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**From:** Oregon Community College Association <casey@occa17.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 12:04 PM  
**To:** Roache, Marshall <Marshall.Roache@oregoncoast.edu>  
**Subject:** OCCA Digest - January 8, 2026



Leading with racial equity, we advocate, communicate, and collaborate to strengthen community colleges for the benefit of Oregonians, particularly those historically underserved or systemically marginalized in higher education.



## Executive Director's Message

*A message from OCCA Executive Director Dr. Abby Lee:*

As we step into a new year, I am filled with deep appreciation for the collaborative spirit that defines Oregon's community colleges. January always brings a renewed sense of



purpose, and this year is no exception. Across our 17 colleges, faculty, staff, presidents, trustees, and partners continue to show what is possible when we work together with clarity, compassion, and determination.

OCCA is gearing up for the 2026 legislative session where our collective voice will matter more than ever. Oregon is facing real budget challenges, but community colleges are not the problem. We are the solution. Community colleges deliver the skilled workforce Oregon needs, provide affordable pathways for students of every age and background, and anchor local economies in every corner of the state.

During the short legislative session, we will continue to champion stable funding for community colleges. We will also continue highlighting the stories that show the true impact of our work. These stories are powerful tools for advocacy.

Thank you for your partnership, your leadership, and your unwavering commitment to Oregon's students. Together, we will continue to demonstrate that community colleges WORK for Oregon, and that our state's future is stronger because of the work we do.

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*In the Spotlight*

## Celebrate Board Members During National Board Member Recognition Month

January is National Board Member Recognition Month, and OCCA would like to extend a big thank you to all of the community college board members for your dedicated service. Your leadership, stewardship, and commitment strengthen our institutions and expand opportunity across our communities. We are grateful for the time, care, and vision you bring in support of student success.

OCCA would like to extend special recognition to its [\*\*Board of Directors\*\*](#), and particularly the OCCA Executive Committee for your dedicated leadership and service. Your time, expertise, and commitment to Oregon's 17 community colleges strengthen our collective voice and advance opportunities for students, communities, and the statewide workforce. Thank you for your thoughtful guidance, steady governance, and unwavering support of OCCA's mission. We are deeply grateful for all that you do.



## OCCA Board Approves 2026 Legislative Priorities

The OCCA Board approved legislative priorities for the 2026 short legislative session at its December meeting. The [\*\*2026 OCCA Legislative Priorities\*\*](#) outline the top three priorities for the session, as well as six additional issues OCCA is actively monitoring. These topics reflect emerging developments from state agencies, legislative offices, and stakeholder groups. The Priorities document is a living one, with the potential for changes as the session nears.

### Top Priorities

1. Protecting the Community College Support Fund (CCSF) from a 5% budget reduction
2. Preserving access to the Oregon Promise program
3. Protecting Career Pathways programs from elimination

### Issues to Monitor & Evaluate

1. Oregon Higher Education Coordination Act of 2026 proposal (OHECA 2026)

2. Associated Students of the University of Oregon (ASUO) proposal on student fee autonomy
3. Dual credit instructor qualifications and parity administrative rule change
4. Public Meetings Law and Oregon Government Ethics Commission (OGEC) rule on meals & serial communications
5. Short-Term Workforce Pell: 2026 implementation update
6. Bachelor of Applied Science in Education: HECC approval process

[Click here](#) to view additional details on each legislative priority. The 2026 Legislative Session begins Feb. 2 and must end by March 9.

## Jan. 29 Lunch & Learn to Highlight Upcoming Legislative Session



The next OCCA Lunch & Learn webinar is set for Thursday, January 29, at noon: Advocacy for the 2026 Legislative Session. Join us for this Lunch & Learn to gain an overview of the upcoming legislative landscape, learn about priority issues impacting Oregon's community colleges, and better understand the core messaging guiding our advocacy efforts during the session.

Participants will also receive practical guidance on how to effectively engage with legislators and serve as informed, confident advocates for community colleges throughout the 2026 Session. This webinar is especially valuable for board members, presidents, and anyone involved in advocacy or government relations.

[Register now by clicking here](#). See all upcoming Lunch & Learn webinars, as well as access links to the archived recordings from past ones by [visiting OCCA's website](#).

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## Federal Update



This week Congress returned to the U.S. Capitol. At the top of their agenda is to pass the remaining nine appropriations bills, including the education-related programs normally funded in the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies appropriations bill or another Continuing Resolution (CR) before the current CR expires on January 30. Earlier this fall, the House and Senate Appropriations Committees marked up

significantly different versions of the funding bill for education and workforce programs, with the Senate largely rejecting cuts proposed by the President in his budget. Continued advocacy for programs that impact community college students is critical over the next several weeks as lawmakers negotiate these funding bills. Take action by [contacting your Congressional representative](#) and Senators Wyden and Merkley to share the impact federal programs have on your communities. Particularly, we ask that you discuss programs that have great impact on student success and affordability, which may be in danger of being cut:

- Child Care Access Means Parents in Schools (CCAMPIS)
- Adult Basic Education State Grants
- Strengthening Institutions Program (SIP)
- Supplemental Education Opportunity Grants (SEOG)
- Federal Work Study

In an interview with the news outlet Breitbart, Secretary of Education Linda McMahon shared that her focus this year will be on K-12 issues including school choice, literacy, and “returning education to the states” and she will focus less on higher education. What 2026 actually brings remains an open question as the Department continues work on federal regulations to implement Workforce Pell and other higher education provisions contained in H.R. 1 which go into effect in July. The transfer of postsecondary programs to the Department of Labor will also continue to move forward as we start the new year, creating some uncertainty and possible delays in funding and technical assistance. For more information about the negotiated rulemaking process and a recent notice provided to institutions related to the constitutionality of MSI and HIS grants, see ACCT’s recent update [here](#).

For the upcoming [ACCT National Legislative Summit](#) (NLS) February 8 -11, OCCA is scheduling Congressional visits and developing an Oregon specific handout to go along with the advocacy priorities identified by ACCT and AACC. More information will be provided soon to the colleges that are attending.



***Digest to Become Weekly Publication During Legislative Session***

The OCCA *Digest* will shift to become a weekly publication starting with the Feb. 5



***Save the Date: AOAT Luncheon Set for April 17***

The [2026 All-Oregon Academic Team \(AOAT\) Luncheon](#) will take place on

edition. This change will allow OCCA to keep community college stakeholders updated regularly regarding the 2026 short Legislative Session. The *Digest* will be published every Thursday in February through the end of the Session (which constitutionally ends by March 9).

Friday, April 17, 2026, at Chemeketa Community College's Eola Center in Salem. Registration for this exciting and inspiring event will open in February. The luncheon honors students from all 17 colleges who have made remarkable achievements in and out of the classroom, often overcoming challenging obstacles. The event's keynote speaker and featured student speakers will be announced in the spring.

## Conference Sponsor Highlight: WGU



*Thank you to Western Governors University for serving as a Gold-level sponsor of the 2025 OCCA Conference! We appreciate your support!*

**Western Governors University** partners with Oregon community colleges to expand affordable, competency-based pathways for adult learners. With flexible online programs, generous transfer credit, and employer-aligned credentials, WGU helps students move from college to career faster—supporting completion, equity, and workforce needs statewide through trusted partnerships, data-driven support, and student-centered outcomes today.

## February: National CTE Month



February is National Career & Technical Education (CTE) Month, and OCCA, in coordination with the colleges, celebrates each year by highlighting community college CTE programs all month long with different industry themes each week. Check your local community college's social media platforms for CTE program highlights each week.

Also this year, OCCA will host a CTE Day at the Capital on February 18 to highlight the value and importance of community college CTE programs in Oregon. Several colleges will have hands-on demonstrations on display in the Capital Galleria.

In addition, the day will serve as the Community College Lobby Day, where college

representatives can schedule time to meet with their legislators who are available. Be sure to reach out to your college's president or [Campus Advocacy Coordinator](#) (CAC) to connect with your legislators. More details for the day will be coming in early February, so stay tuned!

## Worth the Read

*Articles & reports worth a quick read*

- [How many vice presidents does a college need?](#) - Inside Higher Ed, 1/7/2026
- [All community colleges exempt from new IPEDS survey](#) - CC Daily, 1/6/2026
- [New FIPSE awards to community colleges](#) - CC Daily, 1/6/2026
- [Poll: College enrollment rises despite declining belief in education importance](#) - EdSource, 1/5/2026
- [Meeting the rural care crisis](#) (TVCC) - CC Daily, 1/5/2026
- [5 predictions on how AI will shape higher ed in 2026](#) - Inside Higher Ed, 1/5/2026
- [Fixing the Transfer Process](#) - CC Daily, 1/4/2026
- [Key workforce trends to watch in 2026](#) - FastCompany, 12/24/2025
- [DOJ report declares MSIs unconstitutional](#) - Inside Higher Ed, 12/22/2025
- [From Service to Success: How institutions can transform veteran learning journeys](#) - The evoLLLution, 12/22/2025
- [26 stats for 2026](#) - Inside Higher Ed, 12/19/2025
- [Higher ed faces competing visions for its future](#) - Inside Higher Ed, 12/18/2025
- [When college costs hit hard, free course materials matter](#) - CC Daily, 12/17/2025
- [Workforce Pell's stress test: Can faster credentials also be accountable?](#) - Work Shift, 12/17/2025
- [Oregon's college-going rate rises across all student groups](#) - The Oregonian/OregonLive, 12/16/2025
- [Podcast: Voices of Student Success - 2025 trends and 2026 predictions](#) - Inside Higher Ed, 12/10/2025
- [Preparing community colleges for what comes next](#) - CC Daily, 12/10/2025
- [Opportunities, challenges in building the workforce pipeline](#) - CC Daily, 12/9/2025
- [A new 'solution' to student homelessness: A parking lot where students can sleep safely in their cars](#) - The Hechinger Report, 12/9/2025
- [A ready-made model for Workforce Pell: Inside Lorain's fast-track programs](#) - New America, 12/4/2025
- [Workforce Pell: Here are 5 big challenges for implementation](#) (HECC) - University Business, 12/2/2025

## Kudos Corner: COCC Receives \$1.2 million Federal Grant to Support Workforce Pell



Kudos to Central Oregon Community College (COCC), which was one of just 70 higher education institutions, non-profits and other organizations nationwide to receive a grant from the Department of Education to help advance its priorities in the coming year. COCC received a \$1.2 million Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE) grant to support Workforce Pell with the creation of seven new short-term manufacturing certificates. [Read more here](#).

## LBCC Selected for AACC Initiative on Advanced Manufacturing



Kudos to Linn-Benton Community College (LBCC) for its selection as one of 18 community colleges nationwide to participate in the EmployED Initiative through the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) with funding through General Motors. The initiative is funding projects at AACC member colleges to support efforts to align community college talent with industry needs, helping to close advanced manufacturing industry gaps. [Click here to learn more](#).

## TVCC President Young Named Woman of the Year

Kudos to Treasure Valley Community College (TVCC) President Dr. Dana Young, who was named Woman of the Year by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce in December. Young was recognized for her love for her community and her years of service to TVCC. [Read more here](#)

*OCCA and our colleges do incredible things throughout the year that make an impact on students and our communities. Kudos Corner will highlight these commendation-worthy actions each week. Want to recommend a Kudos-worthy highlight? Email [casey@occa17.com](mailto:casey@occa17.com).*



## Mark Your Calendar

[Download the 2025-26 OCCA Calendar](#)

All times are PST.



### January 2026

- 8 - Oregon Presidents' Council (OPC) Meeting, 9:00 a.m. (virtual)
- 13 - OCCA [Legislative Committee Meeting](#), 11:00 a.m. (virtual)
- 13-15 - Legislative Days, Oregon State Capital, Salem
- 19 - OCCA Office Closed, Martin Luther King Jr. Day Holiday
- 28 - OCCA [Executive Committee Meeting](#), 9:00 a.m. (virtual)
- 29 - [OCCA Lunch & Learn Webinar](#): 2026 Legislative Advocacy, 12:00 p.m. (virtual)

### February 2026

*All Month - [CTE Month](#)*

- 2 - Legislative Session Begins
- 2 - OCCA [Member Services Committee Meeting](#), 3:00 p.m. (virtual)
- 6 - OCCA [Board Meeting](#), 9:00 a.m. (virtual)
- 8-11 - [ACCT National Legislative Summit](#), Washington, DC
- 10 - OCCA [Legislative Committee Meeting](#), 11:00 a.m. (virtual)
- 11 - [HECC Funding & Achievement Subcommittee Meeting](#) (virtual)
- 12-14 - [Student Success & Retention Conference](#), Sheraton Portland Airport Hotel & Conference Center
- 13 - Full [HECC Commission](#) Meeting (virtual)
- 18 - [CTE & Community College Lobby Day](#), Oregon State Capital, Salem
- 19 - Oregon Presidents' Council (OPC) Meeting, 9:00 a.m., Chemeketa Community College, Salem/hybrid
- 25 - OCCA [Executive Committee Meeting](#), 9:00 a.m. (virtual)
- 26 - [OCCA Lunch & Learn](#): CTE, 12:00 p.m. (virtual)

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