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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Oregon community colleges see fourth year of continued enrollment growth

SALEM, Ore. – Oregon’s community colleges are experiencing strong enrollment growth this fall. Fourth-week data released Nov. 20 by the state’s Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) shows continued increases in both overall headcount and Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) enrollment at most colleges across the state, underscoring growing demand and momentum across Oregon’s community college system.

According to HECC’s report, total community college headcount climbed to 94,898 students, marking a 3.7 percent increase over fall 2024. FTE enrollment also rose to 22,671 students, a 3.5 percent gain from the same point last year.

Enrollment has been climbing steadily since 2022, and while statewide it has not yet reached pre-pandemic levels, with headcount still 14.5 percent lower and FTE down 11.2 percent compared to fall 2019, the pace of recovery is accelerating. Nationally, community colleges saw the steepest enrollment declines of any sector of higher education reflecting during the pandemic due to a combination of factors, including the high proportion of students who are working adults juggling jobs with childcare, which was severely disrupted by the pandemic.

It is important to note that headcount provides the most accurate measure of enrollment at Oregon’s community colleges. According to HECC, in 2023–24, 59 percent of students were enrolled part-time. This reflects the reality that many community college students balance education with significant responsibilities and barriers, including financial hardship, transportation challenges, unmet basic needs, childcare obligations, and employment, often working one or more jobs to support themselves and their families.

“Rising enrollment highlights the essential role community colleges play in powering Oregon’s workforce,” said Dr. Abby Lee, Executive Director of the Oregon Community College Association (OCCA). “Students are choosing pathways that lead to strong careers, and our colleges are committed to meeting that demand with accessible, high-quality programs that prepare Oregonians for the opportunities ahead.”

While the state’s latest (Nov. 19) revenue forecast indicates a smaller potential for

significant statewide budget cuts mid-biennium, OCCA continues to advocate for the resources needed to sustain this momentum, particularly to the Community College Support Fund (CCSF). Stable and adequate funding is essential for supporting increasing enrollment, expanding CTE capacity, and ensuring that community colleges can continue to deliver high-quality career training and transfer pathways for all Oregonians.

Oregon's community colleges are a cornerstone of the state's economic vitality, and the right investment now will help drive Oregon's growth and opportunity for years to come. Community colleges WORK for Oregon.

HECC 4th Week Enrollment Report: <https://www.oregon.gov/highered/strategy-research/Documents/Featured-Data/Fall-4th-week-2025-web.pdf>

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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.