

Student Talking Points

Background

The Legislature is considering a 5% mid-biennium cut that would remove tens of millions of dollars statewide over the two-year budget cycle. Students feel these cuts directly: in class availability, rising costs, and reduced access to the supports that help us stay enrolled.

Students Choose Community College to Build Their Futures

Oregon's community colleges serve more students than any other higher education sector in the state.

Students choose community colleges for many different reasons, including affordability, flexibility, proximity to home, smaller class sizes, supportive environments, and clear pathways into high-demand careers. Many choose community colleges because these institutions make it possible to balance school with work, parenting, caregiving, or returning to education after a break.

Community college students are focused on their goals and futures. Students enroll because they are:

- Working toward stable, high-demand careers
- Planning to transfer to a university
- Supporting children or family members while in school
- Returning to education to advance or change careers
- Seeking financial stability and long-term opportunity

Community colleges are designed to support these aspirations with programs aligned to Oregon's workforce needs and flexible structures that fit real life.

(Talk about your personal goals and what you hope your education will help you achieve.)

What Budget Cuts Mean for Students

A 5% mid-biennium cut would affect students in ways that directly interfere with our ability to complete our programs:

- Fewer course sections, making it harder to get required classes
- Longer waitlists for high-demand CTE programs
- Reduced access to advising, tutoring, childcare, mental health services, and food pantries
- Higher tuition or fees that put education out of reach
- Longer time to degree completion and increased financial strain

At Portland Community College alone, the potential two-year reduction exceeds \$15 million—demonstrating how deeply these cuts could affect instruction and student supports.

Students Already Face High Levels of Basic-Needs Insecurity

National and local research from the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice shows that many community college students struggle to meet basic needs while pursuing their education.

- 41% of students nationwide are food insecure
- 48% are housing insecure
- 14% experience homelessness in a given year

At Portland Community College:

- 41% of surveyed students were food insecure
- 56% were housing insecure
- 19% experienced homelessness in the past year
- 64% experienced at least one basic-needs insecurity

These numbers describe real barriers students face while trying to complete their education.

(Insert an example of a time when food, housing, transportation, or work made school more difficult.)

How To Tell Your Story Effectively

Your lived experience is your most powerful advocacy tool. A simple structure works best:

****A. Introduce Yourself****

- Name, program, and college
- Why you chose community college

(Insert your reason.)

****B. Describe What You're Balancing****

- Work, caregiving, housing or food costs, transportation, or textbooks

(Share a real example.)

****C. Connect Cuts to Your Life****

- Explain how fewer classes, fewer supports, or higher costs would affect you

(Insert your personal impact.)

****D. Share Your Goals****

- What you hope to achieve for your future, family, or community

****E. Make a Clear Ask****

Ask legislators to protect and invest in community colleges so students can complete their programs and contribute to Oregon's workforce.