

## OCCA Update for College Boards – February 2026

### **2026 Legislative Session Begins**

The 2026 Legislative Session began on February 2 and must end by March 9. OCCA is monitoring a variety of bills, including ones related to notifications regarding ICE on or near campus and community college board governance.

The OCCA Board approved legislative priorities for the 2026 short legislative session at its December meeting. 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. The Priorities document is a living one, with the potential for changes as the session continues.

#### **Top Priorities**

1. Protecting the Community College Support Fund (CCSF) from budget reductions.
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 proposal (OHECA 2026)
2. Associated Students of the University of Oregon (ASUO) proposal on student fee autonomy
3. Public Meetings Law and Oregon Government Ethics Commission (OGEC) rule on meals & serial communications
4. Short-Term Workforce Pell: 2026 implementation update
5. Bachelor of Applied Science in Education: HECC approval process

[\*\*Click here\*\*](#) to view additional details on each legislative priority.

#### **BOARD MEMBER ACTION:**

- **Subscribe to and read the OCCA *Digest* e-newsletter**, which will be published each Thursday during the Legislative Session (and on the first Thursday of the month during the interim). The *Digest* will provide a legislative update each week, as well as a list of upcoming hearings and opportunities for advocacy.
- **Utilize the OCCA Advocacy Toolkit** for the 2026 Legislative Session for resources to be an effective community college advocate. The toolkit can be found on OCCA's website: <https://occa17.com/advocacy-toolkit/>
- **Review the January 29 OCCA Lunch & Learn recording** from the session on Advocacy for the 2026 Legislative Session. Access this recording and all other past Lunch & Learn sessions on OCCA's website: <https://occa17.com/lunchandlearn/>

### **CTE Month & CTE/Lobby Day Breakfast February 18**

February is National CTE Month. OCCA and the colleges will highlight Career & Technical Education (CTE) programs all month long on social media. In addition, OCCA will host CTE Day at the Capitol in Salem on **February 18**. The event will take place in the East Galleria at the Capitol

building, with several colleges set to provide displays and demonstrations related to the various CTE programs offered around the state. Thank you to the culinary program at Central Oregon Community College for providing the pastries! Board members are invited to attend the event, which also serves as Community College Lobby Day at the Capitol. Check with your president and Campus Advocacy Coordinators (CACs) to find out if your college has meetings scheduled with legislators that day. Board members are also invited to start the day off with a breakfast courtesy of OCCA at the Willamette University Goudy Commons (across the street from the Capitol). This is an opportunity to gather prior to the start of CTE/Lobby Day, meet legislators, and have a great meal!

**BOARD MEMBER ACTION:**

- **Check out OCCA and your college's posts on social media** throughout February to learn more about CTE programs.
- **Attend CTE Day/Lobby Day** at the Capitol on February 18, along with the **breakfast**.

**Coming in February: OCCA Board Meeting**

OCCA's Board of Directors will meet virtually on **Friday, February 6**. The Board is expected to vote on proposed positions on legislative concepts/bills as recommended by the Legislative Committee, as well as vote on updated OCCA standing committee appointments. In addition, the Board will have a first reading of the nominations for OCCA officers and Executive Committee members for 2026-27. The Board is also expected to hear from OCCA's auditors at = REDW Advisors & CPAs on the 2024-25 audit.

**Public Meeting Minute – Grievance and Complaint Process for Board Violations of Oregon Public Meetings Law**

*Each month, OCCA Senior Policy Advisor & General Counsel Karen Smith will provide guidance for boards related to Oregon Public Meetings Law.*

In 2023, the Oregon Legislature passed HB 2805, a bill which included several changes to Oregon Public Meetings Law and provided new authority to the Oregon Government Ethics Commission (OGEC) to enforce violations of public meetings law. Prior to the passage of this bill, OGEC only had authority to investigate and enforce violations of the executive session provisions of public meetings law.

The law allows any person to submit a written grievance within 30 days of the public meeting at which the alleged violation occurred. Anonymous grievances are not permitted. A grievance must be submitted first to the public body (e.g., the community college) prior to the filing of a complaint with OGEC. The public body must allow written grievances to be submitted in-person, by first class mail, or by email, and has 21 days from the date of receipt to respond to the allegation. The response must acknowledge receipt of the grievance, and do one of the following:

- 1) Deny the facts and circumstances alleged in the grievance and state why the board did not violate public meetings law;

- 2) Admit the facts and circumstances outlined in the grievance, but deny that the board violated public meetings law; or
- 3) Admit the conduct violated public meetings law and set forth the steps the board as the governing body will take to remedy the violation. These steps might include rescinding the original decision made in violation of the law, or acknowledging in a properly noticed public meeting held within 45 days of the original decision that the original decision violated the law, there is good cause to uphold the decision, and the board's practices have been modified to ensure future violations will not occur.

When the public body responds to the allegation, a copy of the response and the grievance must be submitted to OGEC.

A complainant may also file a complaint with OGEC. If the complaint satisfies OGEC's review requirements, OGEC will construe the complaint as a complaint against all members of the board and cases will be opened for each member. The agency has the authority to pursue their full administrative review process to determine if a violation has occurred and assess civil penalties or issue a letter of education if warranted. OGEC has the authority to proceed on their own motion as well.

For more information about OGEC's public meetings law complaint process and new public body reporting duties related to this process, click [here](#).

#### **Save-the-Date: All-Oregon Academic Team Luncheon**

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.

#### **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](mailto: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](mailto:occa@occa17.com).*