

OCCA Board Representative Update

October 2026

October Board Meeting

The Oregon Community College Association (OCCA) Board of Directors met October 2 at Southwestern Oregon Community College in Coos Bay for its first meeting of the 2026-27 year. The Board approved standing committee appointments, heard updates from statewide partners, and reviewed the results of OCCA's Governance & Leadership Education Needs Survey. Southwestern also hosted a college spotlight highlighting student research and partnerships in its [agroecology program](#). Board members received updates on state legislative and fiscal issues, OCCA's work with the Oregon Government Ethics Commission, the federal lawsuit involving Oregon's in-state tuition policies, and preparations for the 2026 OCCA Conference. The Board also received OCCA financial and operational updates, including information about the association's upcoming annual audit. Additional details on several of these topics are included elsewhere in this update.

For board members: Review the updates from the October board meeting and share relevant information with your local board. If questions or issues arise that OCCA should be aware of, connect with your college's OCCA Board representative or OCCA staff.

2026 OCCA Conference

The **2026 OCCA Conference is just a few weeks away, November 4–6 at Sunriver Resort!** This year's theme, **Community Colleges WORK for Oregon**, will highlight the many ways Oregon's community colleges strengthen students, communities, employers and the state's economy. The conference will feature breakout sessions across four tracks—Board Leadership & Governance; Oregon's Economy & Communities; Student Success & Institutional Effectiveness; and Advocacy & Investment—along with national keynote speakers, student voices and opportunities to connect with colleagues from across the state. The Howard Cherry Awards Banquet will once again be a conference highlight, recognizing outstanding leadership and service to Oregon's community colleges. Beginning Oct. 21, attendees can download the conference app to view the full schedule, breakout session descriptions, speaker bios, maps and other conference information. More details are available on the [OCCA Conference website](#).

For board members: It's not too late to register! If you haven't already, make plans to attend and encourage other members of your local board to participate. Early bird registration is available through October 9. Beginning October 10, registration rates will increase. We look forward to seeing you at Sunriver!

Federal Lawsuit Update

At the Oct. 2 OCCA Board meeting, attendees received an update on the [federal lawsuit](#) challenging Oregon laws and policies that provide in-state tuition and certain state financial aid benefits to undocumented students. The lawsuit names the State of Oregon, Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC), Oregon Health and Sciences University (OHSU), the seven public universities and 14 community colleges, and challenges locally adopted community college tuition policies that distinguish between in-state and out-of-state students based on residency. Representatives from the Oregon Department of Justice and HECC joined the discussion. OCCA is helping coordinate information and legal resources for colleges, including support for those participating in a joint defense, while also assisting boards that are still evaluating their options and reviewing local tuition policies.

For board members: Stay informed about the federal lawsuit and be prepared to review your college's tuition and residency policies as needed. OCCA will continue to provide updates, legal information, and resources to support local boards.

Member Survey

OCCA recently completed its 2026 Governance & Leadership Education Needs Survey, with responses from 65 board members and nine college presidents representing all 17 Oregon community colleges. The survey identified strong interest in continued education and training on board governance roles and responsibilities, ethics and public meeting requirements, community college funding and budget development, onboarding for new board members, student success, and presidential evaluation. Respondents also highlighted interest in topics such as board-president relationships, CTE and industry partnerships, Oregon's community college funding model, and artificial intelligence and emerging technologies. OCCA is using the survey results to help shape board development opportunities throughout the year, including conference programming and the Lunch & Learn webinar series. The goal is to ensure OCCA's professional development offerings are responsive to the issues board members are encountering locally and provide practical resources that can be applied in board service.

For board members: Register for OCCA's first Lunch & Learn webinar of the year, "Conversations that WORK – ToP Focused Conversation Method," on Oct. 29 from noon–1 p.m. This session will introduce a practical framework for navigating complex conversations, engaging with differing perspectives, and building productive dialogue that can lead to collective action. Presenters include Julia Nicholson of Clackamas Community College, Mike Beebe of Leadership for Change, and Certified ToP Facilitator Judy Weddle. More information and registration details are available on the [OCCA website](#).

Community College CSL

The OCCA Board received an update at its October meeting on the state's Current Service Level (CSL) estimate for the 2027-29 Community College Support Fund (CCSF). The Oregon Department of Administrative Services (DAS) has calculated that maintaining the state's current level of support for community colleges would require a 13.7% increase, bringing the CCSF to approximately \$971.6 million. The unusually large increase is driven primarily by the expiration of PERS side accounts, which have helped reduce colleges' pension costs for roughly two decades. As those accounts expire, colleges will face substantially higher PERS costs, even as the related debt-service payments end. HECC has approved the DAS recommendation, and OCCA is supporting the 13.7% figure because it more fully reflects the structural cost increases colleges are facing. Earlier, Oregon's community colleges had requested a more restrained 7.5% increase, which assumed continued efficiencies, tuition revenue, reserve spending and other cost-saving measures. OCCA emphasized that the lower request did not mean college costs were increasing by only 7.5%; colleges are collectively relying on approximately \$167 million in reserve spending to help cover operating shortfalls. Board members were also cautioned that the 2027-29 state budget is expected to be extremely tight, with legislative leaders already warning that the state may not be able to fund current service levels across all agencies.

For board members: Download OCCA's Community College Support Fund talking points from the [Advocacy Toolkit](#) on the OCCA website and use them to become familiar with the 2027-29 funding request. The talking points can also be used when discussing community college funding needs with legislators and other community partners.

Upcoming Audit

OCCA's annual financial audit for fiscal year 2025-26 is scheduled for the week of Oct. 12. Staff are preparing for the audit, which will review the association's financial activity and year-end reporting for the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2026. The completed audit report is expected to be presented to the OCCA Board at its February 2027 meeting.

Committee Assignments

At its Oct. 2 meeting, the OCCA Board approved 2026-27 appointments to the association's five standing committees: Budget; Legislative; Member Services; Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI); and Nominating. Committee appointments are designed to include representation from across Oregon's community colleges and bring together locally elected board members, college presidents, and staff to help guide OCCA's work in key areas such as finance, advocacy, board development, and organizational leadership. OCCA standing committees meet throughout the year to advance the association's priorities and make recommendations to the Board. The Board and Executive Committee may also establish temporary committees or work groups to address specific issues as they arise. More information, including current committee membership lists, is available on the [OCCA website](#).

For board members: Review the 2026-27 OCCA committee assignments and connect with your college's OCCA representatives or committee members about issues your board would like elevated statewide. Committee membership lists and additional information are available on the OCCA website.

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 staying engaged with OCCA's upcoming training and conference opportunities, maintaining relationships with local legislators, and continuing to share examples of the impact community colleges have on students, employers and communities. As the election concludes and the legislative session approaches, those local relationships and stories will become increasingly important to OCCA's statewide advocacy efforts.