



Oregon

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TO: Board of Trustees, Oregon State University
FROM: Ben Cannon, Executive Director, HECC
DATE: May 13, 2024
SUBJECT: 2024 Q2 Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) Updates

This document highlights some of the recent actions and initiatives of the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC). For more information on our work, initiatives, and programs, go to: www.oregon.gov/highered or [sign up for our mailings lists for email updates](#).

2024 Legislative Session Outcomes: Bills Pass Supporting Numerous Workforce and Student Support-Related Initiatives

We are pleased to publish the [2024 Summary of Legislative Outcomes Related to Postsecondary Education and Training](#). The Legislative Assembly this short session made several strategic investments in education and workforce programs and initiatives including:

- Investments totaling **\$10M (SB 5701) supporting semiconductor-related programming** at four Oregon public universities and two community colleges.
- Separately (though not yet funded) the Legislature established the **Semiconductor Talent Sustaining Fund at HECC (HB 4154)** for the purpose of funding education, training, and research opportunities. [A recent study by ECONorthwest](#) recommended strengthening education pathways and diversifying Oregon's semiconductor workforce.
- **Grants to Grow the Behavioral Health Workforce totaling \$4M** give public universities (SB 1592) funding to expand the behavioral health workforce in Oregon.

Among policy changes made this session, highlights include:

- **Direct Admission:** Senate Bill 1552 requires HECC to establish a mandatory direct admissions system to all Oregon public higher education institutions.
- **Co-requisite Education:** SB 1552 directs HECC and public institutions to examine improving developmental education delivery through co-requisite education.
- **Rules Pertaining to Oregon Opportunity Grant Award Process:** Through SB 1552, HECC is required to develop rules specifying the way the student awards are determined for the Oregon Opportunity Grant.
- **Funding for Applied Baccalaureate Programs:** SB 1552 requires HECC to include in the Community College Support Fund distribution model payments for activity related to applied baccalaureate degrees and Nursing BS degrees.

Public Funding Process for Capital Construction Projects Focuses on Student Needs and Strategic Goals

The HECC Office of Postsecondary Finance and Capital (PFC) coordinates the [process for developing state budget recommendations for state-funded debt](#) as part of the biennial budget development process.

The Commission has developed a rubric that assigns scores for certain priorities for strategic capital development and for state needs, and these criteria are communicated in the [Public University Capital Guide](#). The rubric is designed to prioritize projects that demonstrate certain state priorities related to equity and state goals; cost savings, leveraging of non-state resources, and other factors.

For the community colleges, a rubric based on state statutory requirements is applied to capital proposals, the guidelines for which are detailed in the [Community College Capital Guide](#). In addition to aligning with the strategic, due diligence, and equity goal requirements, community college capital proposals for state-funded debt must be matched from non-state sources.

Analysis of Oregon Opportunity Grant Shows the Aid Continues to Foster Affordability and Success

We are pleased to share the [2023 Annual Report of the Oregon Opportunity Grant \(OOG\) program](#). The OOG provides grants to more than 30,000 students each year, prioritizing those with the greatest financial need. **This year's report focuses on the 2021-22 academic year** when eligibility for the program expanded. Highlights of this year's report include:

- Students who receive the OOG are **more likely to come from communities that are underserved or marginalized** in college/university, including students of color, older students, women, and students from rural counties.
- **Students with the OOG succeeded at the same or higher levels as other students**, across multiple measures of academic progress. Students with the OOG at community colleges had higher retention and earned more credits, and those at public universities and private institutions had nearly identical retention and numbers of credits, compared to students from higher-income backgrounds.
- Students with the OOG are much more likely than higher-income students to face affordability challenges, even accounting for federal and state grant aid, institutional aid, their EFC, and an estimate of their earnings. The expansion of the OOG **improved affordability**, such that an estimated 12.5 percent more recipients had enough resources (not including loans) to afford the cost of attendance at their institutions.

The 2021-22 data does not reflect the impact of increased investments the Legislature made in 2023, nor do they reflect changes that may result from the recent FAFSA simplification.

Encourage Students to Complete the FAFSA or ORSAA and Apply for State Grant Aid

Please continue to encourage students to fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or the Oregon Student Aid Application (ORSAA) to apply for financial aid. To get the latest information on the new applications, you may check the dedicated [HECC Office of Student Access and Completion \(OSAC\) webpage on the recent FAFSA changes](#). In addition to the FAFSA or ORSAA, multiple programs such as the Oregon Promise require additional applications. Resources on financial aid form completion can be found at the links below.

- [OSAC: FAFSA and ORSAA Information](#)
- [Federal Student Aid FAFSA page](#)
- [Federal Student Aid Update on Access to the 2024-25 FAFSA Form for Individuals Without a Social Security Number](#)