

**C OCC Board of Directors
Advocacy Committee
Meeting Agenda
September 23, 2026
2:30 – 3:30 p.m.
Remotely via Zoom**

Committee Members: Erin Foote Morgan (Chair), Erica Skatvold, Erin Merz

C OCC Staff: Greg Pereira (President), Lucas Alberg (Director of Marketing and Public Relations), Kyle Matthews (Executive Assistant to the President)

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Approval of July 17, 2026 Meeting Minutes – Items 2.1-4**
- 3. Evaluate Past Committee Performance and Discuss 2027 Goal Setting**
- 4. Priority Advocacy Issues and Strategies**
 - a. Laptops for Deer Ridge Students-in-Custody
 - b. OCCA Talking Points – Item 4.1-3
 - c. Lightcast Economic Impact Report
- 5. Outreach Updates and Strategies**
- 6. Next meeting: To be determined**
- 7. Adjourn**

**COCC Board of Directors
Advocacy Committee
Meeting Minutes
July 17, 2026
10:00 – 11:00 a.m.
Remotely via Zoom**

Committee Members: Erin Foote Morgan (Chair), Erica Skatvold, Erin Merz

COCC Staff: Greg Pereira (President), Lucas Alberg (Director of Marketing and Public Relations), Kyle Matthews (Executive Assistant to the President)

- 1. Called to Order at 10:02 a.m.**
- 2. Approval of May 22, 2026 Meeting Minutes – Items 2.1-4**
 - a. For item 3a.1, Merz clarified that students-in-custody at Deer Ridge Correctional Institution (DRCI) have not *written letters* of concern regarding access to laptops. They have only *expressed* their concerns.
 - b. Motion to approve the minutes with the above correction.
 - i. 1st: Erin Merz
 - ii. 2nd: Erica Skatvold
 - iii. In favor: Erin Foote Morgan, Erica Skatvold, Erin Merz
 - iv. Opposed or abstained: none
- 3. Priority Advocacy Issues and Strategies**
 - a. Proposed Federal Grant Rule Changes
 - i. Foote Morgan reminded the Committee about an email she forwarded to them regarding proposed changes to rules on federal grants. She asked if this could be something for the Committee to address and what steps could be taken.
 - ii. Pereira said that the Oregon Community College Association (OCCA) is working on a unified response that COCC could support. He offered to discuss it with them further.
 - iii. Alberg said that this issue has not been discussed by the OCCA's Campus Advocacy Coordinators (CAC). He will plan on asking about it during their next meeting on the Thursday after this meeting.
 - b. Other OCCA Updates
 - i. Pereira said that the OCCA is working on a response regarding state-level interpretations of federal legislation around how restrictive workforce Pell grants should be. The federal version says that a grant could be awarded to a program that trains for a high-demand job *or* meets a need in the community. The Oregon version of the legislation would require

both qualifications. Pereira suggested it was not of significant concern and that the Oregon legislature would favor the federal interpretation.

- ii. Pereira will be attending the Oregon Presidents' Retreat during the first week of August and expects to have more information to share at the next Committee meeting.
- iii. Alberg said the CAC will have a retreat the week after this meeting, so he will likely have more to share at this Committee's next meeting as well.
 - 1. Foote Morgan asked what is on the CAC retreat's agenda.
 - 2. Alberg said there would be an overview of the OCCA's annual community colleges budget request and development of key messages; the state legislation timeline; a presentation from Lightcast on the economic impact report; and some planning about legislative campus visits, lobbying in Salem, a presentation for the Ways and Means subcommittee on education in April, upcoming lunch and learn webinars, and advocacy toolkit needs. Alberg further explained that he had developed a marketing plan to disseminate some datapoints through storytelling, which he plans present to COCC's Board at a later date.

c. Laptops for Students at Deer Ridge Correctional Institution (DRCI)

- i. Merz said that Sen. Anthony Broadman was not able to visit DRCI after the graduation ceremony, but either he or a member of his staff would still be interested in discussing the matter. DRCI instructor Emma Chaput had suggested including a student's voice in the conversation, but was unsure whether a student would be allowed to attend a Zoom meeting. DRCI Director of Education Jay Sklenar shared some facts about the program that would suggest that hiring a part-time IT professional to oversee the students' laptops would be unnecessary, especially since the welding students at DRCI already have access to laptops without need for additional assistance. Merz was sent contact information for Larry Bennett from Oregon's Department of Corrections (DOC) and suggested that he might be a good person to contact.
- ii. Pereira suggested that contacting Bennett could be a good idea and asked Matthews to send him an email to ask if he would like to meet with COCC personnel to discuss this matter.
- iii. Foote Morgan asked Merz to represent this Committee in a meeting with DOC leadership. Merz concurred.
- iv. Pereira suggested that Sklenar could represent the DRCI faculty if Chaput and Jackie Currie are off contract. He also suggested inviting the DRCI Administrator as well. Merz concurred.
- v. Foote Morgan asked if Sen. Broadman could be invited as well.

- vi. Pereira said that would be a good idea. He noted that he is unsure whether Bennett would have final say on the matter or if it might be the next person up the chain of command. He suggested ensuring the Senator is included in a meeting with the final decision maker. He also said that Zak Boone is in contact with an organization that is willing to cover the costs for laptops if that is a barrier for the DOC.
- vii. Foote Morgan suggested that Bennett would be the correct person to contact as he is the direct report to the office of the director of the DOC for matters of education and rehabilitation. Tracie Hightower, Director of Education and Training, reports to Bennett and could also be invited to a meeting.

4. Outreach Updates and Strategies

- a. Foote Morgan suggested that the middle of summer might not be the best time of year for outreach. She also noted that there could be new Committee members in the near future, and if that happens, a discussion on outreach strategies for 2027 may be need to wait until then.
 - i. Skatvold noted that official committee appointments are made during the Board's regular meeting in September.
 - ii. Matthews added that he had sent the current committee rosters to Jim Porter, who will be contacting each Board member about their areas of interest.
 - iii. Skatvold suggested that it is unlikely that this Committee's roster would change and that they could start making plans for 2027 now.
- b. Foote Morgan recalled Pereira's initial meetings with community leaders as he started his position in July 2025 and asked how they have helped in his work.
 - i. Pereira said, in these meetings, he has learned how much members of the community appreciate COCC, which is unique for a community college. It seems that everyone in Central Oregon is aware of and has a connection to the College. When considering applying for a bond in 2030, College leadership should consider community members who might be supportive.
- c. Foote Morgan concurred that outreach strategies around a 2030 bond should be a high priority and noted that there will be a new strategic plan for the College starting in 2027.
 - i. Pereira clarified that the current strategic plan is scheduled to end in 2027, but the College could decide to extend that plan. Pereira, Aimee Metcalf, Amy Ward, and Tom Barry will take the lead on this, starting on July 1, 2027. COCC will also have an accreditation visit in 2027.
 - ii. Foote Morgan suggested that the timing of a new strategic plan may be out of sync with Board member elections, noting that new Board members could join COCC and be expected to adopt a new strategic plan

that they had no part in developing. She suggested it could make more sense for a Board to have a year learn about a strategic plan before voting on it.

- iii. Skatvold noted that Board member elections happen every odd numbered year.
- iv. Pereira added that, if a strategic plan would begin on July 1, it would likely need to be approved by the Board by April of that year. This could avoid the problem of new Board members having to approve a new strategic plan.
- v. Foote Morgan concurred, noting that she, Merz and Porter had to vote on a new strategic plan while they had only been on the Board for about two months.
- vi. Pereira suggested the current strategic plan could be extended another year in order to address any unmet goals and get around the possibility of new Board members having to vote on it. For the new plan, one goal will likely focus on student success, another will likely focus on community, and a third will likely focus on people. He suggested these three points of focus could be presented to each department at the College and they could have opportunities to provide suggestions.
- vii. Foote Morgan asked Pereira if there might be any outreach for feedback outside of COCC during the development of the new strategic plan.
- viii. Pereira suggested there could be opportunities for community members, businesses and partners to provide feedback for the new strategic plan.
- d. Foote Morgan asked other Committee members what issues could be prioritized in the next year in terms of outreach, such as the Oregon legislative session and the 2030 bond.
 - i. Merz recalled making a list of stakeholder groups for this Committee to have meetings with, and their focus has been on lawmakers over the past year.
 - ii. Foote Morgan suggested the Committee could reflect on its work over the past year at their next meeting. Skatvold and Merz concurred.
- 5. Next meeting:** Wednesday, August 19 at 12:00 p.m. via Zoom
 - a. Foote Morgan suggested planning on a standing meeting for this Committee moving forward.
- 6. Adjourned at 10:49 a.m.**



Community Colleges Work for Oregon

Talking Points for the 2027–29 Community College Funding Request

CORE MESSAGE: Community colleges prepare workers, expand opportunity, strengthen local economies, and provide an affordable path to education in every part of Oregon. Continued state investment is essential to sustain this work.

Enrollment growth is good for Oregon—and it increases college costs

- Community college enrollment continues to grow, especially in Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs that prepare students for high-demand jobs across Oregon.
- This growth is good news for students, employers, and communities. It means more Oregonians are gaining skills for careers in health care, advanced manufacturing, construction, public safety, education, technology, and other critical fields.
- CTE programs are also among the most expensive programs colleges provide. They require specialized faculty, up-to-date equipment, laboratories, safety measures, technology, and often smaller class sizes.
- As enrollment and workforce demand grow, funding must grow with them.

Open access means serving Oregonians at every starting point

- Community colleges serve students pursuing GEDs, English-language learning, short-term workforce credentials, CTE certificates and degrees, transfer degrees, and applied bachelor's degrees.
- They serve more low-income, first-generation, rural, adult, and historically underserved students than any other sector of Oregon higher education.
- Open access also means providing the advising, financial aid assistance, tutoring, disability services, technology, basic-needs support, and other resources students need to persist and complete.
- Community colleges work for Oregon because they make education and workforce opportunity available to people who may not be able to attend a four-year institution or enroll full time.

Most community college students balance school with work and family

- Most community college students attend part time while working, raising children, caring for family members, or managing transportation, housing, and other responsibilities.
- Lightcast estimates that 73% of Oregon community college students are employed while attending college.
- Part-time attendance is not a sign of lower commitment. It reflects the realities of the working adults, parents, and other students community colleges are designed to serve.
- Funding policy should recognize the actual number of people colleges serve—not only the full-time-equivalent enrollment they represent.

Headcount shows the true number of students colleges serve

- In 2024–25, Oregon community colleges served 209,605 students, representing 73,786.7 student FTE—approximately 2.8 students for every 1 FTE.
- FTE is useful for measuring instructional activity, but headcount shows how many individual Oregonians a college is actually serving. That distinction matters because most community college students attend part time.
- A student taking four credits and a student taking sixteen credits still require many of the same base services: admissions and registration, records and transcripts, advising, financial aid processing, student accounts, technology access, tutoring, disability services, career and basic-needs support, and campus safety.
- Colleges also carry per-student and shared operating costs for facilities, utilities, custodial and security services, technology systems, cybersecurity, compliance, and other infrastructure. Those costs are driven in significant part by the number of people using college systems and campuses—not only the credits they take.
- Estimated public support is approximately **\$3,223.05 per headcount** and **\$9,155.69 per FTE**. These are estimates derived by dividing 2025–27 biennial public funding totals by two to approximate a one-year amount, then dividing by 2024–25 full academic-year headcount or FTE.

Important timing note: Enrollment is for academic year 2024–25, while the funding estimates are derived from 2025–27 biennial funding totals, so the time periods do not align exactly. Community college public support includes state support plus estimated property tax and timber tax revenues.

HECC approved the DAS recommendation because it reflects the cost pressures colleges are facing

- The Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) approved the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) recommendation that the state contribution through the Community College Support Fund (CCSF) increase approximately 13.7% in 2027–29.
- OCCA supports the HECC/DAS recommendation because it more fully reflects the structural cost increases colleges are facing, particularly the loss of PERS side-account rate offsets as colleges' PERS revenue bonds and related side accounts expire.
- The DAS current service level, or CSL, is a statewide technical estimate of how much the CCSF should increase under state budget methodology. It is not a guarantee that every individual college will have enough total revenue to maintain its current service levels.
- Each college faces a different combination of enrollment changes, collectively bargained labor agreements, PERS costs, local property-tax revenue, tuition revenue, reserves, and other operating pressures.
- DAS estimates that maintaining the state's current funding contribution would require approximately **\$118.6 million** in additional CCSF funding. Fully funding the **13.7%** recommendation would help colleges absorb the PERS shift and other cost increases while reducing pressure for further tuition increases, service reductions, and reserve drawdowns.

The colleges' earlier 7.5% request was deliberately restrained

- Before HECC approved the DAS recommendation, Oregon's community colleges had requested a 7.5% CCSF increase. The colleges developed that request in an effort to be as restrained as possible while still reflecting projected cost growth.
- That 7.5% request assumed continued efficiencies, tuition revenue, reserve spending, and other difficult compromises. It was not an estimate that colleges' costs were rising by only 7.5%.
- A major reason the 13.7% DAS estimate is higher is the expiration of colleges' PERS revenue bonds and related side accounts. The DAS calculation reflects the loss of the PERS rate offset associated with those side accounts, while also recognizing that the related debt-service payments are ending.
- Many colleges have already used reserves, reduced budgets, or taken other steps to absorb the higher PERS costs as side accounts expire. Those actions do not eliminate the underlying structural cost increase.
- Colleges collectively face approximately **\$167 million** in reserve spending to make up operating shortfalls. Supporting the HECC/DAS **13.7%** recommendation will help mitigate that unsustainable draw on reserves and better position colleges to maintain programs and services for students.

Tuition cannot fill the gap

- Community college students are highly price sensitive. Even modest tuition increases can cause students to take fewer credits, delay enrollment, or leave college altogether.
- Many students are working adults, parents, or low-income students with little flexibility to absorb higher tuition and fees.
- Without adequate state funding, colleges must draw down reserves, increase tuition, or reduce courses, programs, staffing, and student services.
- Those reductions make it harder for students to complete credentials and harder for Oregon employers to find the skilled workers they need.

Community colleges produce a strong return on Oregon's investment

- Lightcast found that Oregon's community colleges generate **\$11 billion** in annual economic impact and support approximately **120,140 jobs—one out of every 23 jobs** in Oregon.
- Community college alumni account for approximately **\$9.9 billion** of that impact through increased earnings and greater workplace productivity.
- For every dollar invested, students receive an estimated **\$4.70** in higher lifetime earnings, taxpayers receive **\$1.40** in added revenue and public-sector savings, and Oregon society receives **\$6.50** in economic and social benefits.
- State funding for community colleges is not simply an expense. It is an investment in workers, businesses, taxpayers, and communities throughout Oregon.

Closing ask

Community colleges work for Oregon, but they need Oregon’s investment to continue that work. Support the HECC/DAS recommendation for a 13.7% increase in the Community College Support Fund so colleges can serve growing enrollment, sustain high-cost workforce programs, preserve affordable access, maintain essential student services, and reduce reliance on unsustainable reserve spending.

Additional Background

State investment in higher education has grown over time

- Since 2011–13, the Public University Support Fund (PUSF) has increased 120%.
- Since 2011–13, the Community College Support Fund (CCSF) has grown 116%.
- Total state General Fund/Lottery Fund support for public universities, including debt service, has increased 146% over the period.
- Total state General Fund/Lottery Fund support for community colleges, including debt service, has increased 125% over the period.

These figures provide historical context on the growth in state investment over time. They are not intended as a measure of current funding adequacy or institutional costs.

Sources

- HECC, Community College Data Dashboard, 2024–25 full academic-year enrollment and student FTE (accessed September 2, 2026).
- HECC, State Funding and Formula Summary, 2025–27 Biennium, After the 2026 Session.
- HECC, Current Service Level (CSL) Calculations, Higher Education Support Funds, 2027–29 Biennium.
- OCCA, Understanding the Revised DAS Current Service Level Estimate for Community Colleges (June 23, 2026).
- Lightcast, The Economic Value of Oregon’s Community Colleges (April 2026).
- Historical state funding growth figures (2011–13 through the current biennium) provided by OCCA.

Funding methodology note: Estimated public support per headcount and per FTE is derived by dividing 2025–27 biennial public funding totals by two to approximate one year, then dividing by 2024–25 full academic-year headcount or FTE. The enrollment and funding periods do not align exactly.

HECC Community College Data Dashboard: <https://www.oregon.gov/highered/strategy-research/pages/dashboard-community-colleges.aspx>

HECC State Funding and Formula Summary: <https://www.oregon.gov/highered/about/postsecondary-finance-capital/Documents/public-university-funding/State-Funding-and-Formula-Summary-2025-27-After-2026-Session.pdf>

HECC CSL Calculations: <https://www.oregon.gov/highered/public-engagement/Documents/Commission/Funding-and-Achivement-Subcommittee/2026/4-June%2010/4.0d%20-%20CSL%20Summary%2C%202027-29.pdf>