

OCCA Board Representative Update

September 2026

Legislative Days & Community College Advocacy

OCCA and community college leaders were at the Oregon State Capitol for September Legislative Days, Sept. 8–10. College presidents, board members, students and other advocates met with legislators to continue building support for Oregon’s community colleges heading into the 2027 Legislative Session.

The primary message is that community colleges are essential to Oregon’s workforce and economic health. Colleges are seeing continued demand for career and technical education, short-term credentials and other workforce programs at the same time that the cost of delivering those programs and providing student services continues to grow.

OCCA is continuing to advocate for the DAS and HECC CSL percentage increase: a **13.7% increase (\$971.7 million) in the 2027–29 Community College Support Fund (CCSF)**. The request is intended to better reflect colleges’ actual cost growth, including compensation, PERS, health insurance and other operating expenses.

For board members: Continue talking with your local legislators about the importance of adequately funding the CCSF and, where possible, share examples from your college of growing enrollment, high-cost CTE programs, workforce partnerships, student needs and the budget pressures your institution is experiencing.

Community Colleges WORK for Oregon

OCCA launched the statewide **Community Colleges WORK for Oregon** campaign in conjunction with Legislative Days. The campaign highlights findings from the new Lightcast economic impact analysis and reinforces the significant economic return Oregon receives from its community colleges.

Every college has received its local Lightcast economic impact information, and OCCA has developed statewide materials for use with legislators, community partners and the public. The campaign will continue through the fall and into the 2027 Legislative Session, providing another way to connect the CCSF funding conversation with the role community colleges play in preparing Oregon’s workforce and strengthening local economies.

For board members: Look for opportunities to share your college’s Lightcast findings with legislators, business and community leaders, and through your own networks.

September Economic & Revenue Forecast

Oregon's August 26 economic and revenue forecast offered a somewhat improved outlook heading into development of the 2027–29 state budget. State economists increased projected revenue by approximately **\$55 million for the current 2025–27 biennium and \$538 million for 2027–29** compared with the previous forecast.

While that is positive news, the overall fiscal environment remains constrained. Inflation and other cost pressures continue, and the state will face significant competition for available resources as the Governor and Legislature build the next biennial budget.

For community colleges, the forecast reinforces the importance of making the case that maintaining current services requires recognizing the actual costs colleges are facing—not simply applying a statewide Current Service Level calculation.

OCCA will continue working with college presidents and advocacy partners throughout the fall as the Governor develops her recommended budget.

Headcount Matters in the Funding Conversation

OCCA is also continuing to emphasize the distinction between **students served and FTE** when discussing higher education funding.

In 2024–25, Oregon community colleges served **209,605 students representing 73,786.7 student FTE — approximately 2.8 students for every FTE**. Many costs associated with serving a student, including advising, financial aid, registration, disability services, technology, student accounts, facilities and campus safety, exist regardless of whether that student takes four credits or 16.

FTE remains an important measure of instructional activity, but headcount is necessary to understand the broader cost of serving students.

For board members: When discussing community college enrollment and funding, board members should reinforce the number of individual Oregonians community colleges actually serve.

2026 OCCA Annual Conference

Planning continues for the **2026 OCCA Annual Conference, Nov. 4–6 at Sunriver Resort**. This year's theme is **Community Colleges WORK for Oregon**.

The Member Services Committee is reviewing breakout session proposals this month, and OCCA will announce the final conference program following that review. The conference will include sessions focused on board leadership and governance, Oregon's economy and workforce, students and communities, and advocacy, investment and sustainability.

The Howard Cherry Awards Banquet will again be a highlight of the conference, recognizing outstanding contributions to Oregon's community colleges.

For board members: Make plans to attend the conference and to encourage participation from other members of their local boards.

Looking Ahead

The next several months will be important as Oregon moves toward the 2027 Legislative Session. OCCA's work will increasingly focus on building support for community college funding, expanding the Community Colleges WORK for Oregon message, monitoring development of the Governor's Recommended Budget and preparing colleges for coordinated advocacy during the session.

Board members can help now by maintaining relationships with local legislators, sharing examples of the impact community colleges have in their communities, and helping tell the story of the students and employers their colleges serve.