impact on student financial aid. Goss spoke at both the Senate Education Committee on Monday and the House Education Committee Wednesday morning alongside other higher education and K12 officials.

State Budget – On September 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 4, 2025. 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. However, while the goal is to minimize any impact to the CCSF, it's currently unclear if cuts will be completely unavoidable.

As Oregon anticipates further budget impacts from the full implementation of H.R. 1, OCCA is actively preparing for the upcoming short legislative session and will strengthen its advocacy efforts to protect the CCSF. Preserving the CCSF is critical to helping colleges continue their mission of serving students and supporting Oregon's workforce and communities, especially in times of fiscal uncertainty.

Upcoming Events

OCCA Lunch & Learn Webinars – October 30, 2025

OCCA will kick off the third year of its Lunch & Learn Webinar Series on October 30 with a session focused on PERS. Carol Samuels and Brendan Watkins of Piper Sandler & Co. will discuss upcoming changes to PERS "side accounts" and their potential impact on community college budgets. While rates are set for 2025–27, this session will help board members, presidents, and business officers prepare for what may affect 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/>.

2025 OCCA Annual Conference – November 5-7, 2025, Hood River, OR

Registration is still open for the 2025 OCCA Annual Conference, set for November 5-7 at the Best Western Plus Hood River Inn in the beautiful Columbia River Gorge. Don't miss this wonderful learning and networking opportunity with four keynote speakers, a wide variety of breakout sessions, a legislative panel, and the annual Howard Cherry Banquet. The conference also marks the return of the popular Student Voices Panel, a highlight for many attendees. This year's conference theme is "Winds of Opportunity" which reflects both the challenges and the possibilities ahead as Oregon's community colleges continue to adapt and innovate in a rapidly changing world. OCCA is also offering a 2-hour pre-conference session on Oregon Public Meetings Law that meets the Oregon Government Ethics Commission's (OGE) mandatory training requirements for all governing board members.

Early bird registration for the conference closes October 10, while regular registration will close on October 17. Learn about the conference schedule, registration and more on the OCCA website: <https://occa17.com/conference/>.

Have a question about any of this information or other community college issues? Want to learn how to get more involved with the OCCA Board? Contact OCCA staff at occa@occa17.com or visit www.occa17.com. Be sure to also follow us on Facebook @OregonCommunityCollegeAssociation and on Twitter @ORCommColleges and subscribe to the OCCA Digest e-newsletter on our website.