

Government Relations Update for the Campus Community February 2017

Legislators opened the 2017 Session on February 1st, and quickly began introducing bills and holding public hearings. Summary from the Oregon Council of Presidents:

- Bills are being heard in committees and noncontroversial ones are starting to move through the process. This week, both the House and Senate held floor votes on a handful of bills.
- The Senate Workforce Committee has been holding informational hearings on PERS in preparation for a larger conversation about possible pension reform this session.
- The Legislature continues to grapple with big issues around the budget – i.e., additional revenue to close the \$1.8 billion budget shortfall. Tension remains between business and labor leadership.
- More than 300 bills have been introduced since February 1st. The deadline has passed for more bill requests to be made other than the 5 priority measures that each member has as well as additional members that may be requested by the Senate President and the House Rules Committee. Legislators have until February 28th to do new measures.

Budget

- The Joint Ways & Means Committee (JWM) has almost completed its road show hearings on the state budget and representatives of public universities have had a strong presence at each hearing. Remaining destination: [3/3/2017 6:00 PM - Tillamook](#)
- The JWM Education Subcommittee is beginning to receive presentations from state agencies on funding for P-20 Education. The Subcommittee will begin considering higher education budgets in mid-March.
- The first revenue forecast of the Session showed \$200M in anticipated additional state revenue for the next biennium, slightly reducing the state's \$1.8B budget gap.



University students advocate for +\$100M in the Public University Support Fund at the Joint Ways and Means hearing in Madras in February. Photo courtesy of Jock Mills, OSU. Sign design courtesy of Bill Goloski, Oregon Tech.

First Win of the Session!

Oregon Tech successfully advocated for a “technical fix” to the [bonding bill](#) related to the first phase of the Cornett Hall Renovation/ Center for Engineering on February 23rd when the Capital Construction

Subcommittee authorized the changes in statutory language. Oregon Tech can now proceed with the Cornett Hall Renovation, and continue advocating for \$42M for Phase 2: the Center for Excellence in Engineering and Technology.

Here are some bills of interest...

SB55: Oregon Promise/Free Community College

SB55 removes the \$10M funding cap on the Oregon Promise program which was the cost for one cohort of students for one year. The Governor's Recommended Budget (GRB) includes \$39.7M to cover the estimated cost of free community college tuition for two cohorts of students for two years. The Co-Chairs have raised the issue of whether the state can fully fund the program due to budget constraints.

The HECC has reported on the first cohort of students to access the program, which has raised questions from some legislators about the demographics of students being served. Due to the program model, which requires students to utilize their federal and state need-based aid first, and then receive Oregon Promise funds, only about half of the Oregon Promise grant recipients are PELL-eligible. Key preliminary findings about applicants to participate in the program include:

- About 1/3 of all Oregon HS graduates applied
- Almost half of the applicants were not Pell-eligible
- Approximately 1%-3% of applicants were from families with expected family contributions above \$81,000
- Oregon saw the largest jump nationwide in FAFSA completion even though the overall number of HS graduates was flat.

Key preliminary findings about recipients of OR Promise awards include:

- Generally, there were declines in postsecondary enrollment
- OR Promise students represent about 5% of all community college (CC) students
- About half of OR Promise recipients do not receive Pell grants
- Most OR Promise dollars go to recipients with higher incomes
- Education Northwest also released early findings on program. The [study finds](#) Oregon Promise had an influence on students' college-going decisions, particularly first-generation college students.

In addition, the HECC is expecting about a \$1.5 – 3.5M cost overrun for the first year of the program. This session, the universities are advocating that the legislature fund the need-based Oregon Opportunity Grant fully before they add to the size of the Oregon Promise program. Since additional funds are needed to support the first cohort of students this year, the Senate Education Committee



Lita Colligan uses the force with Senator Arnie Roblan, Chair of the Senate Education Committee. Senator Roblan is a big Star Wars fan, former high school teacher, and an advocate for Oregon's colleges and universities. Note the Oregon Tech pendant in Luke's arms.

held a work session on the amended bill that will remove the funding cap and recommended a Do-Pass, with a referral to Ways and Means on February 15th.

SB207: Credit for Advanced Placement (AP)/International Baccalaureate (IB) Scores:

The Senate Education Committee held a public hearing on SB 207 which would require colleges and universities to award credit for AP/IB passing scores at a level of 3. Universities support the intent of the bill, and universities have been awarding AP and IB credit for successful test scores for over a decade, but we do not support including a specific test score for all courses in statute. Our faculty believe that some courses require a test score of 4 or 5 to represent equivalency to college-level work. The universities submitted written and verbal testimony on the bill in early February.

SB8: Allows Mergers of Community Colleges and Universities

This bill was introduced by the Senate President to allow a voluntary merger of a community college and university, by presenting a plan to the HECC that proposes how the merged institution would be governed, and the efficiencies that would be achieved. The universities are neutral on this bill, after it was amended, since it is voluntary in nature.

HB 2864: Relating to Cultural Competency

The universities continue to work with the Oregon Student Association (OSA) and legislative sponsors such as Rep. Alonso Leon on amendments that will allow universities more discretion in how they deliver training and meet the intent of this bill.

SB2540 and others: Applied Baccalaureates at Community Colleges

Several community colleges are seeking authorization to award applied baccalaureate degrees. The Governor's staff did not introduce a bill to expand community college authority to offer baccalaureate degrees, but the colleges are now organizing in Salem to seek that authority, especially for nursing. The public universities are willing to fill gaps in the market to respond to regional or state employer needs.

HB 2257/HB 2729: Extension of Textbook Affordability and "Open Education Resources"

These bills would continue funding for the development of free textbooks at colleges and universities. Oregon House Bill 2871, passed during the 2015 Legislative Session, provided a legislative investment in the area of textbook affordability, with a specific focus on the development of Open Educational Resources (OERs). A list of awardees can be found here:

<https://www.oregon.gov/HigherEd/Pages/oer.aspx>

SB 134: Veterans Services on Campuses

The seven public universities support SB 143 which would establish a grant program to supplement campus resources available to serve veteran students. We have reported the level of veteran services at each campus, and funding will be determined by the level of services that are currently offered. Oregon Tech is considered a "B" campus, which means that Oregon Tech currently does not have "campus veteran resource centers or campus veteran resource coordinators." Grants for these campuses would establish new centers and recruit and employ coordinators. Below is the text that we submitted for joint university testimony.

Oregon Institute of Technology (OIT): Oregon Tech has a VA certifying official in the Registrar's Office and the Student Veterans Program maintains a Veterans Lounge. Our veteran support services are embedded into our student services programs, to ensure that veterans receive comprehensive services. Our Director of Retention started a small bridge loan program to provide students no-interest short term loans to complete their term. While Oregon Tech does not have a separate veteran resource center or coordinator, we are ranked #2 for Best West Colleges for Veterans by *U.S. News & World Report*. Oregon Tech could be classified as an "A" campus to expand veterans' services within the comprehensive student services center, or as a "B" campus to establish a separate center and employ coordinators.



HB 2782: Financing of Expansion of OSU-Cascades Campus, was scheduled in the House Higher Education & Workforce Development Committee on February 23rd.

Additional Legislative Initiatives of Interest

- Increased access for student parents to state ERDC (Employment Related Day-Care).
- Increased access for student parents to TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families).
- Increased access for students to SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits.

Policy Bills of the Public Universities

- **HB 2582 Establish a University Research "Fighting Fund"**

Oregon's public universities are requesting the investment of \$20 million to establish matching funds that will enable universities to better compete for federal grants. The Fighting Fund would match federal research grants awarded to Oregon universities when they compete for grants that enable research and economic development in Oregon. The fighting fund is not recommended in the GRB but is being introduced by Legislators in the 2017 session.

- Referred to House Higher Education Committee
- Tentatively scheduled for a public hearing on Feb. 28th or March 2nd.

- **HB 2565 Expand Veteran Priority Registration and Services**

The public universities are working proactively with legislative sponsors to broaden and clarify priority registration for Veterans, so they have a small preference when signing up for classes and can ensure that they can graduate while their veterans benefits are available.

- Referred to House Higher Education Committee

Opportunity for Campus Engagement: May 16, 2017: TRU Day in the Capitol

Please save the date for this advocacy day for the technical and regional universities. All seven university presidents will be there for the Council of Presidents and to conduct advocacy meetings with legislators. Some board members, faculty and students will be invited to join this event.

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