

OCCA Update for College Boards – August 2026

Community College Current Service Level Update

The Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) will meet August 13 to approve its Agency Request Budget for submission to the Governor. As part of that decision, the Commission will determine whether to forward the Department of Administrative Services Chief Financial Office (DAS-CFO) current service level estimate of a 13.7% increase for the Community College Support Fund (CCSF). The DAS estimate remains above the 7.5% CCSF increase developed and requested by Oregon's community colleges.

The DAS current service level is a technical state budget calculation—not a final funding recommendation and not a determination that every college would have enough funding to maintain current services. It also does not account for the \$167 million colleges are using from reserves in the current biennium to support ongoing operations, or fully reflect locally negotiated compensation and other college-specific cost pressures.

OCCA has met with both HECC staff and the Legislative Fiscal Office to discuss the difference between the DAS calculation and the community colleges' request. OCCA emphasized that the 7.5% request was built from projected college operating costs, while the DAS CSL applies statewide budget methodology and assumptions. OCCA will continue working with state budget partners to ensure policymakers understand what each number represents as the 2027–29 budget is developed.

BOARD MEMBER ACTION:

- Let your college president know about major local cost pressures or service-level concerns that should be reflected in OCCA's ongoing budget discussions, and continue to reinforce that the 13.7% DAS CSL is a budget calculation—not an expected funding level.

September 8–10 Oregon Legislative Days

The Oregon Legislature will hold its next round of Legislative Days September 8–10. OCCA and community college representatives are preparing to meet with legislators during this period to discuss the 2027–29 Community College Support Fund request, the workforce and economic impact of community colleges, and the need to sustain programs and student services as costs continue to rise.

The House has also re-established a Higher Education policy committee, chaired by Rep. Lisa Fragala, a former Lane Community College board member. The committee is expected to consider higher education policy issues that may emerge from the HB 4124 workgroup examining the structure of Oregon higher education. OCCA will closely follow the committee's work and assess potential effects on community colleges, local governance, statewide coordination, and funding policy.

BOARD MEMBER ACTION:

- Watch for updates from OCCA before and during Legislative Days, and be prepared to help communicate how state investment decisions affect students, workforce programs,

and services in your local community.

September Economic and Revenue Forecast

The September Economic and Revenue Forecast will be released August 26. This forecast will establish the fiscal backdrop for the September Legislative Days and early development of the 2027–29 budget. The direction of General Fund and lottery revenues could affect expectations for the Community College Support Fund, financial aid, workforce programs, capital requests, and any 2027 budget reductions or additions.

BOARD MEMBER ACTION:

- Review OCCA’s forecast summary when it is released and consider how changes in the state revenue outlook could affect your college’s budget planning and advocacy.

Oregon Government Ethics Commission and Public Meetings Law

OCCA joined the League of Oregon Cities, Association of Oregon Counties, and Special Districts Association of Oregon in a letter to the Oregon Government Ethics Commission (OGEC) raising serious concerns about the Commission’s approach to interpreting and administering Oregon’s public meetings law. The letter raised issues about our deteriorating relationship and raised concerns about the veto of HB 4177, as well as guidance that local government organizations believe has expanded the law beyond legislative intent.

HB 4177 was a 2026 bill intended to clarify when communications among governing body members outside a public meeting constitute prohibited serial deliberations, identify communications that would remain outside public meetings requirements, and improve OGEC training, complaint, and enforcement processes. The Legislature passed the bill, but Governor Kotek vetoed it and directed OGEC and stakeholders to work urgently and openly toward clearer, workable guidance before the 2027 session.

OCCA Board President Pat Fahey and Executive Director Abby Lee have been asked to attend OGEC’s August 14 meeting, along with representatives of the other local government organizations that signed the letter, to discuss these concerns and a path forward. OCCA supports strong transparency requirements, while also seeking clear rules that allow elected board members to carry out routine and necessary governance work without fear that innocuous communications will be treated as violations.

BOARD MEMBER ACTION:

- Let your college president know about instances where OGEC’s current interpretation (or directly given advice) has made it difficult to carry out board operations in a commonsense manner. Examples may include receiving factual information from a president or staff member; asking a clarifying question without deliberating toward a decision; discussing meeting schedules, attendance, or logistics; speaking individually with community members or the news media; or having one-on-one conversations that are not used to involve a quorum or reach agreement outside a public meeting.

2026 OCCA Conference Call for Presentations

The annual OCCA Conference is set for November 4–6 at Sunriver Resort in Central Oregon. This year’s theme highlights how “Community Colleges Work for Oregon” and the critical role board

members, college leaders, and partners play in that success.

OCCA has issued a call for breakout session proposals and invites dynamic, engaging proposals for breakout sessions that showcase innovative practices, effective strategies, and meaningful outcomes that demonstrate how community colleges are working for students, communities, and the state. Breakout session tracks will include how Community Colleges Work for:

- Board Leadership & Governance
- Student Success & Institutional Effectiveness
- Oregon's Economy & Communities
- Advocacy & Investment

OCCA encourages proposals that highlight innovative approaches across all topic areas, including the use of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, new service delivery models, and creative strategies that improve outcomes, strengthen governance, and advance community impact.

Conference session proposals are due by August 14 and must be submitted using OCCA's online form. Find more information about proposal submissions by visiting OCCA's Conference web page: <https://occa17.com/conference/>

BOARD MEMBER ACTION:

- Work with your president to consider submitting a proposal for a conference breakout session highlighting your college's innovative work, successful program or other lesson learned. Be sure [proposals are submitted](#) by 5:00 p.m. Pacific time on August 14.

2026 Howard Cherry Awards Nominations

The annual OCCA Howard Cherry Awards are now accepting nominations for Outstanding Board Member, Outstanding Advocate, and Outstanding Administrator. The awards will be presented during the OCCA Conference on November 5 at Sunriver Resort in Sunriver, OR.

All submissions must be made using OCCA's online nomination form no later than August 14. For more information on nomination requirements and submission details, visit OCCA's website: <https://occa17.com/conference/>.

BOARD MEMBER ACTION:

- Consider making a nomination and [submitting it](#) by August 14.

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*



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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 Executive Support Specialist Laura Crook at laura@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 well-being 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.