

## OCCA Update for College Boards – May 2026

### **All-Oregon Academic Team Luncheon Honors Students**

OCCA had the honor of recognizing nearly 60 outstanding students from all 17 community colleges during the All-Oregon Academic Team (AOAT) Luncheon on April 17 at Chemeketa Community College's beautiful Eola Center in Salem. These honorees were a wonderful representation of the many kinds of students from all walks of life that attend Oregon's community colleges. More than 140 people attended the luncheon, which featured keynote speaker Senator Janeen Sollman, the 2025 OCCA Howard Cherry Award – Outstanding Advocate winner.

In addition, three featured student speakers inspired attendees with powerful stories of perseverance, growth, and hope: Jay Freilinger from Chemeketa CC, Savannah West from Linn-Benton CC, and Stephen Zeller of Portland CC. OCCA sincerely appreciates their courage and generosity in sharing their experiences.

### **BOARD MEMBER ACTION:**

- **Review the press release, student list, and event program on [OCCA's website](#) and check out your college's websites and social media pages for congratulatory messages to their students.**

### **HECC Approves Bachelor of Applied Science in Education (BASE) Degree**

On April 9, the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) approved the Bachelor of Applied Science in Education (BASE) degree, paving the way for community colleges to help fill educator workforce gaps. Five colleges – Chemeketa CC, Columbia Gorge CC, Linn-Benton CC, Rogue CC, and Treasure Valley CC – are approved to offer the degree beginning in Fall 2027, and they have formed a consortium to deliver the degree.

The consortium model supports a coordinated and cost-effective rollout by reducing duplication and using shared curriculum, instructional design, and statewide resources. Colleges will rely on existing infrastructure, online and hybrid delivery, and credit for prior learning to keep costs low and expand access. The BASE degree adds to Oregon's existing university transfer pathways and educator preparation programs. It also strengthens the overall ecosystem by creating an additional route for students who are often underserved by traditional models, including working adults, bilingual instructional assistants, and rural residents, while continuing to support and complement university-based programs.

As part of HECC's approval, enrollment in the BASE degree will be capped at 30 students in the first year and 50 students per year statewide during the program's following three years to support quality and sustainable growth. The HECC received letters of support from 15 school districts and Education Service Districts backing the proposal.

**BOARD MEMBER ACTION:**

- Review the BASE approval press release by [clicking here](#).

**OCCA Begins Community College Funding Request Process with HECC Presentation**

Later this summer, the HECC will submit its agency budget request – which includes the Community College Support Fund – for inclusion in the Governor’s Agency Request Budget for legislative consideration. To inform this process, OCCA will present to the HECC’s Finance & Achievement Subcommittee on May 6, highlighting current fiscal pressures, student needs, and other funding considerations.

**BOARD MEMBER ACTION:**

- [Watch](#) the HECC’s Finance & Achievement subcommittee meeting live on May 6 at 1:00 p.m. PST (or catch the recording afterwards) to learn more about community college budget needs for the 2027-29 biennium.

**OCCA Lunch & Learn Webinar: Registration for May Opens Soon**

On April 30, OCCA hosted a Lunch & Learn titled *Writing Better AI Prompts for Community College Leaders*, presented by Brett Rowlett, Director of External Affairs at Lane Community College. This webinar, designed specifically for community college administrators and board members, provided practical strategies for writing better prompts to improve the quality, accuracy, and usefulness of AI-generated content across community college settings. Through clear examples and live demonstrations, participants learned how to save time, strengthen communications, and get more reliable results from AI tools.

Thank you to all who were able to join us. Board members who were unable to attend – or who would like to revisit the discussion – can view the recording by [clicking here](#).

Registration will open soon for the May OCCA Lunch & Learn webinar.

**BOARD MEMBER ACTION:**

- [Watch](#) the April Lunch & Learn if you were unable to attend, then register for the May webinar once the link is [posted](#).

**Public Meeting Minute – Serial Communications Revisited**

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

On April 16, 2026, Governor Kotek vetoed HB 4177, a bill passed during the February Legislative Session to clarify current Public Meetings Law provisions related to serial communications. In her [veto message](#), the Governor directed the Oregon Government Ethics Commission (OGEC) to

work with the legislature, her office, and key stakeholders to provide as much clarity as possible now around serial communications and to develop a bill for the 2027 Session. OCCA will continue to work with other local governments to push for more consistency and clear guidance around the application of Oregon Public Meetings law to community college governing boards. Since the current law remains unchanged, we thought it would be helpful to revisit the topic from our first Public Meetings Law Minute from September 2025.

### *Prohibited Serial Communications*

Oregon Public Meetings Law requires governing bodies to deliberate and decide matters in open public meetings. OGEC recently released a [Frequently Asked Questions](#) resource titled “Prohibited Serial Communications” to help governing bodies like community college boards of education navigate when a quorum of the board might be engaged in serial conversations that may violate Public Meetings Law. It is important for all community college board members to understand the law and rules around serial communications.

OGEC administrative rules effective October 1, 2024, state that a quorum of the board shall not use a series of communications of any kind, directly or through intermediaries, for the purpose of deliberating or deciding on any matter that is within the jurisdiction of the governing body outside a meeting conducted in compliance with Public Meetings Law. As a reminder, a quorum of a community college board of education is four (4) board members. Serial communications may include in-person conversations; telephone calls; videoconferencing (like Zoom or FaceTime); written communications including email, text, and other written electronic communications; and using intermediaries to convey information among board members on matters that may come before the board. Prohibited communications among a quorum of the board can occur outside a public meeting as well as during a public meeting if a quorum of the board is discussing matters outside the public’s view such as in a private text group.

As an OCCA best practice, we recommend that you avoid communicating the views of other board members to fellow board members outside of a properly noticed public meeting. Also, ensure that the board engages in deliberation and discussion in full in all public meetings. Please do not hesitate to contact OCCA Senior Policy Advisor & General Counsel Karen Smith ([ksmith@occa17.com](mailto:ksmith@occa17.com)) if you have any questions about prohibited serial conversations.

### **BOARD MEMBER ACTION:**

- **Mark your calendars:** The June 25 OCCA Lunch and Learn topic will focus on Oregon Public Meetings Law requirements for Executive Session meetings. This is a great opportunity for board members to brush up on these important laws.

### **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,



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*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).*