

OCCA Update for College Boards – July 2026

Community College Current Service Level Update

On June 23, the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) announced that the Department of Administrative Services Chief Financial Office (DAS-CFO) had revised the 2027-29 current service level (CSL) calculation for community colleges. The updated estimate is approximately 13.7%, down from the 17.8% HECC presented to its Commission on June 10-11. The revised estimate remains above the 7.5% Community College Support Fund increase developed by Oregon's community colleges.

According to HECC, DAS-CFO revised the calculation to align it with current source data and CSL methodology. The earlier model applied a 0% growth rate to pension obligation bond (POB) payments, effectively carrying the prior debt-service cost into 2027-29 without an increase. The updated model reduces those costs where bond obligations expire or mature and no payment continues into the new biennium.

The revised CSL remains a technical state budget calculation, not a final funding recommendation or a complete estimate of college need. It does not account for the \$167 million colleges are spending from reserves in the current biennium to support ongoing operations. Without enough ongoing revenue to replace that one-time support, colleges would need to continue drawing down reserves, increase tuition, or reduce programs and services.

HECC is expected to approve its Agency Request Budget on August 23. The Governor's Recommended Budget is scheduled for release on December 1, and the Legislature will make final funding decisions during the 2027 Legislative Session. Given the state's essentially flat revenue outlook and the requirement that the Governor submit a balanced budget, colleges should not treat the 13.7% CSL as an expected funding level.

BOARD MEMBER ACTION:

- **Read more about the proposed CSL** by [clicking here](#) for an FAQ document.

Workforce Pell Learning Lab

OCCA was pleased to help support the Workforce Pell Learning Lab, held June 23 at Chemeketa Community College's Wine Studies Center. The interactive workshop brought together more than 120 participants, with representatives from nearly every Oregon community college, to move from Workforce Pell awareness to action.

Throughout the day, participants assessed readiness, identified institutional barriers and state-level dependencies, explored Oregon-focused tools and real program scenarios, and developed practical next steps to support implementation.

OCCA extends its thanks to Chemeketa Community College for hosting, and to the day's

presenters for sharing their time and expertise: Kamille Seward and Jimmy LeDuc from Education Design Lab; Julia Pontoni and Donna Lewelling from the Higher Education Coordinating Commission; and Kate Kinder from the National Council for Workforce Education. The strong turnout reflected Oregon's shared commitment to strengthening workforce pathways and expanding opportunities for students across the state.

BOARD MEMBER ACTION:

- **Check in with your president** to hear feedback from the **college's team that attended** to learn more about your college's plan for short term programs that may be Workforce Pell eligible.

Lunch & Learn Recap: Executive Sessions & Public Meetings Law

OCCA Senior Policy Advisor and General Counsel Karen Smith presented at the final 2025-26 OCCA Lunch & Learn on June 25, "Oregon Public Meetings Law: Can the Board Discuss This Issue in Closed Session?" The presentation focused on executive sessions and the legal requirements for boards to meet in closed session under Oregon Public Meetings Law. Karen reviewed the limited executive session exemptions, news media access requirements, and guidance for board members on maintaining transparency and compliance when deliberating and making decisions. As a reminder, final decisions or actions may not occur in closed session.

Thank you to all who were able to join us. Board members who were unable to attend – or who would like to revisit the discussion – can view the recording by [clicking here](#).

BOARD MEMBER ACTION:

- Didn't have a chance to attend the June Lunch & Learn? [View the recording online](#) at your convenience. All Lunch & Learn webinar recordings from the last three years are available at that link.

2026 OCCA Conference Call for Presentations

The annual OCCA Conference is set for November 4-6 at Sunriver Resort in central Oregon. This year's theme highlights how "Community Colleges Work for Oregon" and the critical role board members, college leaders, and partners play in that success.

OCCA has issued a call for breakout session proposals, and invites dynamic, engaging proposals for breakout sessions that showcase innovative practices, effective strategies, and meaningful outcomes that demonstrate how community colleges are working for students, communities, and the state. Breakout session tracks will include how Community Colleges Work for:

- Board Leadership & Governance
- Student Success & Institutional Effectiveness
- Oregon's Economy & Communities
- Advocacy & Investment

OCCA encourages proposals that highlight innovative approaches across all topic areas, including the use of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, new service delivery models, and creative strategies that improve outcomes, strengthen governance, and advance community impact.

Conference session proposals are due by August 14 and must be submitted using OCCA's online form. Find more information about proposal submissions by visiting OCCA's Conference web page: <https://occa17.com/conference/>

BOARD MEMBER ACTION:

- Work with your president to **consider submitting a proposal** for a conference breakout session highlighting your college's innovative work, successful program or other lesson learned. Be sure to [proposals must be submitted](#) by 5:00 p.m. PST on August 14.

2026 Howard Cherry Awards Nominations

The annual OCCA Howard Cherry Awards are now accepting nominations for Outstanding Board Member, Outstanding Advocate and Outstanding Administrator. The awards will be presented during the OCCA Conference on November 5 at Sunriver Resort in Sunriver, OR.

All submissions must be made using OCCA's online nomination form no later than August 14. For more information on nomination requirements and submission details, visit OCCA's website: <https://occa17.com/conference/>.

BOARD MEMBER ACTION:

- **Consider making a nomination and [submit](#) by August 14.**

Board Governance & Leadership Survey

The OCCA Member Services Committee is seeking your input to help shape future governance education, leadership development, and professional learning opportunities for Oregon's community college board members and leaders. As part of the Committee's 2025-26 goals, OCCA has launched the Governance & Leadership Education Needs Survey to better understand the training, resource, and support needs of locally elected board members and presidents around the state.

Your feedback will directly inform:

- Board education and governance programming
- Annual Conference and professional development planning
- Future training topics and resource development
- Strategies to strengthen statewide board engagement and leadership support

The survey should take approximately 10–15 minutes to complete, and responses will help

ensure OCCA's future offerings are aligned with the real needs and priorities of our member colleges. The Member Services Committee has set a goal of achieving an 80% response rate statewide, and we would greatly appreciate your participation. The survey will close soon, so please take the opportunity to submit your feedback ASAP!

To take the survey, use this link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Y8JCXMF>

BOARD MEMBER ACTION:

- If you haven't already done so, please **take the Board Leadership & Governance Survey** by [clicking here](#).

OCCA Digest e-newsletter

The *OCCA Digest* is a monthly e-newsletter that highlights updates during the Legislative Session, important events, news, and announcements. It is a great way to stay connected with information important to community colleges in Oregon and learn how you can take action to support colleges and students. The newsletter is published the first Thursday of each month, *except during a legislative session, at which time it becomes a weekly publication that comes out on Thursdays.*

To sign up to receive this free e-newsletter, visit <https://occa17.com/resources/newsletter/> and click the "Sign Up" button. The OCCA Digest will come from OCCA Executive Support Specialist Laura Crook at laura@occa17.com, so be sure to add her email to your contacts to ensure the email arrives in your inbox and not your spam folder.

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The Oregon Community College Association was founded in 1962 with the purpose of providing support to the colleges before policymakers and partners whose actions affect the wellbeing of community colleges across the state. OCCA represents the 17 publicly chartered community colleges and their locally elected board members. 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. Have questions about OCCA and our work to support Oregon's community colleges? Contact occa@occa17.com.