

Legislative Update

The legislature is now six weeks into the long session, which, under the state's constitution, is scheduled to end in early July. This update provides a progress report on some of the key bills and activities that we are pursuing on behalf of OSU and higher education.

Ways & Means

By Friday, March 17, 2017, the Joint Ways & Means Committee will have nearly completed a series of hearings around the state. Most of the testimony it received addressed concerns about funding cuts to specific programs, or the need for additional revenues to fill the state's projected \$1.8 billion shortfall in its forecasted budget. Since our last update, the state economist has issued a [quarterly forecast](#) that indicates Oregon's economy is performing well, but not in a fashion that will make a significant change in the state's overall need for either additional tax revenues or structural cost reductions (or both).

In early April, the Joint Ways & Means Education Subcommittee will consider the budget for Oregon's seven public universities as it reviews funding for the Higher Education Coordination Commission (HECC). Universities will have the opportunity to provide information directly to the subcommittee, and we are in the process of preparing a number of presentations involving the Public University Support Fund, Statewide Public Service Programs, and other targeted programs aimed at student success.

OSU's focus for testimony before Ways & Means:

- Support at least a \$100 million increase for Oregon's public universities to achieve a comparable level of funding to the current biennium and to avoid unaffordable tuition increases and program reductions.
- Recover \$9.4 million in budget reductions to the OSU Statewide Public Service Programs – the Extension Service, Agricultural Experiment Station, and Forest Research Laboratory. See comprehensive information regarding the advocacy effort aimed at Senate Bill 805 for the OSU Statewides [here](#).
- Invest \$69.5 million in state bonds to expand the OSU-Cascades campus once the projects recommended by the Oregon Council of Presidents have been funded.
- Fully fund the Oregon Opportunity Grant – the state's need-based student financial aid program for community college and university students.

Bills of Note

1. Expansion of the OSU-Cascades Campus ([HB 2782](#))

On Tuesday, March 14, the House Higher Education Committee unanimously approved House Bill 2782, which will fully fund the \$69.5 million expansion of the OSU-Cascades campus as sought by the OSU Board of Trustees. The bill now goes to the Joint Ways & Means Committee. Consideration of capital funding will likely not occur for another month or two.

2. OSU Statewide Public Service Programs ([SB 805](#))

On Thursday, March 2, the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee considered SB 805, which would recover \$9.4 million in programmatic reductions recommended by the Governor in her budget for the OSU Statewide Public Service Programs. A [multiparty letter](#) in support of the Statewides was submitted to the committee. The following Tuesday, March 7, the Senate Committee approved the bill for consideration by the Joint Ways & Means Committee. Advocates will now work with legislators to continue to support the bill.

3. Open Education Resources ([HB 2729](#))

In the coming weeks, the House Higher Education Committee is expected to approve HB 2729, which would continue funding for open education resources, also known as OERs or “free textbooks.” Despite the significant savings to students that accrue from developing and dispersing OERs, the HECC chose not to seek continued funding for this program.

4. Veterans Benefits ([HB 2565](#))

Since our last report, the House Higher Education Committee considered HB 2565 and sent it to the House floor for consideration where it was approved by a 57-0 vote. The bill will now head to the Senate for consideration. HB 2565 improves legislation passed during the 2015 session that established a priority registration process for veterans attending public universities and community colleges. Universities and veterans worked together over the last year to ensure that veterans will receive a priority when registering for classes throughout their matriculation, rather than just for the first term of attendance.

5. Vaccines for Outbreaks ([HB 3276](#))

OSU is working with Rep. Nancy Nathanson (D-Eugene) on a bill that would ensure that vaccines are made available to students and others during major outbreaks of contagious diseases such as meningitis.

6. University Research Fighting Fund ([HB 2582](#))

On Tuesday, March 14, the House Higher Education Committee considered HB 2582, which would establish a \$20 million fund to support universities as they compete for federal grants. A fact sheet regarding the bill can be found [here](#) and a multi-party letter of support can be found [here](#).

Highlights

On Wednesday, March 1, the [Beaver Caucus](#) lobbied legislators in support for increased appropriations for higher education.

On Tuesday, March 2, advocates from across the state came to Salem to support the OSU Statewide Public Service Programs.

Emerging Issues – Credit transfers

Legislators are taking a continued and greater interest in seeking to increase the transferability of credits, particularly as students progress from community colleges to the public four-year institutions. This issue has been the subject of concern in previous legislative sessions, but this session legislators are showing an interest in moving beyond simply studying the issue to

enacting mandates. The HECC provides a compelling case that transfer students end up needing more credits to graduate with a four-year degree compared to cohorts who matriculate from start to finish at a four-year university.

Odds and Ends

- OSU's [2017 Legislative Priorities](#)
- **Save the Date: OSU Day at the Capitol (Thursday, April 20)**
- **Other legislative issues:** The last wave of bills for consideration crossed the transom over the last week. We will have a better sense of all the bills under consideration in the next week. If you would like information regarding a particular bill that may be of interest or if you have questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Jock Mills, Director: jock.mills@oregonstate.edu

Karli Olsen, Coordinator: karli.olsen@oregonstate.edu