

Government Relations Update for February 2015

2015 Session Opens with Democratic Majorities in both Chambers and a New Governor

The all-consuming news in Salem at the start of the 2015 legislative session was the resignation of Governor John Kitzhaber, effective Wednesday, February 18, and the swearing in of Oregon's 38th Governor, Kate Brown. Governor Brown is a veteran of Oregon politics: she was elected to the House of Representatives from 1991-1996, until she was elected to the State Senate. In 1998 she was elected as the Senate Democratic Leader, then the minority party. In 2006 when the Democrats won a majority of seats in the Senate, she became Oregon's first woman to serve as Senate Majority Leader. Brown was elected as Secretary of State in 2008 and re-elected in 2012. Brown has a law degree, and prior to being elected to the Oregon legislature she practiced family and juvenile law. Brown is an equestrienne and a former competitive diver. She's a champion for civil and gay rights, children's welfare and labor issues. In her inauguration speech she promised to work hard to restore the public's frayed trust in government as well as focus on the economic issues facing working Oregonians. She will round out her staff in the next week or so. Governor Brown is also expected to pick her replacement as Secretary of State in the near future.



Kicker May Kick

On Thursday, February 19th, the February Revenue Forecast predicted that the Kicker is likely to kick, to the tune of \$349 million. Legislators will have roughly \$14.8 billion to spend in this biennium. The Close of Session forecast looks like it will be more than 2% stronger than the initial forecast in 2013, triggering the personal income kicker. Oregon's General Fund revenues have grown at a rapid pace in recent months driven by a healthy job market, and tax collections have outstripped expectations since December, economists said. Ways and Means co-chairs crafted their draft outline budget with the kicker in mind, so we don't expect any major announcements about cuts to the 2015-17 budget, but it has now become more difficult for Oregon's Public Universities to achieve our budget goal of \$755 million.

Bills of Interest in 2015

Summaries prepared by Nels Johnson, Thorn Run Partners, in collaboration with the seven public universities.

SB 44: Extends sunset for tax credit for university venture development funds contribution.

HB 2645: Veteran priority in registration bill was referred to the House Higher Education Committee this week, after passing out of the House Veterans and Emergency Preparedness Committee.

SB 81: Called the Free Community College Tuition bill, it requires that tuition for certain courses offered at community college to be waived if person meets specified requirements, within two years of graduating from HS or being awarded a GED. The Senate Education Committee held a Public Hearing SB 81. The conversation was framed around the question of affordability and higher education. Ben Cannon, Executive Director of the HECC, testified on the issue of affordability.

SB 84: Establishes statewide standards and funding mechanisms for accelerated college credit programs for high school students. Oregon Tech's Director of Academic Agreements, Marla Edge, testified in support of SB84 and recommended amendments to maintain more faculty control over the process to align course outcomes and qualify teachers.

SB112: Establishing a Career and Technical Education Council that will make recommendations on a CTE Revitalization Grants.

SB 113: Directs the HECC to define employee categories at post-secondary institutions and report on staffing ratios. PSU and SOU testified, sharing concerns regarding the complications involved with implementing such a policy.

SB 473: Reporting Sexual Orientation: The Senate Education Committee held a Public Hearing on SB473, which would require each public university, community college or other institution of higher education to allow students, faculty and staff to identify sexual orientation on forms used to collect demographic data. Rep. Nosse and Sen. Gelser both testified in favor of the bill. EOU testified that there were technical issues that needed to be fixed.

SB 518: Directs HECC to convene a work group of representatives from public universities and community colleges to determine whether the 40-40-20 mission would be enhanced by enabling universities to award associate degrees. The bill's chief sponsor, Sen. Dembrow, testified in favor of the bill stating that his aim was to provide those students who have attended three years of university, but haven't been able to secure a bachelor's degree.



Chemeketa Community College EMT students participated in CTE Day in the State Capitol.

HB 2407: Seeks to rethink how the Oregon Opportunity Grant is allocated. The details are being worked out in the -1 Amendment process by the HECC. The basic proposal is to offer about \$2,100 per student, and to change the allocation from a first-come-first-served basis to focusing on those students with the greatest financial needs first. At the hearing legislators expressed an interest in ensuring that if the OOG was going to be allocated differently, that universities put in place some sort of procedures/protocol to ensure that OOG students were able to graduate in four years.

HB 2728: Establishes Oregon Talent Council and eliminates ETIC. The bill also establishes an innovation fund to invest in the development of emerging and high-demand programs in engineering, healthcare, energy and other sectors. President Maples testified in the House Higher Education Committee in support of HB2728 on February 27, 2015, and the seven public universities sent a letter of support.

HB 2766: Sponsored by Rep. Parrish, the bill would allow language-based computer coding to satisfy any language requirement in public schools, and second language requirements in community colleges and post-secondary institutions. PSU testified that there is room to work out amendments but that they can't support the bill in its current form.

Presentations

President Maples presented to the [House Committee on Higher Education](#) on February 4, 2015 about the TRU Challenges and Opportunities, and to the Senate Committee on Education on March 3, 2015 along with the other three TRU presidents.



President Maples listens to Jim Piro, CEO of PGE, as they both offer support for HB2728 to establish the Oregon Talent Council.

Please see the [Oregon Tech Government Relations](#) webpage for copies of letters and presentations.

For more information about Oregon Tech's legislative agenda or any bills during the 2015 session, contact Lita.Colligan@oit.edu or Brittany.Miles@oit.edu.