



Higher Education Coordinating Commission

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February Agency Update:

February 2025 | Tribal partners can find previous quarterly Government-to-Government updates as well as other information on work and initiatives in the [Coordination with Tribes](#) section of our website. We are pleased to report on our ongoing work and new initiatives to support Oregon learners and communities.

Monitoring Federal Changes: Working with Governor Kotek as well as state and institutional partners, the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) is actively assessing the potential impact of recent federal directives on Oregonians served by the postsecondary education and training system. If there are significant changes to HECC agency operations we will share details on our [website page focused on federal monitoring](#), and in other communications. The HECC is committed to our mission to advance equitable access and success in postsecondary education and training, meet workforce needs, and strengthen Oregon's collective future. Our commitment to equitable opportunity in postsecondary education and training has been woven into the agency's policies, programs, and processes since the founding of HECC as a state agency in 2013. Agency work is driven by Oregon's state educational and training goals that commits us to better serving underrepresented populations who are not served today.

Our Commission

OUR VISION:

The Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) envisions a future where all people benefit from the economic, civic, and cultural impact of high-quality postsecondary education, training, and workforce development. [Learn more about our vision here.](#) The HECC's 2024-2029 Strategic Plan charts a path forward toward this vision through goals and strategies.

The HECC is the State of Oregon's Commission and agency working to advance equitable access and success in postsecondary education and training, meet workforce needs, and strengthen Oregon's collective future. Established in 2013, the HECC is a volunteer commission responsible for advising the Oregon Legislature and the Governor on higher education policy. The Commission is supported by an executive director who oversees eight offices of the agency. To learn more about the HECC, go to: <https://www.oregon.gov/highered>
[Sign up for newsletters and updates here.](#)

Upcoming Meetings

Higher Education Coordinating Commission,

April 9: HECC Funding and Achievement Subcommittee meeting.

April 10: Full HECC Commission meeting.

For other [upcoming public meetings of the HECC](#), [see our website here](#). For [Affiliated Boards \(WTDB, others, see here\)](#). For email notices of upcoming public meetings, or to sign up for our newsletter, go to www.oregon.gov/HigherEd.

Funding Opportunities

Explore HECC [Grants and Contracting Opportunities here](#).

2025 Legislative Session: The HECC is actively involved in the legislative session, which officially began on Tuesday, January 21, 2025. You can keep informed about the HECC's legislative engagement, including agency testimony and presentations, on our [legislative resources web page here](#). The HECC is responsible for providing factual, up-to-date information to help legislators make well-informed decisions about higher education and workforce development policy and funding.

One key role of the HECC is to present on the comprehensive funding needs for the postsecondary education and workforce system and the impact of the Governor's Recommended Budget (GRB) for this system. These presentations are made to the Joint Ways & Means Education Subcommittee to inform the development of the final 2025-2027 Legislatively Approved Budget (LAB). This set of presentations is expected to span approximately 12 days, with six days of presentations by HECC, and other days focused on invited testimony from institution partners and public testimony opportunities. You can read our fact sheet on the GRB below.

- HECC Fact Sheet on GRB 2025-27, last updated Dec. 11, 2024

Governor Tina Kotek has recommended a \$2.5M increase in program funding for the Oregon Tribal Student Grant program for the upcoming 2025-27 biennium. (See more on the OTSG in Affordability and Financial Aid news section of this update.)

In addition to presenting on funding for 2025-2027, HECC employees also track and analyze hundreds of bills that pertain to the postsecondary education and workforce system so that we can serve as a resource to inform decisions. The HECC's legislative focus this session will primarily be on sustaining key ongoing activities. The HECC is sponsoring six bills this session.

- Oregon Opportunity Grant Equity Reform (H.B. 3025)
- Minor and Technical Revisions (H.B. 3026)
- Private Career Schools (PCS) Unit Injunctive Relief (H.B. 3027)
- Office of Degree Authorization (ODA) Fees (H.B. 3028)
- Future Ready Oregon and Continuing Workforce Investments (H.B. 3029)
- Oregon Administrator Scholars Program (H.B. 3030)

The HECC also submits numerous statutorily required reports to the Legislature, available on our website [here](#). HECC representatives are regularly invited to present to legislative committees on numerous topics. In Oregon, legislative hearings are available to watch by video, and recordings are also made available afterward. Key links:

- HECC's Legislative Resources Page
- State of Oregon Links: Oregon Legislature | Oregon Legislative Information System | Legislative Audio and Video

Oregon Tribal Student Grant Communications: Many thanks to all who have been working with HECC to share stories about the impact of the OTSG. We are still working on a press release and accompanying materials about the positive impacts of this grant in its first three years, and we will be in contact with updates as this project develops.

Affordability and Financial Aid News

Apply for Scholarships at OregonStudentAid.gov: Students can explore more than 600 scholarships through the OSAC Scholarship Application. The application is open November to March each year. The scholarship application for the 2025-26 aid year closes on March 3, 2025. . Read more in our press release.

FAFSA/ORSAA: To be eligible for most types of financial aid, students must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or the Oregon Student Aid Application (ORSAA). Resources on financial aid form completion can be found using the links below.

- OSAC: Introducing FAFSA/ORSAA
 - OSAC: FAFSA and ORSAA Information
 - OSAC: Updates on Recent FAFSA and ORSAA Changes
- Federal Student Aid FAFSA page

Oregon Tribal Student Grant: The 2024-25 application has set a new record for OTSG, the HECC Office of Student Access and Completion (OSAC) received over 1,110 submitted applications and 810 of those applicants have been fully approved. The application for the current school year (2024-25) is now closed. The 2025-26 application opened on February 26, 2025. By opening the application much earlier than prior years, eligible applicants have an earlier window to apply, OSAC will begin reviewing awards earlier guiding institutions with information to process aid packages to students for 2025-26.

The OTSG, first launched in 2022 and codified in statute in 2023, bolsters the opportunity for tribal members to achieve their postsecondary education goals, whether they have just graduated from high school, or are adults wanting to start or return to college. The HECC has seen growing participation in the OTSG in its first three years and we are very glad to see the growth trend continue into future academic years. For the 2023-24 school year the OSAC awarded 501 OTSG recipients, compared to 412 students for the 2022-2023 academic year (the pilot year). For the 2024-25 aid year, OSAC has advanced funds to 610 OTSG recipients enrolled at Oregon institutions. An annual increase by about 100 recipients each year will keep compounding costs and demand in future years.

Given the growth rate in OTSG this biennium, OSAC forecasted that the OTSG would have a funding shortfall and the HECC has requested \$2.5M from the Oregon Legislature so that the program can continue to operate and not impact authorized applicants and recipients during the 2024-25 school year. To date, the OTSG has served students pursuing all levels of postsecondary education, including certificates, associate degrees, bachelors, masters, PHDs, MDs and JDs. To be eligible for the program students must be an enrolled member of one of the nine federally recognized tribes in Oregon. Students must also be enrolled or accepted for enrollment at an Oregon college or university and complete a valid FAFSA or ORSAA. Additional eligibility information can be found on the Oregon Tribal Student Grant web page. For the 2025-27 biennium, the Governor's recommended budget includes \$28.5 million for the OTSG, which represents an increase of \$2.5 million above our current 2023-25 service level. Because of the steadily rising costs and enrollment, however, we expect that at this funding level HECC/OSAC will need to plan for and establish cost control measures for the first time in the program's history for the 2025-26 and 2026-27 aid years. HECC has informed the legislative leadership that at such funding level, we may need to restrict or eliminate graduate level awards as the first cost control step.

Oregon Promise Grant: Learn about the Oregon Promise Grant here. Deadline varies by graduation date for new students.

OSAC offers the FAFSA Plus+ program for schools, community-based organizations, and other sites that work with a specific student population. Becoming a FAFSA Plus+ site allows an organization to upload a roster of students and then be able to see the FAFSA filing status for those students. Learn more and sign up to become a FAFSA Plus+ site for free.

OSAC continues our outreach and presentations across the state. Go online to request support from OSAC at an upcoming event or in a classroom, or to provide training to your students and communities. OSAC outreach is available to students, families, and career/college access staff across Oregon to provide support and guidance. You can also sign up to receive our e-newsletters here.

- Free Publications and Posters: Order or download free posters and brochures here including the OSAC Poster—a quick reminder for students to apply for financial aid, including the FAFSA/ORSAA, grants, and scholarships. English and Spanish versions available.
- Webinars: OSAC hosts a variety of webinars throughout the year for students, parents, and career/college practitioners. Our webinars provide up-to-date information about programs we serve.

Tribal Access to Oregon Tuition and Fee Waiver: HECC-OSAC continues to be available to ensure eligible tribal foster youth and youth experiencing homelessness have access to the Oregon Tuition and Fee Waiver program, which waives tuition and fees for the equivalent of four years of undergraduate studies after other public grants and any school aid are applied for eligible students under age 25. Learn more about eligibility at www.oregonstudentaid.gov. OSAC representatives would be pleased to help any tribal staff. Please contact Anne.Shearer@hecc.oregon.gov.

ASPIRE Program: The ASPIRE (Access to Student Assistance Programs in Reach of Everyone) program helps educate Oregon students to become career and college ready. ASPIRE offers education, resources, and mentoring opportunities for all students. Student supports include 1:1 and group mentoring, activities that focus on career exploration, career and college research, admissions applications, scholarships, and financial aid. Tribes are welcome to join ASPIRE. Learn more here.

Supporting Learner Pathways, Economic and Community Development, and Student Success

Collaborative Effort Underway to Design a Statewide Direct Admissions Program: The HECC is working with K-12, community college and university partners on direct admissions, a recent state initiative to make the college admissions process more accessible for students. In 2024, the Oregon Legislature passed Senate Bill 1552 requiring HECC to establish a direct admissions program with all Oregon public higher education institutions. When direct admissions is implemented statewide, we anticipate that a letter will be sent to every public high school student in Oregon to inform them based on a few key academic criteria, which Oregon community colleges and public universities are available to them for further study. Learn more about the initiative status here.

Partnership Investments for Reengagement/Workforce Training: HECC (Oregon Youth Works) and Youth Development Oregon are currently engaged in and scheduling meetings with contacts at each Tribal Sovereign Nation to support investments in youth reengagement and workforce training opportunities. The intention of this work is to combine two separately funded programmatic opportunities into a single Intergovernmental Agreement with each tribe that aligns mutually developed language. If successful, over one million dollars will be invested across the nine Federally Recognized Tribal Nations in Oregon, supporting opportunities for youth and young adults. Staff from HECC and YDO are developing a framework to capture agreement information, guidance to support alignment, and methods to share information securely and efficiently. Primary Contact: Jeremy Ahola. Call or Text: 503-689-6662. Work email: Jeremy.w.ahola@hecc.oregon.gov.

Youth Conservation Opportunities on Public Lands: The “Youth Conservation Opportunities on Public Lands” cooperative agreement between the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Oregon HECC enables Oregon Youth Works (OYW) to build stronger cooperative Tribal relationships and increase partnerships that center around Tribal-serving organizations in the Burns and Lakeview BLM Districts. This collaboration provides work opportunities and education for young participants ages 16-30, inclusive of veterans aged 35 or younger in the areas of natural and cultural resource conservation for professional development, and scientific studies by offering meaningful productive work. It gives participants a mix of work

experience, basic and life skills, education, training, and support services; and provides participants with the opportunity to develop citizenship values and skills through service to their community and the United States. This partnership continues the longstanding efforts of the BLM to provide opportunities for public service, youth employment and training, and participation of young adults in accomplishing conservation-related work.

Primary Contact: Hillary Blackstone Work Email: Hillary.BLACKSTONE@hecc.oregon.gov

Youth Mental Health Corps: Through collaboration with OregonServes at the Office of Workforce Investment, staff from Oregon Youth Works an application for grant funding to help develop opportunities to support a Youth Mental Health Corps program for Oregon. If awarded, the grant would serve as an investment strategy for a program where young adults can gain practical experience and certification to help support Behavioral and Mental Health challenges found in communities throughout Oregon. Tribal leaders who are interested can connect with OregonServes to learn more about this program opportunity by contacting: Primary Contact: Madeline Seghers Work Email: Madeline.SEGHERS@hecc.oregon.gov

Implementation of Future Ready Oregon: HECC is continuing our implementation of Future Ready Oregon, an investment package passed in 2022 that supports the education and training Oregonians need for good-paying jobs and meaningful careers. Future Ready Oregon investments support grants and strategies that center the needs of historically underserved and underrepresented Oregonians, identify and address barriers to education and employment, and expand partnerships between communities, educators, and employers to advance innovation in talent development. [Learn more here.](#)

Future Ready Oregon Industry Consortia: The HECC has convened three statewide Industry Consortia representing the healthcare, manufacturing, and technology industry sectors. Each consortium is comprised of representatives from industry, education, labor, and community-based organizations. Consortia are advisory to the HECC and the Workforce and Talent Development Board. Most recently, the consortia informed priorities for a sector-specific Workforce Ready Grants funding opportunity (see below). Additionally, in 2024, the consortia engaged a consultant to conduct focus groups with employers across the state to better understand their workforce and talent development needs. In Q4, they heard preliminary findings and recommendations related to workforce planning, training, development, and retention. A full report is expected in December. [Learn more here.](#)

Workforce Benefits Navigators: Oregon's nine local workforce development boards have launched their Future Ready Oregon Workforce Benefits Navigators (WBN) projects to increase access to benefits and services that help marginalized and underserved communities access workforce education and training opportunities, career coaching, and wraparound supports. The boards are piloting a variety of strategies. For example, Southwestern Oregon Workforce Investment Board is setting up tech resources, including mobile apps, in collaboration with libraries, tribal organizations, and local agencies. This effort is geared towards enhancing accessibility, fostering family-sustaining employment, and contributing to a thriving regional economy. [Read more about WBN.](#)

Academic Program Approvals: At its December and January Commission meetings, the HECC approved the following new academic programs at Oregon's colleges and universities. Read more about these programs in recent [meeting materials here.](#)

Community Colleges (CC) Program Approvals—Central Oregon CC: Bachelor of Science: Nursing (BSN). Chemeketa CC: Bachelor of Science: Nursing (BSN). Clackamas CC - Child Care Specialist Apprenticeship, Less Than One Year Certificate (CC). Medical Assistant, Less Than One Year Certificate (CC). Klamath CC: Bachelor of Science: Nursing (BSN). Lane CC - Bachelor of Science: Nursing (BSN); Respiratory Care, Associate of Applied Science (AAS). Linn-Benton CC: Bachelor of Science: Nursing (BSN). Oregon Coast CC: Bachelor of Science: Nursing (BSN). Treasure Valley CC: Bachelor of Science: Nursing (BSN)

University Program Approvals and New Locations—Oregon State University (OSU) - M.S. in Supply Chain and Logistics Management. University of Oregon (UO) - Material Science and Technology, Bachelor of Science (BS); B.S. in Material Science and Technology; Historic Preservation, Master of Science (MS) (New Location); Ed.S. in School Psychology Extended to New Location.

New Reports and Other Updates

2024 Key Performance Measures Show Increased College-Going Rate, Continued Impacts from Pandemic: We are pleased to share a summary of the HECC's Key Performance Measures (KPMs), a set of 17 metrics focused on Oregon's strategic progress toward state higher education and workforce goals. The HECC's KPMs include indicators related to accessing college for high school students, affordability, completion, and outcomes of postsecondary education and training. The HECC's measures feature disaggregated data by race/ethnicity to draw attention to the continued need for equity progress.

Future Ready Oregon Annual Report Shows Positive Impacts: The HECC Office of Research and Data has prepared the third annual report on Future Ready Oregon. This report provides a comprehensive evaluation of the ongoing implementation and impact of all eight Future Ready Oregon programs. The report includes findings on participation, workforce program completion, and participants' employment outcomes; compares participation and outcomes to statewide economic and education trends; and makes recommendations for the coming years.

Legislative Report Details Considerable Progress on Collaborative Work to Streamline Student Transfer: We are pleased to share highlights from HECC's 2024 report to the Oregon Legislature on transfer policy work led by the Oregon Transfer Council. The report outlines progress made toward the implementation of a more streamlined transfer system in Oregon. The progress reported in this report is the result of tremendous collaboration and countless hours poured into this work by community college and public university staff, faculty, and administrators, in partnership with the HECC.

National Report on Collaborative Solutions for Student Mental Health includes Oregon's Efforts: Oregon is one of numerous states featured in a new report released this month by the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO) on ways that state higher education agencies are responding to the student mental health crisis. The SHEEO-JED Mental Health and Wellness Learning Community, launched by SHEEO and The Jed Foundation (JED) in the fall of 2023, brought together state higher education leaders, institutional leaders, practitioners, and other stakeholders to address the growing student mental health needs. Oregon is one of five state teams that received a \$25,000 planning grant to participate in this learning community.

Oregon Ranks Tenth in Nation for Volunteering: In a November announcement, AmeriCorps, the federal agency for national service and volunteerism named Oregon as the tenth ranking state for formal volunteering in the nation as highlighted in the latest Volunteering and Civic Life in America research. The HECC houses OregonServes and Oregon's AmeriCorps State Grant Program. These programs promote volunteerism, national service, and civic engagement in Oregon by awarding grants and providing technical support and leadership.

Other HECC Newsletters and Publications - Recent Issues

- HECC Collaborations, January 2025 - In Legislative Session and Beyond, We are Collaborating to Remove Barriers for Oregonians
- Future Ready Oregon Update: February 2025
- OSAC February Newsletter
- Workforce Update: February 2025

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