

Talking Points

Budget

Summary

At the request of the Legislative Fiscal Office, the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC), like all state agencies, was required to prepare scenarios for 2.5 percent and 5 percent reductions to its biennial budget. Since the Community College Support Fund is part of HECC's budget, any reductions would directly affect college budgets. Community colleges are already making cuts and additional reductions will further erode college programs and services. Since the reductions would take effect halfway through the biennium, a 5 percent cut to the two-year budget effectively results in about a 10 percent decrease in funding available during the second half. Any cuts at this point in the biennium would have serious consequences for community college students, institutions, and the communities they serve. Although HECC was obligated to submit these options, the Commission strongly recommended that no reductions be made to community college funding.

The following are talking points to use in discussions about the impact of these reductions:

Enrollment Growth & Oregon's Largest Higher Education Sector

Oregon's 17 community colleges are the backbone of the state's workforce development system, serving more students than any other higher education sector and driving economic mobility across every region.

Enrollment continues to rise, particularly in CTE programs such as healthcare, advanced manufacturing, IT, early childhood education, welding, and public safety. These programs provide flexible, affordable pathways into high-skill, high-wage careers.

[Note the specific enrollment increases at your college, particularly in CTE programs – mention which programs.]

Community colleges serve working adults, first-generation students, parents balancing work and family, and rural residents who depend on their local college as their main postsecondary access point.

Colleges work with employers, workforce boards, and K12 partners to align programs with local workforce needs.

Talking Points

Role During Economic Shifts

Community colleges function as Oregon's "economic shock absorber." When unemployment rises or industries shift, enrollment reliably increases as workers seek retraining, upskilling, or new career pathways.

This flexibility has historically helped stabilize regional economies. A mid-biennium cut would hinder colleges' ability to expand CTE cohorts, provide short-term workforce training, or increase class availability when Oregonians need these services most.

Overview of Specific HECC Cut Submissions

The Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) has two potential options for cuts to the community colleges:

- **2.5% cut to HECC budget (\$23 million cut to CCs):**
 - **\$21 million** cut to the Community College Support Fund (CCSF)
 - **\$2 million** cut to Career Pathways funding
- **5% cut to HECC budget (\$57 million cut to CCs):**
 - **\$41 million** cut to the Community College Support Fund
 - **\$3 million** cut to Career Pathways funding
 - **\$13 million** cut to Oregon Promise (no new student admissions)
 - **HECC childcare program closed**

Statewide Cut Impact to Community Colleges

2025-2027 state funding for community colleges has already caused colleges to make significant cuts to programs and services. Additional cuts will undermine colleges' ability to serve students and communities leading to:

- Fewer course sections and limited access to required classes.
- Reduced capacity in high-demand CTE programs.
- Delayed equipment upgrades needed for industry-aligned training.
- Hiring freezes in advising, tutoring, and student support roles.
- Reduced ability to operate rural centers and outreach services.
- Increased strain during a time of enrollment growth.

Representative College Impacts

Statewide, community colleges are facing up to a \$57 million cut with \$41

Talking Points

million of that coming out of the CCSF.

Reductions generally impact CTE program capacity, course section offerings, staffing levels and student support services.

[Provide examples that illustrate the magnitude of reductions your colleges would face over the full two-year budget cycle.]

Oregon Promise Cut = \$13-\$40 Million Lost + Doors Closed to New Students

As part of its potential 5 percent budget cut submission to the Legislative Fiscal Office, the HECC has proposed a freeze on new enrollments in the Oregon Promise Grant Program, which provides tuition support to thousands of community college students. The Commission anticipates that without new enrollments, the program would effectively end, cutting off access to college for thousands of future students.

- This represents **\$13 million in current biennium cuts to community college students**, and roughly **\$40 million in the following biennium** if no new students are allowed to apply for the program.
- Eliminating the Oregon Promise would end tuition support for thousands of low-income students, effectively closing the door to college for many students.

Career Pathways Elimination = \$3 Million Cut + Countless Lost Opportunities for Working Adults

The HECC is also recommending a reduction in funding for Career Pathways Programs. These are career-connected, high-quality education and training programs that align with industry needs, allowing individuals to advance in a career through multiple successive entry and exit points. These programs are especially critical in economic downturns when workers are seeking short-term training to re-enter the workforce. This would be a **\$3 million cut** at the 5 percent cut scenario or **\$2 million** at the 2.5 percent cut scenario.

- **Cutting Career Pathways funding removes critical access for working adults seeking short-term training to re-enter the workforce.**

Talking Points

Consequences for Students

When funding is cut, colleges face two options: reduce programs or raise tuition. Both hurt students.

Program reductions delay graduation, block entry into workforce pathways, and disrupt academic planning. Tuition hikes increase financial strain on low-income students, working adults, and families juggling multiple responsibilities. Cuts also shrink access to essential supports – advising, tutoring, childcare, transportation, food pantries, basic needs centers, and mental health services – all proven to boost retention and student success.

[Talk about what support services/programs your college offers and what a cut could mean for them.]

Long-Term Workforce & Economic Consequences

Community colleges partner with employers across the state to meet Oregon's most critical workforce needs, including nursing, behavioral health, education, manufacturing, renewable energy, and emergency response.

A funding cut now would disrupt these pipelines, delay solutions to workforce shortages, and stall economic mobility, especially in rural communities. **Bottom Line - Don't Cut the Engine of Oregon's Workforce**

Oregon's community colleges serve more students than any other sector of higher education and are the state's most accessible, affordable, and effective providers of workforce training.

A 5% mid-biennium cut would reduce opportunities for tens of thousands of Oregonians, hinder economic growth, and constrain the availability of skilled workers across all regions.

Investing in community colleges is investing in Oregon's future workforce, its communities, and its long-term economic vitality.

Community Colleges WORK for Oregon.

