

HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING COMMISSION
LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION ON INDIAN SERVICES
2023 ANNUAL REPORT



Published December, 2023.
Office of Executive Director
Higher Education Coordinating Commission
www.oregon.gov/highered

Cover photo: WOU Pow Wow, courtesy of Western Oregon University



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Higher Education Coordinating Commission

3225 25th Street SE

Salem, OR 97302

www.oregon.gov/HigherEd

Patrick Flanagan, Executive Director

Legislative Commission on Indian Services

900 Court Street NE, Room 167

Salem, OR 97301

December, 2023

Dear Mr. Flanagan,

I am pleased to present the 2023 Legislative Commission on Indian Services Annual Report of the Higher Education Coordination Commission (HECC).

We honor the sovereignty of the nine federally-recognized Tribes in Oregon, and deeply value the opportunities we have had to work cooperatively with the educational representatives of the Tribes over the last year. This report summarizes the actions and initiatives the HECC has undertaken in 2023 to foster postsecondary education and training opportunities and pathways for tribal students and learners in Oregon. The HECC is actively serving and partnering with Tribes in Oregon in numerous ways to best address specific needs and promote opportunities for Oregon's tribal students. We are dedicated to building strong relationships with our tribal partners through consultation, communication, concrete actions, and the fulfillment of our commitments, and look forward to continuing and expanding our work together in the coming year.

We are at an exciting juncture for postsecondary education and workforce training in Oregon. This year, we have had the responsibility and honor of continuing to administer the Oregon Tribal Student Grant, a historic investment in affordability for members of the nine federally recognized tribes in Oregon. This program was first launched in 2022, and we are so pleased that the 2023 Legislature funded it for the 2023-25 biennium and codified into law as a permanent program. In addition, the HECC is implementing a major increase the 2023 Legislature approved to the Oregon Opportunity Grant—the state's need-based financial aid program—including increased awards for the lowest income Oregonians. With the Legislature's reauthorization of federal funds, HECC is continuing our implementation of Future Ready Oregon, an investment package passed in 2022 that supports education and training Oregonians need for good-paying jobs and meaningful careers, with a focus on historically underserved and underrepresented communities. These are just a few of our efforts to foster an accessible, affordable, equitable, and coordinated network of college and career training programs, and we are pleased to report on more in this report.

Should you have questions or comments regarding this report, please direct them to Rudyane Rivera-Lindstrom, Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility and HECC Tribal Liaison at (503) 689-4309.

Respectfully,

Ben Cannon

Executive Director, Higher Education Coordinating Commission

TABLE OF CONTENTS

HECC INITIATIVES AND ACTIVITIES	8
DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESSIBILITY	9
REPORTING DATA AND ANALYSIS ON POSTSECONDARY TRENDS, DISAGGREGATED BY RACE/ETHNICITY	10
FUNDING FOR EQUITY AND STUDENT SUCCESS	11
RECENT EQUITY AND STUDENT SUCCESS INITIATIVES AND ACTIVITIES	12
COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY AND ACCESS	12
EXPANDING DIVERSE LEARNER AND WORKER PATHWAYS	14

ABOUT THE HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING COMMISSION

Agency	Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) www.oregon.gov/highered
Key Contacts	Ben Cannon, HECC Executive Director ben.cannon@hecc.oregon.gov 971-273-9222 Rudyane Rivera-Lindstrom, Director of DEIA & Tribal Liaison rudyane.rivera-lindstrom@hecc.oregon.gov 503-689-4309
Major Areas	<p>The Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) works to improve success in higher education and training for Oregonians by ensuring an accessible, affordable, equitable, and coordinated network of college and career training programs.</p> <p>The mission of the Higher Education Coordinating Commission, derived from our chartering statutes, is to: 1) dramatically and equitably improve postsecondary educational attainment levels; 2) improve Oregon’s economic competitiveness and quality of life; and 3) ensure that Oregon students have affordable access to colleges and universities.</p>
Agency Statement	<p>The HECC envisions a future in which all Oregonians—and especially those whom our systems have underserved and marginalized—benefit from the transformational power of high-quality postsecondary education and training (from HECC Vision Statement, Strategic Framework, 2017).</p> <p>Established in 2011 and vested with its current authorities in 2013, the HECC is a 15-member volunteer commission appointed by the Oregon Governor and confirmed by the Oregon State Senate, with funding and policy responsibilities for higher education and the workforce statewide. The HECC supports postsecondary education by administering the statewide higher education and workforce budget of about \$1.8 billion per year; authorizing programs and degrees; administering statewide financial aid, workforce, and educational programs; and providing strategic guidance to state leaders. We also directly serve Oregonians by awarding grant and scholarship aid to students and connecting Oregonians with workforce and training resources. Our work is driven by the State of Oregon’s educational attainment goals for youth and adults, and by our Commission’s goals for equity, student success, affordability, and economic and community impact. To guide that work, we use the Equity Lens to help close system and opportunity gaps to achieve equitable outcomes for all.</p> <p>Oregon’s first statewide Strategic Roadmap for Postsecondary Education and Training was finalized in August, 2021. The Roadmap sets an ambitious path forward by describing how postsecondary systems, policies, and practices need to change in order to achieve Oregon’s goals for educational attainment and equity. The Roadmap also reaffirms the four key areas of strategic activity for the HECC agency in the Commission’s Strategic Framework (2017-2021): 1) REPORTING to Steer Progress 2) FUNDING for Success, 3) Streamlining Learner PATHWAYS, and 4) Expanding Opportunity through OUTREACH. These four Action Areas are aimed to achieve the Commission’s Strategic</p>

Goals for STUDENT SUCCESS, EQUITY, AFFORDABILITY, and ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY IMPACT.

The Commission is supported by the state agency by the same name, comprised of eight distinct offices led by Executive Director Ben Cannon.

HECC INITIATIVES AND ACTIVITIES, 2023

The HECC coordinates activities with tribal partners, the Governor's Office, the Oregon Department of Education, and numerous other education partners to foster postsecondary pathways and student success. The following are significant activities HECC has undertaken in 2023 that support postsecondary education pathways for, and honor our relationships with, the nine federally recognized Tribes in Oregon.

Strategic Plan and Roadmap: Starting in fall 2023, the Commission has launched a public process to update its Strategic Plan, building upon the Strategic Roadmap that was finalized in 2021. The Commission's planning discussions are held at public meetings, and tribal engagement as well as public comment is welcomed. The updated Strategic Plan should be complete by Fall, 2024. Oregon's Strategic Roadmap for Postsecondary Education and Training was developed after an extensive public engagement and development process that commenced in 2019.

The Roadmap sets an ambitious path forward by describing how postsecondary systems, policies, and practices need to change in order to achieve Oregon's goals for educational attainment and equity. The Roadmap sets the following five categories for strategic action as major areas of focus, with specific examples described in the document: 1) transform and innovate to serve students and learners best; 2) center higher education and workforce training capacity on current and future state needs; 3) ensure that postsecondary learners can afford to meet their basic needs; 4) create and support a continuum of pathways from education and training to career; and 5) increase public investment to meet postsecondary goals. The Roadmap is intended to guide not only HECC initiatives, but also those of Oregon's postsecondary education and training partners statewide. During the development of our agency budget request for 2023-25, the HECC collected input from partners on potential actions and initiatives for realizing the Strategic Roadmap and invited input from Tribes and other partners.

Implementation of Recent Investments: Current and future learners will benefit from historic investments in financial aid and other critical postsecondary funding approved by the 2023 Oregon Legislature. We are grateful to Governor Kotek and legislators for prioritizing college affordability, student success, and workforce training for Oregonians. Updates on numerous investments are included in this report.

101 Report on the State of Oregon Higher Education and Training: In June 2023, the HECC released a 101 report on the state of Oregon postsecondary education and training today. This report is drawn from numerous presentations that the HECC gave in April to the Legislature's Joint Ways and Means Committee, Education Subcommittee on the impact of the state investment in the comprehensive postsecondary education and training system. This 101 report focuses on the impact of postsecondary education and training on individuals and communities, as well as progress on state attainment and equity goals; trends in postsecondary and training access and enrollment, affordability, completion, and economic outcomes; key initiatives that the State of Oregon is investing in to improve equity and success for Oregonians; the funding landscape; and more.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, ACCESSIBILITY

Equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility continue to be guiding priorities for the HECC, and we are committed to fostering our connections and collaborations between HECC and the nine federally recognized Tribes in Oregon. Our partners and the public can find former quarterly Government to Government updates as well as other information on work and initiatives in Coordination with Tribes on the HECC website at: www.oregon.gov/HigherEd. The HECC continues to apply our Equity Lens to funding decisions, policies, and proposals, and the Commission adopted an updated version of the Lens in 2021.

Participation in Government-to-Government Education Cluster and convenings: The Executive Director has prioritized participation in the Government-to-Government (G2G) Education Cluster and has committed that either he or his appointee will attend each quarterly gathering. Over the past year Executive Director Ben Cannon and Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Rudyane Rivera-Lindstrom continue to attend Education Cluster meetings, to which the agency provides thorough written updates on recent activity.

Tribal Student Support Network Event: In May 2023 at Portland State University, HECC DEIA staff along with Tribal Education Coordinators planned and convened the HECC's first Tribal Student Support Network. This effort lays the groundwork for the Education Cluster to know the HECC and its offices in addition to networking with colleagues from around the state. For two days, HECC staff, education leaders from the Tribes, and institutional education leaders came together to identify ways to better work together to support postsecondary education and workforce pathways for tribal students in Oregon. It was an inspiring, informative, and critically important conversation, and we hope it is one of many annual events to deepen our work with the sovereign Tribes of Oregon to better serve students of today and the future.

We are so thankful to everyone who planned and/or participated in the event, and to all at the PSU Native American Student and Community Center where the convening was held. Dr. Terry Cross, chair of the commission, led an invocation and welcome both days and facilitated the discussion with representatives of the tribes and institutional partners. The first day was focused on fostering connections between HECC staff and tribal partners, with a welcome from PSU President Stephen Percy, an overview of the HECC by Executive Director Ben Cannon, an overview and current data on of the Oregon Tribal Student Grant by Jake Logan-Laboy from HECC's Office of Student Access and Completion, a presentation on Future Ready Oregon by Jennifer Purcell from the HECC, and a group discussion with HECC and tribal representatives. The second day also included partners from across Oregon's public colleges and universities. The agenda included a presentation on Advancing Native Student Success through Indigenizing Curricula and Urban Landscapes by Professor Judy BlueHorse Skelton and Instructor Emma Johnson from the PSU Indigenous Nations Studies program; a panel of tribal education leaders including Melissa Palanuk from Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, Val Switzler of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Sandy Moody-Jurado of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, and Sandy Henry, Education Director for the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians; a panel of leaders from institutions on programs underway to better serve Native populations including Dean Joseph Bull from PSU Maseeh College of Engineering, Dr. Jennifer Wilson from Oregon Institute of Technology, Daniel Liera-Huchim from TVCC, and Geneva Mayall from COCC; a panel on HECC-led state initiatives; and tabling, networking, a raffle, and more.

Other Collaborations: HECC staff also continue their visits and collaborations around the state. This allows us to strengthen existing relationships and work directly with tribal partners on grant programs and awards, such as the Future Ready Workforce Readiness Grants, Oregon Tribal Student Grant and the Oregon Youth Corps (OYC). HECC staff hope to continue finding ways to collaborate and improve our processes. We are so grateful for the new

opportunities to connect. The HECC also continues serving on the Oregon Department of Education’s American Indian/Alaskan Native State Plan Advisory Committee providing supports and post-secondary perspective as needed.

Equity Leadership: Since 2021, the HECC has had a strong DEIA team comprised of three employees who support the agency’s equity works internally and externally. In addition to the HECC’s first Director of DEIA, two Equity and Accessibility Specialists are supporting current efforts in addition to enhancing our engagement efforts with community partners and students. Rudyane Rivera-Lindstrom, Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility for the HECC along with her DEIA team, continues working with and collaborating with our partners and staff on the HECC’s internal and external goals and initiatives related to racial justice and equity. For the first time, the Governor’s office required every agency to submit a DEI Action Plan. Because of our system of operationalizing our equity commitment and established agency equity goals, the HECC was able to quickly submit the new plan and continue our path of accountability. Internally, agency leadership has adopted four overarching equity goals that align to our Strategic Plan. We continue in the consistency and accountability to the HECC’s work and operationalizing of our Equity Lens. This has taken the form of new Equity Action Plans for each office, the creation of a new Equity Impact Protocol, and now the evaluation and establishing of a new metrics to evaluation agency progress.

In 2023, the HECC continued its intentional examination of its equity processes, levels of understanding of how to authentically engage in the work and identifying what was needed to strengthen the agency’s long-standing commitment to equity and partnership with higher education institutions and other state agencies. In efforts to expand and deepen our engagement work, the DEIA team along with three of our offices and two external representatives from community-based organizations, were able to create an Engagement Assessment Toolkit to assess our agency’s capacity and working understanding of what it means to authentically engage our partners. Externally, collaboration and network building continue with consistent participation in virtual events and the creation of spaces that allow for new relationships to be formed and for our work to continue. The HECC not only collaborates with our postsecondary partners, but also supports and takes part in the equity and racial justice work along with other state agencies. The HECC also continues to reach out to the nine federally recognized Tribes individually in the effort to continue building relationships that move beyond the Education Cluster meetings.

REPORTING DATA AND ANALYSIS ON POSTSECONDARY TRENDS, DISAGGREGATED BY RACE/ETHNICITY

Affordability Improves in Oregon's Colleges and Universities: The HECC Office of Research and Data recently published a new research brief on improvements in affordability at public colleges and universities in Oregon from 2019-20 to 2021-21, and the underlying reasons behind these improvements. Through a combination of expanded financial aid, reduced enrollment, and relatively stable tuition in recent years, more Oregon students at public colleges and universities had resources to cover the cost of attendance in the last two years than at any time in recent history. Read the issue brief [here](#).

Other HECC Reports and Data: In addition, our regular measures and reports feature data on enrollment, affordability, completion, participation in education and workforce programs, employment, and more. We present numerous measures by race/ethnicity and other characteristics.

- [Key Performance Measures](#)
- [Statewide Higher Education Snapshots](#)
- [HECC Reports](#)
- [Equity Briefs](#)

FUNDING FOR EQUITY AND STUDENT SUCCESS

State Higher Education and Training Budget for 2023-25: Application of the Equity Lens, and a focus on equitable outcomes and community engagement helped guide the postsecondary education and training budget development Process for 2023-2025. The HECC presented to the Joint Ways and Means Committee, Education Subcommittee during the first two weeks of April. Presentations by partners and public testimony on the higher education budget followed this. We framed our agency budget presentation this year around four key themes:

ECONOMIC MOBILITY: the need to drive equitable economic mobility and meet critical workforce needs

EQUITY: in addition to applying the Equity Lens to all Investments, the need to intentionally fund equity strategies;

AFFORDABILITY: the need to prioritize college affordability, bolstering financial aid for those with the greatest need; and

STUDENT SUCCESS: the need to sustain investments in institutions to serve student, state, and societal needs, including sustained funding levels for the institutions through the Public University Support Fund and the Community College Support Fund.

In June, legislators approved the HECC budget bill (HB 5025). Highlights in the bill include:

- Approximately \$1B in total public university support funding and \$800M in community college support funding.
- The Oregon Opportunity Grant was increased by \$100M, bringing total state investment to \$308M. This major increase allows HECC to increase award amounts to students to cover a higher proportion of college costs, increasing support for low and middle-income Oregonians.
- The Oregon Tribal Student grant was funded and granted permanent staff, at just over \$24M. Based on this amount, HECC will fully award students next year, and return to the Legislature if further appropriations are needed.
- Up to \$25M in investment in fiscal sustainability for regional universities and Portland State University.
- Previous one-time funding for college access and mentorship programs, including ASPIRE, was continued again on a one-time basis for the biennium. Five programs each receive \$1M.
- Future Ready Oregon was approved to continue spending ARPA funding.
- The Strong Start program, instituted during the pandemic, was continued into the next biennium by allowing \$6.8M in unspent funds to be utilized.
- The Oregon National Guard State Tuition Assistance program was increased by \$800,000.

Unspent 2021-23 funding was carried over for HECC's IT modernization project (FAMIS).

RECENT EQUITY AND STUDENT SUCCESS INITIATIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The HECC's commitment to equity informs policy decision making, funding recommendations, ongoing programs as well as special initiatives.

Sustaining the Equity Work: Building off the statewide convenings supported in past years by the Talent, Innovation, and Equity grant from Lumina Foundation, HECC revamped the Leadership Council for Equity (LCE), a council comprised of community-based organization partners who help raise state awareness about the inequities that affect historically marginalized and underserved students in postsecondary education and workforce training opportunities in Oregon. LCE aims to provide insight, advice, and guidance to the HECC agency and staff in efforts to close achievement gaps and align to the goals of our Strategic Roadmap. In 2023, the HECC committed to supporting in a statewide Community Table comprised of community members throughout Oregon in collaboration with Parakata Consulting, CAPACES Leadership Institute, Oregon Community Foundation, the Lumina Foundation and others to help transform Oregon's postsecondary higher education institutions to better serve underserved students. Born from the 2022 Joint Task Force on Underrepresented Students in Higher Education, the Community Table will become the first statewide community advocacy organization on behalf of underrepresented students in Oregon's postsecondary education and workforce training landscape. By strategically coordinating and collaborating educative trainings, Community Table members will strengthen their knowledge and commitment towards advocacy efforts for identified legislative policies they will support for the 2025 legislative session and beyond. These efforts align strongly with LCE goals; current members from the LCE have committed to also serve on the Community Table to increase their opportunity help transform Oregon's higher education systems.

2023 Educator Equity Report Highlights Diversification Efforts: The Educator Advancement Council provided funding through HECC for a new round of Educator Equity Plan Implementation grants in the 2023-2025 budget. The Commission will review Educator Equity Plans for each public university educator preparation program in spring 2024. The universities are supported by a community of practice to refine their goals and plans to enhance university program quality and candidate experiences.

The next Educator Equity Report is coming in September 2024. In preparation for the release of the 2024 report, the Oregon Longitudinal Data Collaborative (OLDC) is working on a statewide educator workforce report to detail teacher recruitment, preparation, and employment.

COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY AND ACCESS

The HECC continues working to expand and protect college affordability through our ongoing administration of financial aid and access programs as well as new initiatives. **Go to OregonStudentAid.gov to learn more and apply for grants and scholarships.**

Fall Enrollment is Up Overall: We recently shared a [summary of the fall 4th week enrollment data for the public institutions](#) on our website. Across all public institutions, enrollment rose 4.3 percent this fall, compared to 2022. This is the largest increase since the pandemic began; however, enrollment has not returned to pre-pandemic levels. The number of learners at community college is higher in 2023 than in 2022 (84,740), rising 7.3 percent. Enrollment rose at 12 of the 17 colleges. The number of public university learners is slightly higher in 2023 than in 2022 (96,950), rising 1.6 percent. Enrollment rose at some universities and fell at others.

Oregon Tribal Student Grant: The Oregon Tribal Student Grant (OTSG) program is continued and funded at \$24 million for the 2023-2025 biennium. The HECC proposed related legislation and it was passed in HB 3565. As a result, the Oregon Tribal Student Grant (OTSG) is now part of Oregon law. The OTSG is expected to pay for most or all public undergraduate college-related expenses—including tuition, housing, books, and other costs not covered by other grants—for eligible students who are enrolled members of Oregon’s nine federally recognized Tribes. Current and prospective students can learn more and apply [here](#). We thank Government-to-Government tribal partners for the close consultation and partnership with launching the grant and supporting applicants. Based on the funding this biennium, HECC will fully award students this year, and return to the Legislature if further appropriations are needed. We are very pleased to see the OTSG continue, now formally part of Oregon law, and we look forward to seeing it grow into the future serving more students at the undergraduate and graduate level. Current and prospective students can [learn more and apply here](#). The [Oregon Tribal Student Grant application](#) is still open for the 2023-24 school year for students planning to attend this academic year. Current and continuing students who are members of Oregon’s nine federally recognized Tribes are eligible and encouraged to apply: <https://oregonstudentaid.gov/grants/oregon-tribal-student-grant/>. The deadline to apply for the 2023-24 academic year is April 5, 2024.

Oregon Opportunity Grant: The HECC is implementing a [major increase to the Oregon Opportunity Grant \(OOG\)](#). Oregon’s need-based financial aid program serving Oregonians with grants toward postsecondary expenses received a \$100 million increase for 2023-25, bringing total funding to \$308 million in 2023-25. With the added funding, the HECC Office of Student Access and Completion (OSAC) is increasing awards for the lowest income Oregonians. These need-based grants follow the students. For the first time, HECC is able to award the new 75 percent of average tuition to the highest need Oregonians whether or not these students attend a community college or a public university. Students apply for the OOG by completing the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#) or the [Oregon Student Aid Application \(ORSAA\)](#).

OSAC Scholarship and Grant applications Open for 2023-24 School Year: OSAC has officially opened its OSAC Scholarship Application for the 2023-2024 academic year. As of November 1, students can now apply for OSAC Scholarships, the Oregon Promise Grant, the Oregon Child Care Grant, and even more state grant programs. OSAC administers more than \$130 million in state-funded grants and privately-funded scholarships to help Oregon students meet their college expenses. The federal FAFSA Simplification Act is transforming the FAFSA and our own ORSAA application. The 2024-25 FAFSA application is anticipated to open by December 31, 2023. OSAC is offering trainings and has a dedicated webpage with resources and information <https://oregonstudentaid.gov/fafsa-orsaa/2024-25-fafsaorsaa-changes/>. Information on upcoming webinars on '24-25 FAFSA/ORSAA can be access at <https://oregonstudentaid.gov/resources/webinars/>. Learn more and find deadlines and applications at OregonStudentAid.gov.

OSAC Continues Outreach and Presentations Across the State: Go to OregonStudentAid.gov to [request support](#) from OSAC at an upcoming event, in a classroom, or providing training to your students/communities. [You can also sign up to receive our e-newsletters here.](#)

- **[Webinars:](#)** OSAC hosts a variety of webinars throughout the year for students, parents, and career/college practitioners. Our webinars are to provide up-to-date information about programs we serve.
- **[Free Publications and Posters:](#)** Order or download free posters and brochures. English and Spanish versions available.

Tribal Access to Oregon Foster Youth Tuition and Fee Waiver: HECC-OSAC continues to be available to ensure eligible tribal foster youth and youth experiencing houselessness 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@state.or.us.

Tribal Partners Continue to be Invited to Join the FAFSA Plus+ program: FAFSA Plus+ is a year-round program that includes FAFSA completion activities, events, and support, financial literacy information, scholarship resources, award letter help, and other college access information. OSAC continues to share student-level FAFSA data and best practices with sites, allowing site staff to provide targeted assistance to their students who need to complete and submit a FAFSA, make corrections, and notify students who have been selected for verification. Since the expansion, HECC has entered into data-sharing agreements with the NAYA Early College Academy, the Southern Oregon Indian Education Program (SOIEP), and The Klamath Tribes.

Partnering with High Schools and Partners Statewide on Pre-college Mentoring and Outreach: OSAC works to prepare students of all backgrounds for success in college and career, through Oregon ASPIRE, community outreach presentations and more.

EXPANDING DIVERSE LEARNER AND WORKER PATHWAYS

We continue our work to expand and streamline learner pathways to better serve the needs of diverse students today, including collaborative campus efforts to streamline the community college to university transfer pathway, working to improve affordability and time to degree for students, including low-income, first-generation, and underserved learner groups, and to support employment and workforce success.

Transfer Council Focused on Streamlining Transfer Pathways: The Transfer Council—convened in October 2021 and comprised of representatives from Oregon public universities, community colleges, and high schools—made considerable progress on the implementation of the goals set forth by Senate Bill 233 (2021) to streamline the credit transfer process from two to four-year institutions to save students time and money. Since convening in October 2021, the Transfer Council and its subcommittees have focused on developing a common course numbering system, advancing the work on Major Transfer Maps and other credit transfer-related issues. The Transfer Council is moving forward with the transfer initiatives that started with HB 2998 (2017).”

Continued administration of First Generation Student Success grants: Thanks to continued funding approved by the Oregon Legislature, HECC continues to administer the First Generation Student Success grants funds supporting nine Oregon public community colleges and projects, programs, and strategies that will increase the number of students who are underrepresented by race/ethnicity as defined in ORS 342.120, including low income, college-bound, and/or first-generation and who enroll in community colleges statewide and make progress toward a certificate or degree. Grant projects are serving Latinx, Native American, and African American students.

Future Ready Oregon Implementation: The Legislature’s reauthorization of \$111.8 million Other Funds in ARPA funding, HECC is continuing our implementation of Future Ready Oregon, an investment package passed in 2022 that supports education and training Oregonians need for good-paying jobs and meaningful careers, with a focus on historically underserved and underrepresented communities.

The HECC is responsible for administering a majority of the Future Ready Oregon investments and providing a comprehensive annual report, reviewing each of the programs established under Senate Bill 1545 (2022) and assessing performance and outcomes of the programs. The investments administered by the HECC include the following grant-funded programs and strategic initiatives:

- **Prosperity 10,000** – \$35 million to Oregon’s nine Local Workforce Development Boards to expand capacity to provide career coaching services, develop paid training opportunities, and provide scholarships, stipends, and wrap-around supports through partnerships with community-based organizations, schools, labor organizations, and other workforce service providers.
- **Postsecondary Career Pathway Training Programs** – \$14.9 million to community colleges to expand education and training programs, and connected student supports, that lead to jobs in high-wage, high-demand industries and occupations.
- **Credit for Prior Learning Grant Program** – \$10 million in competitively awarded grants to colleges and universities to expand opportunities to receive academic credit for knowledge and skills gained through work, life, military, formal and informal education experiences.
- **Workforce Ready Grant Program** – \$95 million in competitive grant funding for workforce service providers and community-based organizations to administer workforce programs that lead to careers in healthcare, manufacturing, and technology.
- **Workforce Benefits Navigator Pilot Program** – Grants to Oregon’s nine Local Workforce Development Boards to establish Workforce Benefits Navigator pilot programs in WorkSource Oregon one-stop centers and community-based organizations across the state.
- **Statewide Industry Consortia** – Three Consortia representing the healthcare, manufacturing, and technology sectors identify needs, address gaps and opportunities, and increase equitable workforce participation.

Recent Future Ready Oregon Updates

Workforce Ready Grant award: The HECC announced in a [recent press release](#) that it has offered Future Ready Oregon Workforce Ready Grant awards to 30 community-based organizations and workforce service providers to advance innovative and collaborative workforce development programs and partnerships. A combined total of approximately \$35 million has been preliminarily awarded, making this the largest round of Future Ready Oregon grant funding to date. “Workforce Ready Grants, Round Two: Innovation in Workforce Programs” support education and training programs that center the needs of Oregon’s underserved and marginalized communities and connect individuals to the resources they need for good-paying jobs and meaningful careers in key sectors of Oregon’s economy—healthcare, manufacturing, and technology. A number of projects directly serve tribal members; for more information, please see the [table of preliminary project descriptions](#).

Future Ready Oregon Industry Consortia: The HECC, in partnership with the Workforce and Talent Development Board, has started convening the Industry Consortia, a component of the Future Ready Oregon investment package. Three separate, statewide Industry Consortia represent the healthcare, manufacturing, and technology industry sectors. Each Consortium is comprised of representatives from industry, education, labor, and community-based organizations. These Consortia were envisioned as a forum for building partnerships that more deeply engage partners across Oregon’s workforce landscape in identifying opportunities and addressing sector-specific workforce development challenges. Each consortium convenes for quarterly public meetings for

the purpose of informing strategic policies and Future Ready Oregon funding opportunities, and [details can be found here](#).

Continued Administration of Workforce Programs as well as Administration of Adult Basic

Skills: We work with partners statewide to train returning students, adults, dislocated workers, and all Oregonians with the skills they need for gainful employment. The HECC is the administrative entity for several federally funded workforce and education programs, including those authorized by Title I and Title II of the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

Supporting Dislocated Workers: The HECC Office of Workforce Investments (OWI) continues its extensive work to mitigate challenges for workers and employers. The OWI works with the Oregon Employment Department, partner agencies, and community-based organizations to coordinate Rapid Response services supporting affected workers and businesses during reported layoffs. The OWI continues to support businesses and Oregon's nine Local Workforce Development Boards in their service.

Youth Employment Partnerships Serving Tribes: Oregon Youth Works is an initiative charged with empowering Oregon's youth by supporting workforce and positive youth development programs that cultivate practical skills, foster community engagement, and drive sustainable growth. This is achieved through a variety of programs and service models to meet participant and community needs. Currently OYW is directly or indirectly partnering with seven of Oregon's nine federally recognized sovereign tribal nations. In 2023 Oregon Youth Works increased engagement through multi-state partnership visits with tribal members. These visits helped staff better connect, learn, and engage with each tribe about their tribal specific plans and considerations to better support young people in education and workforce, learn about potential barriers, and considerations.

Oregon Youth Works consists of: Oregon Youth Corps (OYC), Oregon Conservation Corps (OCC), Oregon Youth Employment Program (OYEP), Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Youth, and with the Oregon Department of Human Services Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Youth Employment Program. All OYW programs apply the HECC Equity Lens in awarding grants by identifying and supporting populations with greater vulnerability including communities of color, indigenous communities, communities with members who have limited proficiency in English and communities with lower-income members. These five programs are described below.

Oregon Conservation Corps (OCC): The HECC has awarded nearly \$11 million in grant funding for the 2023-2025 biennium. OCC is serving youth from the following Oregon federally recognized sovereign tribal nations: Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, Confederated Tribes of the Siletz, Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Indians, and Klamath Tribes. OCC partnerships focus on reaching youth from diverse cultural backgrounds, identities, and abilities and plan to serve upwards of 500 young adults in the 23-25 grant cycle. OCC partners operate through a crew-based model to reduce the risk wildfire poses to communities and critical infrastructure, help to create fire-adapted communities, and engage youth and young adults in workforce training. Tribal youth not only administer fuels mitigation, but they also participate in the delivery and care of their tribal elders through delivering wood and hardening homes from wildfire risk simultaneously learning cultural history and essential employability skills.

Oregon Youth Corps (OYC): Oregon Youth Corps (OYC) opens opportunities for young people to develop employability skills, connect with their community, learn about themselves, and grow interest in what comes next in life. OYC delivers funding and resources to youth workforce training providers through a variety of mechanisms, including intergovernmental agreements and grants awards.

Currently, OYC is providing grant awards through June 2024 to Coquille Indian Tribe, Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, and Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Reservation. However, in 2024 OYC will transition from grants, to pursue the goal of establishing partnerships with all nine of Oregon's federally recognized tribal sovereign nations, utilizing Intergovernmental Agreements (IGA). Meetings are already occurring to ensure IGA's are co-developed to enhance youth workforce and development goals and objectives shared between OYC and each specific Tribal Sovereign Nation. Data gathered from the IGAs will also be available to share with the Oregon Department of Education, Office of Indian Education's American Indian/Alaska Native Student Success Plan. Additionally, OYC collaborates with Federal Land Management Agencies will continue to help support and enhance a federal youth employment initiative called the Indian Youth Service Corps.

OYC provides program grants with a goal to provide youth workforce and development experiences for individuals, provided by organizations in each of Oregon's 36 counties. Grants emphasize the teaching and practicing of workforce skill development and are modeled through stewardship focused work-based learning experiences. Grants in this past biennium helped provide over 1,400 workforce opportunities for young people.

Oregon Youth Employment Program: The HECC received \$9 million in 2021 to support the Oregon Youth Corps and implement the Oregon Youth Employment Program. HB 2092 (2021) complemented the funding and modernized the program requirements. The purpose of the program is to provide equitable and inclusive opportunity and access to meaningful experiences for youth, to elevate collaborative impact within communities and their populations, and to develop youth and young adults (14-24) through skills training, work experience, career development and youth development. Statute requires the Oregon Youth Employment Program to ensure that at least 75 percent of program participants are from communities of color, rural communities, communities that have faced generational poverty or other communities that have been historically underrepresented in youth employment as identified by the commission by rule. Statute further dictates that no less than 20 percent of program funds are available to organizations with direct experience serving communities of color.

Department of Human Services (DHS) Youth Employment Program: The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Youth Employment Program (YEP) is run year-round to create employment experiences for youth in the JOBS Program. The focus is on TANF eligible teen parents, non-parenting teens, young parents, and TANF related youth in the Child Welfare Independent Living Program and Vocational Rehabilitation Program between the ages of 16-24.

Oregon WIOA Youth Programs: The Oregon WIOA Youth Programs continue to provide workforce development training opportunities to young people ages 14-24 through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). WIOA Youth programs serve both in-school and out-of-school youth through a variety of job opportunities such as summer and year-round employment opportunities, pre-apprenticeship programs, internships and job shadowing and on-the-job training. Additional opportunities include education offered concurrently with workforce preparation and training; leadership development opportunities; personal supportive services, labor market and employment information, and postsecondary education and training preparation activities.

College Credit while in High School – Accelerated Learning: Educational experiences that allow high school students to earn college credit while in high school are known in Oregon as “accelerated learning” programs. The HECC works with educators across the state to ensure that students may access quality accelerated learning programs while in high school. Students participating in accelerated learning usually start on a pathway to a college degree or certificate. These programs aim to provide bridges that support and encourage college and career preparation. They can smooth the transition into a college or university by enabling high school students to successfully earn college credit and participate in programming to orient and motivate them for postsecondary degrees

and certificates. The HECC coordinates closely with the Oregon Department of Education, community colleges, and public universities to implement the state's equity lens through the state standards for college credit in high school.

Adult Basic Skills Annual Conference: In Oregon, adult education and high school equivalency education are crucial to communities statewide, and the HECC is pleased to support the educators and partners who do this critical work. In October 2023, HECC convened its annual Oregon Adult Basic Skills conference, which focused on effective strategies, techniques, latest trends, and best practices in the field of adult basic skills and high school equivalency education.

Statewide Administration of Oregon's High School Equivalency Program: Includes GED® test preparation, instruction, testing processing in Oregon, and hosting a national conference for educators. In 2023, HECC continued to administer state funding invested by the Legislature to defray the cost of GED® testing and/or provide support in the form of wraparound services to minimize barriers to earning a GED® test credential that many GED® test candidates face. Wraparound services include trained staff, professional development, testing fees, transportation costs, food, childcare, curriculum, and technology.

AmeriCorps Program Recruitment: Oregon Volunteers' AmeriCorps programs are actively recruiting for the next cohort of members eager to meet community's pressing needs and earn an education award for college – now state-tax free in Oregon! Positions are still open in education, conservation, health programs and more. Partners are invited to raise awareness about AmeriCorps opportunities with the new What's at your core? marketing campaign.

Continued Approval of New Academic Programs at the public colleges and universities.

HECC Elects Sandy Rowe as Chair, and Greg Hamann as Vice Chair: At its November 2023 public meeting, the Higher Education Coordinating Commission unanimously elected Sandy Rowe as the incoming Chair of the Commission, and Greg Hamann as incoming Vice Chair, to be effective January 1, 2024. Chair Terry Cross will conclude his position as Chair in December, and will be recognized for his service at the December 14 public meeting. Learn more about [Commission membership here](#).

Three New Members Confirmed, and Two Members Nominated for service on the Higher Education Coordinating Commission: We are pleased to welcome three new commissioners to the Higher Education Coordinating Commission. In September 2023, the Oregon Senate confirmed Governor Tina Kotek's nominations for appointments of Rachel Biscoe, Evelyn Kocher, and Gayle Yamasaki. Their service formally began on October 5, 2023. Rachel Biscoe is serving in the community college student position, Evelyn Kocher is serving in a position at large, and Gayle Yamasaki is serving in the second congressional district position. Governor Kotek also recently announced nominations for appointments of two new HECC members: Jennifer Procter Andrews, a Coquille Tribal Council member, and Theresa Martinez. Jennifer Procter Andrews is nominated for the position currently held by Terry Cross. Theresa Martinez is nominated for the position currently held by Helen Edwards. The Senate is expected to consider the nominations for confirmation in early 2024.

HIGHER
EDUCATION
COORDINATING
COMMISSION

