

OCCA Board of Directors Meeting Takeaways – December 5, 2025

On Friday, December 5, 2025, the OCCA Board met virtually for its second quarterly meeting of 2025-2026. 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 Development: NWCCU

Selena Grace, President of the Northwest Commission on Colleges & Universities (NWCCU), provided board members with some guidance for running effective and efficient meetings with best-practices for decision-making, public engagement and transparency, and board culture and conduct. She also spoke about potential red flags for boards to avoid. She encouraged boards to work together to create a professional culture and to stay focused on their role on policy and not to reach into college operations that are typically outside the board's responsibilities. Her presentation is attached.

Revisions to OCCA Board Bylaws & Policies – Second Reading & Approval

The OCCA Board unanimously approved the revisions to the OCCA Bylaws & Board Policies. The Board heard from OCCA Senior Policy Advisor/General Counsel Karen Smith regarding proposed revisions to OCCA's board policies. This was a second reading and required board approval.

As part of the regular review of its Bylaws and Board Policies (as outlined in Goal 3 of the OCCA Board Strategic Priorities and Objectives), OCCA identified several proposed revisions. The revisions include technical changes to reflect current practices, changes to ensure consistency and efficiency in operations, and compliance with changes to Oregon law. In addition, OCCA's Executive Committee recommended a few changes to streamline OCCA committees and reduce unnecessary meetings. The Board discussed the proposed revisions during its October 3 meeting, and Board members had the opportunity to share feedback with staff. No comments were received. The Bylaws and Board Policies have since been updated on the OCCA website: <https://occa17.com/about/governance/policies-bylaws/>

2026 OCCA Legislative Priorities

The Board unanimously approved the association's priorities for the 2026 Legislative Session. The OCCA Legislative Committee made recommendations to the full Board for OCCA's legislative priorities for the 2026 short legislative session. The 2026 OCCA Legislative Priorities outline the top three priorities for the session, as well as six additional issues OCCA is actively monitoring. These topics reflect emerging developments from state agencies, legislative offices, and stakeholder groups. OCCA Executive Director Abby Lee reminded the Board that the Priorities document is a living one, with the potential for changes as the session nears.

Top Priorities

1. Protecting the Community College Support Fund (CCSF) from a 5% budget reduction
2. Preserving access to the Oregon Promise program
3. Protecting Career Pathways programs from elimination

Issues to Monitor & Evaluate

1. Oregon Higher Education Coordination Act of 2026 (OHECA 2026)
2. Associated Students of the University of Oregon (ASUO) proposal on student fee autonomy
3. Dual credit instructor qualifications and parity
4. Public meetings laws and Oregon Government Ethics Commission (OGEC) rule on meals
5. Short-Term Workforce Pell: 2026 implementation update
6. Bachelor of Applied Science in Education: HECC approval process

Conference Recap & Feedback

OCCA Director of Operations Katie Archambault briefly reviewed the OCCA Conference, which was held Nov. 5-7 in Hood River. She asked the Board to provide feedback on the conference and suggestions for next year. Overall feedback was positive, particularly on the sessions, food and location. Board members are encouraged to take the conference feedback survey to provide further guidance to the OCCA Member Services Committee, which provides guidance on future events. The survey can be accessed here:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/F5CJQSW>

Federal Issues Update: Oregon Department of Justice

OCCA Senior Policy Advisor/General Counsel Karen Smith provided an update on the end of the federal government shutdown and how federal actions are impacting community colleges. The Board also heard an update regarding federal issues and their impact on Oregon from Dustin Buehler, special counsel in the Office of the Attorney General at the Oregon Department of Justice. His presentation to the Board stemmed from outreach by Karen, who has worked to increase collaboration on guidance and resources to higher education institutions from the Oregon Department of Justice.

Dustin mentioned Oregon is part of a multi-state coalition of like-minded states that has filed 48 lawsuits against many of the federal government's decisions and actions. These lawsuits, to date, have restored approximately \$4.5 billion of federal funding the federal government has tried to cut off. He emphasized the importance of the Department of Justice staying connected to entities in Oregon, such as the community colleges. Actions from the federal government are actions across the board which impact many entities. He said there's a lot more work to be done, especially after the holidays, so partnering with the colleges and other education institutions is important. He said there's a lot the DOJ and colleges can learn from each other based on what they're experiencing.

2027-29 Budget Development

Donna Lewelling, Director of the HECC Office of Community College & Workforce Development (CCWD), noted the budget development process has started. OCCA will begin the process to develop the combined budget request for the 2027 Legislative Session. This collaborative process involves college presidents, board members, and administrators working together to establish the Current Service Level (CSL) for the Community College Support Fund (CCSF). In partnership with the OCCA Legislative Committee, the process also identifies any additional budget requests to carry forward into 2027.

The timeline for this process begins in December because OCCA typically presents its request to the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) Funding and Achievement subcommittee in April, with all materials due in March. The Commission reviews the full HECC budget, including community colleges, universities, financial aid, and other higher education programs in June, and must submit its Agency Recommended Budget to the Governor by September 2026.

Upcoming Events

OCCA Lunch & Learn Webinars – January 22, 2026

In October, OCCA hosted a Lunch and Learn webinar featuring Carol Samuels and Brendan Watkins of Piper Sandler & Co. to discuss what board members need to know about Oregon's Public Employees Retirement System (PERS). The session highlighted upcoming rate changes for the remainder of the 2025-27 biennium and the implications of side account adjustments for community college budgets.

The November Lunch and Learn provided an overview of Oregon's 2026 budget landscape. Presenters included Kim To from the Legislative Services Office, Kyle Thomas from HECC, and OCCA Deputy Director John Wykoff. They outlined key fiscal pressures and the legislative budget outlook.

Next up is a Lunch and Learn on January 22, which will highlight 2026 Legislative Session Advocacy. Registration for this session opens soon. 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/>.

National Legislative Summit – February 8-11, 2026

The ACCT National Legislative Summit will take place Feb. 8-11, 2026, in Washington, DC. OCCA will coordinate visits on Capitol Hill with Oregon's Congressional delegation and the attending community college representatives from Oregon. Contact Katie Archambault, katie@occa17.com, with questions.

CTE Day at the Capitol – February 18, 2026

After a seven-year hiatus (due to COVID-19 and then construction at the Capitol), an in-person

community college CTE Day will return to the state capitol on February 18, 2026. OCCA is working in collaboration with the Campus Advocacy Coordinators (CACs) and CTE deans at each of the colleges to try to have all colleges represented at the capital to feature one of their CTE programs. This event is an opportunity for legislators and their staff, as well as members of the public, to see the wide variety of specialized CTE programs Oregon community colleges offer to support their local workforce and industries. The event will feature demonstrations and opportunities for hands-on experiences, with students, faculty and staff on hand to talk with legislators. More details will be released in the new year.

2026 All-Oregon Academic Team Luncheon – April 17, 2026

The 2026 All-Oregon Academic Team (AOAT) Luncheon will take place on Friday, April 17, 2026, at Chemeketa Community College's Eola Center in Salem. Registration for this exciting and inspiring event will open in the spring. The luncheon honors students from all 17 colleges who have made remarkable achievements in and out of the classroom, often overcoming challenging obstacles. The event's keynote speaker and featured student speakers will be announced in the spring.

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, on Twitter @ORCommColleges, and on LinkedIn @oregon-community-college-association and subscribe to the OCCA Digest e-newsletter on our website.