

LEGACIES

Central Oregon Community College Foundation Magazine | 2026



**Ambassadors
of Promise**

**Bringing
the Light**

**Impact of
Giving Report**

CONTENTS



4

The COCC Foundation currently offers nearly 400 scholarships annually, totaling more than \$2.4 million in life-changing assistance

features

4

Ambassadors of Promise

A peer-to-peer outreach program is connecting scholarship recipients with students who need the same assistance

12

Inspiring Minds

Marking 40 years of discovery and discussion, the Nancy R. Chandler Lecture Series keeps on connecting

10

Bringing the Light

Support for COCC's Addiction Counseling and Behavioral Health program is helping address Oregon's unmet mental health needs

15

Impact of Giving Report

Your gifts in 2025-26 have greatly improved students' access to education

On the cover: Scholarship recipients give thanks during the Meal of the Year fundraiser on April 11, 2026.

front, back and inside front covers: Carson VanBuskirk



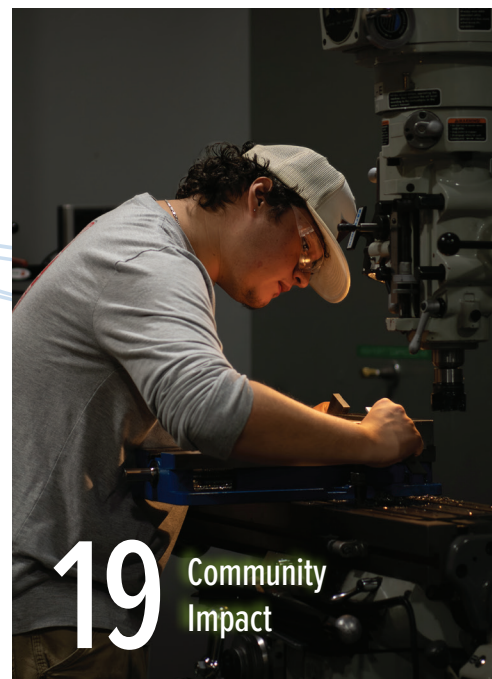
CENTRAL OREGON
community college
FOUNDATION



3 Empowering Future
Generations



9 A Campaign
Embraced



19 Community
Impact

departments

- 2 Letter From the President
- 3 Empowering Future Generations
- 9 A Campaign Embraced
- 13 Chandler Lecture Series
- 14 Letter of Gratitude

LEGACIES

2026

Vol. 38

MANAGING EDITOR

Aimee Metcalf

ADVISORS

Lucas Alberg, Zak Boone,
Mark Russell Johnson,
Brittany Nichols, Wendy Patton

WRITERS

Mark Russell Johnson,
Wendy Patton

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Joanna Larsen

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Rosie Day, Carson VanBuskirk

COCC FOUNDATION BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Steve Callan
Beau Eastes
Tim Green
Elisa Humphrey
Phil Jackson
Daisy Layman
Erin MacDonald
Jenny Malone
Venus Nguyen
Vicki Russell
Kathy Smith
Daryl Stone
Erin Foote Morgan (Ex-officio)

COCC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Laura Craska Cooper
Joe Krenowicz
Erin Merz
Erin Foote Morgan
Jim Porter
Erica Skatvold
Alan Unger

COCC FOUNDATION

2600 NW College Way
Bend, OR 97703
541-383-7225
foundation@cocc.edu

The COCC Foundation
is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit

The Central Oregon Community College Foundation Magazine is published annually. Contents may only be reprinted with permission from the Foundation. Central Oregon Community College is an affirmative action, equal opportunity employer.

Letter From the President

Greetings Foundation Friends,

As we embark on a new school year, I'm also reflecting on my first year on the job. I've truly savored the time, but, wow, it certainly has gone by in a blink. Meeting so many new colleagues, new friends, and a new community has been such an enriching part of the experience. I feel very blessed to be where I am.

Looking back, several days stand out more than others — from my “first day of class” at COCC, to my first student-staff dodgeball game (my knees held up!), to the joy of two commencement ceremonies (at our Bend and Deer Ridge campuses) — there were several that I wanted to call special attention to.

April 11 was one of them: My first Meal of the Year. Many of you were there, too. It was such a special night, a celebration of education, and a reminder of how powerful person-to-person investment can be. Central Oregon is a place where helping others is near and dear to so many hearts, and the event beautifully illuminates that.

Then, just a few weeks later, April 30. That was the day we cut the ribbon on the reimagined Madras campus, signaling a new chapter of expanded access and community focus for Jefferson County. While I got to do the actual ribbon snip, I was joined by College leaders, board members and community supporters, whose part in realizing this accomplishment can't be overstated. The project entailed years of preparing and fundraising. Thank you, donor family, for being a central force.



And then on June 3, the President's Scholarship Celebration, which I know will be an annual highlight for me. We heard moving words from several individuals: a scholarship student named Nelly (her story is on page 4) who spoke about helping others; then Andrew Davis, our dean of student engagement and a past COCC Foundation scholarship student, emphasized COCC's uniqueness; and finally, Ron and Mary Carver, honorees at the event for their half-century of generosity to the Foundation, shared what love of community means to them. Together, the speeches revealed a scholarship's full reach, from caring donors to a student just starting out to a person's impactful career. What an incredible testament to why we all believe so firmly in the work of the COCC Foundation. Wishing you a wonderful year ahead and I hope it goes a little slower!

Greg Pereira, COCC President

As always, please feel free to connect with me at gpereira@cocc.edu.

Left to right: COCC board member Joe Krenowicz, former Bean Foundation board member George Nelson, COCC president Greg Pereira, COCC board vice chair Erin Merz, COCC Foundation board chair Vicki Russell and COCC Foundation trustee Jenny Malone.

 Carson VanBuskirk

EMPOWERING FUTURE GENERATIONS

For longtime Central Oregonians
Ron and Mary Carver, community care
means investing in others

By Wendy Patton,
Assistant Director, COCC Foundation



For more than five decades, Ron and Mary Carver have called Central Oregon home, building careers in medicine, raising their family and investing deeply in the community they love. Their belief in the power of education is rooted in personal experience, from community college classrooms and nursing school to scholarships that helped shape their futures. They were honored for their impassioned support at this year's President's Scholarship Celebration in June. Here, they share what drives that commitment.

HOW DID EDUCATION IMPACT YOU BOTH?

We are partial to community colleges! It's where I (Ron) got my start in higher education. I had great professors. I attended Pasadena City College, and then after two years transferred to UCLA. I then went on to medical school at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, able to attend because I received several scholarships. I did my internship and subsequent residency in obstetrics and gynecology at what is now Oregon Health & Science University. That is where I met Mary, who was a pediatric nurse at Doernbecher Children's Hospital. Mary attended Lewis & Clark College and then what is now OHSU's School of Nursing, where she received her BSN degree. Mary came from a family that highly valued education. Both of us understand the importance and value of education in our lives. It has made all the difference for us.

CAN YOU SHARE WHAT COCC MEANS TO YOU?

We have lived in Bend for 52 years. Bend was then a mill town, with a population of about 16,000. There were three stoplights. But you know what had been here for 25 years in 1974, when we arrived? Central Oregon Community College. And COCC has been one of the prime engines helping to drive the growth, development and vibrancy of Central Oregon. We have an educated workforce with talented people, especially in health care, in large part because of COCC. The College has been a factor in improved health care in our community, which supported us during our medical careers. And oh, that Culinary Institute — how it is contributing to our great restaurant scene!

WHAT DOES GIVING BACK MEAN TO YOU?

Bend has been where we spent our careers in medicine and where we raised our two sons. We have been blessed in so many ways and have felt an obligation to give back so future generations can experience what we have here in Central Oregon. We've heard the stories of lives changed because of COCC and the scholarships provided, and it gives us great pleasure to support this wonderful scholarship program.

WHY DO YOU TWO CHOOSE TO SUPPORT THE COCC FOUNDATION?

We think there is no better way to invest in the future of our community than to support the scholarship program under the guidance of the COCC Foundation. We are confident in the Foundation's care, integrity and leadership. We have seen the results.



AMBASSADORS OF PROMISE

A peer-to-peer outreach program is connecting scholarship recipients with students who need the same assistance



*Launched in 2021,
the aim is to connect
current scholarship
recipients with would-be
applicants through events
and outreach.*

The journey to a Foundation scholarship for Nelly Lukale involved plenty of online searching. And some soul-searching, too — wondering if, as someone who doesn't speak English as their first language, she was a good candidate. Then there was the actual journey. She would travel 9,000 miles from her home in Migori, Kenya, to get to Bend.

In fact, she was an unbelievable candidate: a leader, a doer, the founder of a Kenyan nonprofit called Hope in Action that empowers girls, mentoring change in a heavily patriarchal society. She wanted to study Community Health at COCC, to continue to support the well-being of others. The prospect of earning an education, particularly in the U.S., had always felt like a calling, even though none of her seven siblings had set college as a goal.

The stars would align for Lukale. The only people she knew in the U.S. happened to live in Bend. They'd hired her as an interpreter in Kenya to help with their orphanage and community programs. So there was a place to stay and start from. Her husband, a chef, got a job at Bos Taurus in downtown Bend, helping their family get settled. The scholarship was awarded, fully covering her tuition. Lukale still needed to work the night shift at Bend Transitional Care, as a nursing assistant, to help support her family, with shifts ending at 6 a.m. and classes beginning at 8 a.m.

Ultimately, she earned her one-year certificate in two years, guided by perseverance, a love for education and the knowledge that it would allow her to continue to make a difference for others. "I have a keen interest

in prevention programs and community-based initiatives that create positive and lasting changes in people's lives," she shares. "I would love to work for the county, either focused on HIV or communicable diseases."

Though her scholarship origin story — how she got to the point of applying in the first place — is certainly uncommon, many students simply don't know the way in. Or they're unsure. Or, often, they have self-doubt.

Enter the Scholarship Ambassador Program. Launched in 2021, the aim is to connect current scholarship recipients with would-be applicants through events and outreach. Selected through an interview process, and earning additional monetary aid for their work, ambassadors share scholarship specifics and their own personal COCC experiences. It's a great way for scholarships to have a peer-to-peer ripple effect across the College.

Lukale became an ambassador. She has helped spread the word at club meetings and recruitment events, coaching with enthusiasm. She even encouraged a coworker, someone who also speaks English as a second language, to go for it. "He was scared," she says. "I gave him tips on how to go about the application. It has been incredibly rewarding."

MAKING THE CONNECTION

The COCC Foundation currently offers nearly 400 scholarships annually, totaling more than \$2.4 million in life-changing assistance. About 8% of credit-seeking students at COCC are receiving a Foundation scholarship these days. Of those, six individuals this past year helped pay the word forward about scholarships, demystifying the application process and lighting the path.

"I always tell them it's their opportunity to learn something new," says Brittany Nichols, director of Foundation programs, who designed and put the program into motion. "It helps them identify areas they might be interested in."

Students, she points out, learn public-speaking skills. They learn how to work alongside others, paired up for events at high schools and COCC campuses. They share their stories with current and potential donors. It's good for their resumes, and, for their 15-hour commitment, opens up an opportunity to receive a reference letter. Upon completion of their service, they receive \$500 in additional scholarship funds.

Sometimes, it even connects to what the students are passionate about. "We have an art student who created chalk-art murals," Nichols says, of how spots like Middleton Science Center's massive lobby chalkboard can become high-visibility billboards.

To ensure some familiarity with COCC and the scholarship world, the program is only open to returning students. They sit for an interview and field questions such as, "How do you approach connecting authentically with people from different backgrounds?" and, to emphasize the importance of a personal imprint, "What's one surprising or little-known fact about you that might make people smile?"

Cameron Bates of La Pine has a few such facts. He's originally from Florida. He's worked across the globe in hospitality. He wants to start a hobby farm. He's a climber and snowboarder who lives by the "work hard, play hard" mantra. Selected to be an ambassador, Bates recently earned his Nursing Assistant certificate and was accepted into the Nursing program. He plans to become a nurse practitioner.

"Without this scholarship, I would not be able to go back to school and work to gain experience as a certified nursing assistant," he says. Bringing that message to students at places like Summit and Mountain View high schools — with what he calls "Bobcat Energy" — he's using his own scholarship as a catalyst to help others.



OUTWARD FOCUS, INNER GROWTH

Art student Aubrey Whipple admits that giving a short speech to the Foundation's board of trustees was somewhat terrifying. But in sharing her perspective of the scholarship's impact, it forced her to take on a new challenge, to grow in ways she didn't expect.

"Being able to share my journey, my experience and my gratitude with the board of trustees was the highlight of my time as an ambassador," she says. "I could tell they really cared." Whipple also spent her ambassadorship tabling at events, being in promotional photoshoots and sitting for a video interview for COCC's social media. The collective experience helped her see how she could help others, a larger lesson in life going forward.

"I see myself as a conglomeration of all the wonderful people who have uplifted, enabled and influenced me to get to the point where I am now," she says. "To be able to lift others as I climb is an honor that I do not take lightly, and it is so rewarding to be able to pay it forward in any way."



A CLEAR MESSAGE

For Nelly Lukale, who's making a trip to Kenya this fall to check in with her nonprofit mission — and the 400 or so girls it serves — her focus on championing others has been strengthened by the help she's personally received. Going for things in life, like scholarships and a chance for more education, is something she sees even more clearly now. It's a message she carries, repeating to others: "It's better to try and fail than not try."

“

To be able to lift others as I climb is an honor that I do not take lightly, and it is so rewarding to be able to pay it forward in any way.”





NARRATIVE REVIEWERS WANTED

You can help launch a journey. Twice a year, a volunteer-based panel of COCC staffers and Foundation supporters helps read through scholarship applications to determine the cycle's full award list. This fall, scholarship applications will be reviewed between Oct. 28 and Nov. 4.

"This is one of our most rewarding volunteer opportunities of the year," says Brittany Nichols, director of Foundation programs. "Volunteers review and score applications entirely online, so you can participate from any device, anywhere in the world."

Volunteers log in and complete reviews at their convenience during the designated week. The process typically takes about two hours and doesn't need to be concluded in one sitting.



Contact foundation@cocc.edu to request a volunteer link.

Change a Life Today!

Donate to the COCC Foundation
Scholarship Fund today and
change a life forever.
Learn more at cocc.edu/give



CENTRAL OREGON
community college
FOUNDATION



A CAMPAIGN EMBRACED

The Madras campus transformation, lifted by grant investment and community support, is bringing care and opportunity



Standing in the courtyard that bridges the original Madras campus building, opened in 2011, and an innovative new two-story facility — combining science labs, simulated health clinic training spaces and a child care center — James Rodriguez spoke with emotion at the April 30 ribbon-cutting ceremony.

"I grew up here in Madras. I sat in these classrooms as a student, not knowing where life would take me," he shared. "COCC and our community believed in me before I believed in myself. And now, I get to wake up every day and do the same for others. That's why this building matters so much." Today, Rodriguez, who also served in the U.S. Navy and earned an MBA, is the director of COCC Madras.

Because of donors like you — with grants, gifts, advocacy and commemorative bricks — the "Growing Together" fundraising campaign helped bring the 24,000-square-foot learning center and its workforce training programs into being. It opened on schedule, Jan. 5, for winter term.

The **\$23 million project** was supported in part by **126 generous individuals, businesses and foundations.**

GRANT FUNDING:
\$7.7 MILLION

MONETARY DONATIONS:
\$1.8 MILLION

Today's Madras campus at a glance:



The Nursing and Medical Assisting cohorts are fully enrolled for Fall term.

A second Nursing Assistant cohort last spring was comprised of Madras and Culver high school students.

The child care center continues to grow, supported by a strong partnership with COCC's bilingual Early Childhood Education program.



Overall Fall term enrollment is up 44% from last academic year.

Thank you, supporters, for your "Growing Together" commitment and partnership!



James Rodriguez





BRINGING THE *Light*

Support for COCC's Addiction Counseling and Behavioral Health program is helping address Oregon's unmet mental health needs

She's 39, distressed, and suddenly feeling stuck in life. Having made it past a tumultuous divorce, she was able to move forward and find love again, only to lose her fiancé to an unexpected death. Since then, she's become heavily codependent on her parents for financial security, assuming they'll supplement her mortgage payment. It's something they simply can't do anymore. They've insisted she seek counseling.

"I'm here because my parents need a letter saying it's OK to expect them to keep paying my mortgage," she relays, without much feeling, to her case manager. Actually, make that 13 case managers — all students in a COCC Behavioral Health course called "Motivational Interviewing," working as a group to connect with their "client."

Their professor, Monica Vines, has transformed from a steady, supportive instructor into a needy and dismissive individual, role-playing to give her students experience with what she's framing as someone who's "ambivalent and discordant." She sits at the front of the class, sparring with their questions.

"So you have no interest in being independent?" a male student asks. She shrugs back: "No." "What would need to change for you to start paying your mortgage in full?" poses a female student. She swats away a suggestion for a roommate — that hasn't worked out, she explains. They talk about her drinking habits and nights out, focus on other behaviors she's engaging in.

A poster on motivational interviewing hangs upon a wall, quietly offering tips: "Ask open questions, affirming, reflective listening, summarizing." Potted plants and stained-glass panels give the Modoc building classroom a calming feel.

As the questions continue, the students are cautioned to avoid addressing the trauma itself, instead to focus on the situation at hand. "That's outside the scope," Vines reminds them. They unravel her story, and then a student poses a

succinct question, without room for avoidance, that hangs in the air: "Are you spending more than your income allows?"

"You're hearing things, giving things back," Vines says encouragingly, breaking the trance and bringing the exercise to an end. Class wraps up, but the students have moved even closer to understanding their impact. Soon, they will become a crucial wave of workers, trained and certified, to help others in their community.

It's certainly a vital time for help. Mental illness — defined as mental, behavioral or emotional disorders — is rising sharply in the United States. Diagnoses and treatments grew by almost 40% between 2019 and 2023, according to the National Institute of Mental Health. That accounted for more than one in five people in 2022, or about 59.3 million Americans.

Meanwhile, alcohol use is down nationwide, but drug use disorders for people 12 and older jumped from 8.7% to 9.8% between 2021 and 2024, reports the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. While other factors contribute, the timing surrounding, and stemming from, a global virus is hard to miss.

"During the pandemic, people started to pay real attention to mental health, the isolation," says Vines, who also serves as program director of Addiction Counseling and Behavioral Health at COCC. The burnout of mental health workers that followed, she adds, created a massive workforce shortage. Having

recently served on Oregon's Behavioral Health Talent Council, a 20-person workforce initiative, Vines knows that higher education is key to implementing action plans.

In Central Oregon, the need is particularly high. The U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration has designated the region as a health professional shortage area. A study by the Oregon Health Authority in 2022 found that Oregon ranked fourth in the country in unmet mental health needs.

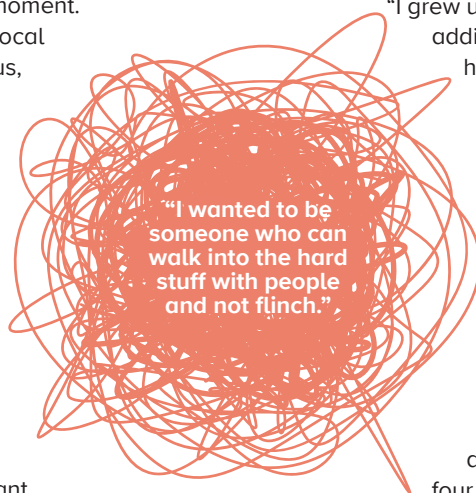
But recent investment is meeting the moment. A major gift to the Foundation from a local couple, who wish to remain anonymous, is helping cover travel funds for students conducting important fieldwork far and wide in Central Oregon. Funds will also pay for textbooks, scholarship support and new sound recording equipment in the College's "Skills Lab," where students conduct practice interviews. With a background in social work, one of the donors was intent on making a gift specific to the extreme need.

Additionally, a four-year, \$1,335,113 grant from the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration, received last October, is providing scholarships and paid field placements in Behavioral Health for up to 18 students per year. "These students will fill a critical health gap in Oregon while building meaningful careers," says project lead Sean Roberts, Ph.D., an assistant professor in Behavioral Health and Psychology.

COCC's program offers a workforce-ready associate degree and a three-term certificate — the latter including 100 of the 1,000 supervised hours required for the state exam. The trainings provide all the necessary coursework and field experience to attain

state certification as a certified alcohol and drug counselor and/or a qualified mental health associate.

Grant-funded students pursuing a certificate or associate degree can receive scholarships of \$4,000 and living stipends of \$6,000 to complete three terms of practicum. In the "Motivational Interviewing" class, half of the 16 students were recipients of the grant. One of them was Julian Hasbun, who graduated this year.



"I grew up in a lot of chaos — trauma, addiction, silence where there should have been safety," he shares. "I spent so much of my life trying to understand people and pain, trying to make sense of why things hurt the way they did, and why no one seemed to talk about it."

At COCC, Hasbun became the student lead for a grant-funded, student-carried initiative focused on harm reduction and reducing binge drinking. Named one of only

four students for 2026 All-Oregon Academic Team distinction, he plans on

becoming a certified alcohol and drug counselor in Oregon, while also aiming to pursue a qualified mental health associate credential. The job market is ready: Behavioral health employment nationwide is expected to rise by 17% between 2024-34, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Hasbun's ultimate goal is a bachelor's degree in either social work or psychology. "I want to be someone who can walk into the hard stuff with people and not flinch," he says. "That's what drew me into this field."

SUPPORT THE PROGRAM

If you would like to support the COCC Addiction Counseling and Behavioral Health program, you can make a tax-deductible gift and designate your donation to "Behavioral Health Services."





INSPIRING MINDS

Marking 40 years of discovery and discussion, the Nancy R. Chandler Lecture Series keeps on connecting

It was a deep lament — something that artificial intelligence just wouldn't understand.

"I wasn't thinking about what I was doing," a software developer dolefully shared about how AI had pulled him in during a project, sidelining his agency. "After a few days, I didn't remember why some things were done like that." On autopilot, he was allowing the computer system to take charge.

"He'd forgotten why he even made decisions," explained researcher Helen Edwards, cofounder of the Artificiality Institute, to a packed house of Chandler Lecture Series attendees this past April. Behind her, the developer's potent quote loomed on the projection screen. "That's just a classic example of someone who's drifting into cognitive blending," Edwards remarked, with the gravity of a clinician.

It was a story that represented one of several thousand gathered by Edwards and her project's cofounder (and husband) Dave Edwards, in an effort to better grasp the ever-growing impact of AI on people. In addition to sharing cautionary tales during their presentation, "Stay Human: Author Your Mind in the AI

“*These lectures are learning moments that become forums for dialogue.*”

Age," they brought positive stories too. Uplifting ones, such as an ER physician who was able to urgently convey a scary procedure to a non-English-speaking patient. And a neurodivergent person who could suddenly express their vaulting thoughts.

The Edwardses' mission is to help call for a world that designs AI for people, rather than tech that simply harvests data from users. Foremost, they urged the audience, is for consumers to constantly keep a human touch on the technology — to always be in the director's chair, to question with judgement, to loop in other humans for perspective.

From pluses, like productivity and problem-solving, to minuses, like job eliminations, persistent "hallucinations" and massive energy usage, AI is certainly a burning topic in 2026. It was an apt discussion to cap the Chandler Lecture Series' 40th anniversary, a span of time that harkens back to when computer technology was still in its cradle — when the 3.5-inch floppy disk was standard for storage (holding just 1.4 megabytes) and the World Wide Web hadn't yet arrived. Forty years can cover a lot.

Central Oregon's cultural landscape gained an amazing new facet in 1985 when Robert W. Chandler Sr., the editor and owner of *The Bulletin*, created an endowment with the Oregon Community Foundation. The

fund would allow the COCC Foundation to shape a program of scholarly talks. Nancy, his wife, was known for hosting salon-style gatherings for visitors from around the world, and get-togethers that brought deep and meaningful conversations. This would take it further and open it up to a wider community.

"My parents always appreciated anything to do with education," says daughter Peggy Cushman, who remembers growing up with houseguests from places like Pakistan. "I think the reason my dad started the Visiting Scholar Program was to give students, and the community at large, exposure to topics they might be interested in or might be new to them."



While the diverse lectures have always placed a focus on exploration, of both literal and intellectual sorts — from summiting Mount Everest to learning about Russia's future with Sergei Khrushchev —

they serve another purpose too.

"It's about sparking curiosity, but also about sparking community," says Charlotte Gilbride, a former advertising executive who has thoughtfully guided and developed the program since 2014. "These lectures are learning moments that become forums for dialogue."

Feedback captures the feeling. "The presentation last night and following conversations were really powerful,"

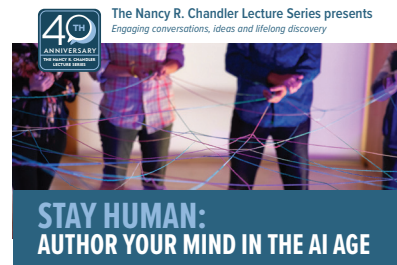
said one past attendee. Issues were presented in a new light, another noted. The topical nature of the talks is highly valued: "Thank you for continuing to bring speakers who address the challenging issues of our times."

With operating costs sustained by the endowment, programming support comes from sponsorships and grants. Over the years, that has included the Maybelle Clark Macdonald Fund, Oregon Community Foundation funds, The Bulletin, the University of Oregon's School of Journalism and Communication, Brooks Resources Corporation, St. Charles Health System, the Associated Students of COCC and others. The events are always offered free to COCC students, and at low or no cost to the greater community.

Scheduled in the fall and spring, talks have included marine biologists and astronauts, journalists and humanitarians, luminaries like poet-activist Maya Angelou and paleoanthropologist Richard Leakey. In 2005, historian David McCullough

put a spotlight on how George Washington's leadership defined him as the country's most important president. Arun Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, shared "Lessons I Learned from my Grandfather" in 2013. Each winter, the series collaborates with the College's Season for Nonviolence programming to offer empowering workshops and presentations centered on positive social change.

Forty years have threaded many thoughts together. It's hard to imagine what 40 years forward looks like. Technology will be unrecognizable from today. AI, for instance, might take on capacity for reasoning. Brain-computer interfaces will put thoughts into action. But how will that change us, and what will it say about our humanness and cognitive liberty? Stay tuned: It will undoubtedly be a future lecture.



HELEN EDWARDS AND DAVE EDWARDS
Co-founders, Artificiality Institute



UPCOMING EVENTS: FALL 2026

Join us for a compelling season of the Chandler Lecture Series this fall as we explore geology, neuroscience and U.S. energy policy.

THE OREGON CASCADES: A Story Written in Ice

NICK ZENTNER
*Professor of Geology,
Central Washington University*

Monday, October 5, 6:30 p.m.
Tower Theatre, Bend



SEEING THE BIG PICTURE: How the Brain Manipulates Our Visual World

MARK R. PITZER, PH.D.
*Co-Director of Neuroscience,
Department of Behavioral
Sciences, University of Portland*

Tuesday, October 20, 6:30 p.m.
COCC Bend Campus, Coats Campus
Center, Wille Hall

THE ENERGY SECURITY DILEMMA: Fossil Fuels and Renewable Energy in a Time of War and Climate Change

DAVID BERNELL, PH.D.
*Professor, School of Public Policy,
Oregon State University*

Monday, November 9, 6:30 p.m.
COCC Bend Campus, Coats Campus
Center, Wille Hall

For more details and to register: cocc.edu/foundation/clc

LETTER OF GRATITUDE

A former scholarship recipient and student gives thanks and an update on her life in agriculture education

March 3, 2026

Dear COCC Foundation Board and Donors,

Nearly a decade ago, in 2017, I was greatly honored to be selected as a "Foundation Scholar of the Year" recipient through the Central Oregon Community College Foundation. Chosen from more than 400 applicants, I had the privilege of representing the College and the Foundation that year — an opportunity that marked a turning point in my life.

At that time, I shared my story of being a first-generation college student and the hardship of overcoming personal trauma associated with domestic violence, while raising a teen as a single parent in pursuit of higher education and a better future. Your belief in me was more than financial assistance; it was affirmation. It was hope. It was a declaration that my goals mattered and that my perseverance was seen.

Today, I want you to know just how far your generosity has carried me, as it sparked an internal fire that has continued to burn. Since receiving that scholarship, your educational gift allowed me to graduate with an associate degree from COCC in 2018. It also enabled me to pursue career opportunities in Hawaii from 2019 to 2024. During my time there, I witnessed and endured tremendous challenges: the pandemic, hurricanes, job losses and the devastating 2023 wildfires that destroyed Lahaina town, displacing families (myself included) and impacting farms and homes across the island.

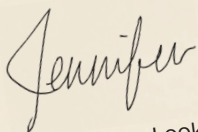
As a trauma survivor who thrives in chaos, with a deep burning desire to succeed in life, I continued to pursue higher education despite all that was happening around me. I earned a Bachelor of Science in anthropology from Oregon State University in 2021, and then a Master of Science in agricultural education and communications from Kansas State University in 2024. Through it all, advocating for others and sharing knowledge have always been driving factors in everything I do, and the education you helped make possible has given me the resilience, knowledge and leadership skills to serve my community in times of crisis.

In 2024, I returned to Oregon for a position as a high school agriculture and CTE teacher and FFA adviser with the Sheridan School District, and within a year, purchased my own farm in nearby Willamina — something that once had felt unimaginable. I currently teach four ag mechanics and two animal science/veterinary science classes to grades 9-12, per day, and coach our FFA through leadership and career development education activities. I am now also expanding my farm beyond my personal dream by creating a land lab and a community-focused agricultural education center. Additionally, I am pursuing a doctoral degree to deepen my impact and capacity to continue serving others, and advocating for the future leaders in agriculture I am educating today.

None of this would have unfolded in the same way without the support of your Foundation and its generous donors. Your investment did not simply ease the financial burden of school; it altered the trajectory of my life. It empowered me to build a career rooted in service, resilience and education. It gave me the tools to contribute meaningfully to communities across states and bring me home again, where I can continue to serve.

This letter serves as a testament to the profound and lasting impact of your generosity. Thank you for believing in students like me. Thank you for changing lives, including mine.

With deepest gratitude,



Jennifer Lee Lookabaugh



2025-26 Impact of Giving Report

CENTRAL OREGON
community college
FOUNDATION



TOGETHER, WE CHANGE LIVES

Our Mission

The COCC Foundation provides funds for scholarships and capital improvements, cultivates relationships with stakeholders to support COCC and its students and develops programs that foster COCC student success.



IMPACT OF GIVING

NEW BEGINNINGS: A NOTE FROM ZAK BOONE

“New beginnings” is a theme that often comes to mind when I think of our students — where a fresh start or a life pivot can put a person on the path to where they want to be. That includes military veterans and career changers, and even incarcerated individuals. First-generation students, who currently make up about 28% of our student body, exemplify new beginnings in their own families.

New beginnings isn’t just about students. It also speaks to how we’re best serving communities: How the College innovates and grows. The completed addition at our Madras campus is that very thing. Years in the making, with careful planning, forging new partnerships and continuing to focus on unique community needs, we’re now bringing new career training options and child care support for working families in the area. To get there, we asked for donor engagement, encouragement and backing — and we couldn’t be more grateful for your strong support. Thank you deeply, from all of us at COCC.

I want to share some other new beginnings, specific to our Foundation team. Our devoted accountant Karen Kjemhus-Spahr, who spent 15 years in that role — in two chapters; she moved on and then couldn’t stay away — retired at the end of June. We can’t thank her enough for being a meticulous, reliable and enjoyable team member and are excited to see where her own new beginnings take her. Jennifer Soto, now in that role, is a COCC alum, with an accountancy and sustainability double-major degree from Oregon State University-Cascades. We’re so glad to have her start a new chapter here at the Foundation.

Additionally, many of you have met Sofia Stranieri, a COCC graduate and Foundation scholarship alumna, who recently served as our capital campaign coordinator. With the campaign now concluded, she’s moving into a new position as donor relations coordinator. We’re excited to bring this new outreach and fundraising role to the Foundation — and she’s the perfect person for it.

With great appreciation for you, and how you support new beginnings,



Zak Boone
Vice President of College Advancement and Foundation Executive Director

THE POWER OF SCHOLARSHIPS



BY THE NUMBERS

\$ 2.25
million

offered in
scholarship
support

375
scholarships awarded
to hard-working students

7.2%
of COCC credit
students received a
Foundation
scholarship

29%
of scholarship
recipients identify
as BILAPOC*



2

more credits
earned per term
than the average
COCC student

79
students

received donor-supported child
care assistance and
student emergency awards
totaling \$71,500



3.45
average GPA
of scholarship
recipients

*Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian and people of color

DEGREES PURSUED

4%

Associate of General
Studies degree



2%

Exploratory degree

39%

Transfer degree



55%

Career and Technical
Education certificate
or degree



Lasting Impact

STUDENT IMPACT

Katie Olson



Katie Olson, Former COCC Foundation Scholarship Recipient

Raised in poverty in Fullerton, California, Katie Olson learned early the value of perseverance. After graduating high school, she built a successful career in law enforcement, serving as a police cadet, bailiff, correctional officer and sheriff's special officer. Along the way, she was selected for FBI firearms instructor training and earned recognition as the top female firearms competitor at the National Police and Fire Games. It was a career path she was proud of.

But being hospitalized with Covid-19 led to some longer-term health issues. And the profound loss of her mother, together with some other major life challenges, caused her to reassess how she would move forward, including where to raise her daughter as a single parent. She found Central Oregon — and COCC.

"Shortly after moving to Bend, I enrolled," Olson shares. Awarded a Foundation scholarship to support her studies, she gravitated toward psychology and social work, drawn to helping others harness inner strength and build stability.

"I am deeply grateful for the opportunity it has given me to rebuild my life through education. Education gave me hope again. It gave me a future to work toward — not only for myself, but for my daughter," Olson says. Meanwhile, she is starting a nonprofit to advocate for and inspire single mothers.

"My goal is to transfer to Portland State University this fall, where I was recently accepted into the School of Social Work," she shares. "I plan to earn a bachelor's degree in social work, followed by a master's in clinical social work," with a focus, she says, on trauma-informed care. That goal felt even closer when Olson was named a recipient of an Opportunity Grant from the Ford Family Foundation this past June.

Tax Talk

As you're perhaps aware, new tax legislation may provide additional charitable giving opportunities for some donors. Public Law 119-21, enacted on July 4, 2025, altered charitable giving rules, including by imposing a new 0.5% adjusted gross income floor on itemized deductions and capping the deduction value for top-bracket earners at 35%. Starting in 2026, some donors could see a smaller tax benefit for philanthropic contributions. If you're considering a gift to support COCC students, we encourage you to speak with your tax or financial adviser about options that may be right for you.

— Wendy Patton, *Assistant Director, COCC Foundation*





COMMUNITY IMPACT

A remodel and major addition this year to the Redmond campus's Manufacturing Technology labs, originally built in 2001, will expand capacity and add upgraded equipment for training in machining, welding and computer numerical control (CNC) operations. The addition will add more than 13,000 square feet of workspace. More students will be able to enroll.

"Central Oregon's manufacturing sector, especially in and around Redmond, is growing rapidly," says Cindy Lenhart, Ph.D., instructional outreach dean. "Local employers are facing urgent shortages in skilled roles such as welding, machining, industrial maintenance and quality control — many of which offer strong wages and long-term career pathways." Last fall alone, the program saw a nearly 50% increase in seats filled compared to the previous year, with many sections waitlisted. Oregon's welding workforce is expected to jump by 15% by 2032, reports the U.S. Department of Labor.

The estimated \$8 million project will combine \$4 million from COCC general funds and a matching grant from Oregon's Higher Education Coordinating Commission. Completion is expected as early as winter term 2027; classes and labs will continue during construction.

Additionally, a newly awarded \$2.1 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education — one of just 22 such grants designated for colleges and universities nationwide — is being used to develop certificates in Manufacturing with regional workforce needs in mind. The award will help COCC create new stackable short-term certificate pathways, seven in all, that are aligned with skill specifications from local industry. Funds will also support hiring faculty and staff, purchase equipment and technology, and improve data systems for Pell eligibility and student outcome tracking.

COCC has worked with Economic Development for Central Oregon (EDCO) and Redmond Economic Development Inc. (REDI) to facilitate partnerships with area employers.



Local employers are facing urgent shortages in skilled roles such as welding, machining, industrial maintenance and quality control — many of which offer strong wages and long-term career pathways."

Your Gift at Work: Making Education More Affordable for All



\$5,500



Annual tuition and fee cost
for most in-district students
attending COCC full time.

\$9,800



The increase in earnings
each year the average associate
degree graduate from COCC will
receive compared to someone
with a high school diploma
working in Oregon.

\$31,000

**Estimated annual
cost of attending
COCC** for a student
living on their own. This
includes tuition, fees,
books, supplies,
personal needs,
transportation, food
and housing costs.



By Supporting the COCC Foundation, You Build Lifelong Success for Students and Enrich Our Communities

In 2025-26

\$1,787,358

generously donated
for student scholarships
and college programs

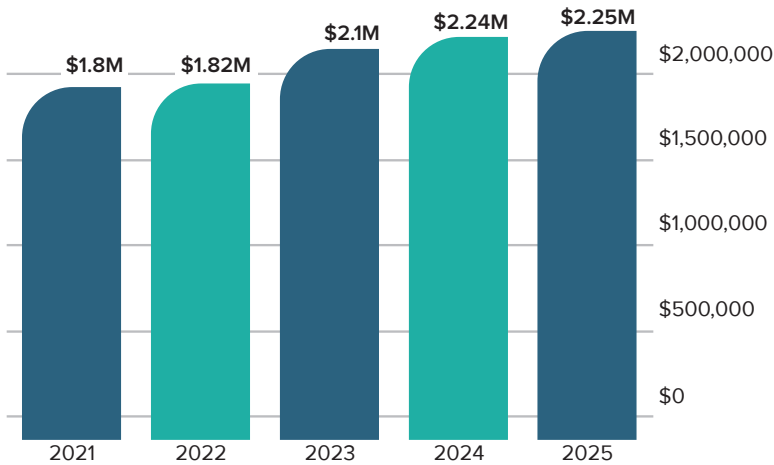


652

Individual and business donors
contributed to our projects, campaigns,
events and scholarship program.*



TOTAL AMOUNT OF SCHOLARSHIPS OFFERED



*For a full listing of current donors,
please visit: cocc.edu/foundation



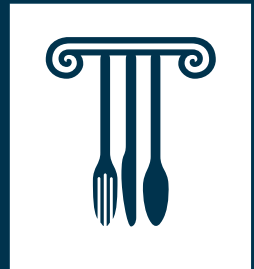
CENTRAL OREGON
community college
FOUNDATION

2600 NW College Way
Bend, Oregon 97703

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Nonprofit Org
US Postage
PAID
Bend OR
Permit No. 87

SAVE THE DATE
SATURDAY
APRIL 10 2027



MEAL
OF THE
YEAR

