



TO: House Committee on Higher education & Workforce Development

FROM: Kristen Grainger, President
Oregon Alliance of Independent Colleges and Universities

RE: Student and Career Pathways

DATE: March 7, 2017

Oregon's 18 private, nonprofit colleges and universities that comprise The Alliance serve more than 35,000 students. We are committed to increasing student readiness, access and success, creating **pathways** from high school, undergraduate and graduate/professional school to their careers.

Alliance member schools share a strong commitment to equity of opportunity, particularly for students from demographic groups traditionally underrepresented on American college campuses, both public and private:

- One in five students at one of Oregon's private, nonprofit colleges is a first-generation college attender.
- One in three is a student of color.
- One in three faces significant financial hardship such that he or she qualifies for Pell grants.
- Ninety-two percent of our students receive grants and scholarships from their schools.

The results:

- Three out of five students finish their bachelor's degree in four years, nearly twice the rate of students at Oregon's public universities.
- Twenty-eight percent of our students graduate with *zero* debt.
- Of students who graduate with debt, it is on par with the national average and with that of students graduating from public colleges and universities.
- One in four Oregon bachelor's degrees was conferred by a private, nonprofit college or university, and more than half of Oregon's master's and doctoral degrees.
- One in four STEM or health degrees was earned at an Alliance member school.

Clearly, Oregon's private nonprofit and independent colleges and universities are committed to helping our state make progress towards our 40-40-20 goal for higher education attainment, and we are delivering on that commitment.

Virtually all of Oregon's private nonprofit colleges and universities have specific programs and initiatives that help students discover their passion and find their career paths. In addition, the Alliance sustains these *collaborative programs* that create pathways by increasing student readiness, access and success in getting to college and navigating college to a career:

Oregon Private College Week (OPCW):

The Alliance organized its third Oregon Private College Week during the week of July 25-29, 2016. Student registrants, family members and guests from 27 states (over half from Oregon) made nearly 6,000 visits to our campuses through tours and admissions sessions, where they learned of the rich variety of academic programs that make an education accessible and offer exceptional value as they prepare for life and career. OPCW 2017 is scheduled for July 24-28.

Three other non-profit organizations devoted to supporting access to higher education for low-income, minority, and rural students brought groups of students to OPCW: **College Dreams, All Hands Raised, and Oregon GEAR UP.**

These partnerships help us leverage resources to reach out to students from all backgrounds and demonstrate that college is *accessible* and *affordable*.

Matched College Savings Program (MCSP) helps leverage every dollar:

The Alliance is now in its 7th year of as a participating partner in Community and Shelter Assistance of Oregon's federal Assets for Independence (AFI) Matched College Savings Program. To date, nearly 300 students have participated in this program that provides mentoring in the form of career, educational, and financial education, and matches their savings from employment 5:1 with federal AFI funds, state tax credits, and Alliance-raised funds. Students must be at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level to participate in this program.

Since MCSP's inception, participating students saving a total of \$367,834 was matched with \$1,790,798 in Alliance, state, and federal funds. The Alliance match alone totals nearly \$585,000.

We know from our financial aid directors that at least 4,000 students at our member institutions meet the financial eligibility requirements to qualify for an Education IDA. Manifest need and demand for the program clearly outstrip our capacity to sustain it under the present model with our own fundraising.

And so, this past May, the Alliance submitted and has been awarded its own \$425,000 grant with the federal AFI program which the Alliance and its member schools matched. Thus, a total of \$850,000 is available in matching funds to student savings.

Under this new model, dubbed **E3 (Earn, Educate, Empower)**, participating students who save up to \$500/year for up to four years can match their savings **8:1** (up to \$4,000 annually), increasing the available benefit from \$9,600 under the previous MCSP program to \$18,000 under E3.

Collaborative programs to support talent development and the transition from education to careers:

The Alliance is working with Handshake (www.joinhandshake.com) and the Oregon Talent

Council to provide a **single portal** where employers can easily and seamlessly recruit talent from Oregon's higher education institutions, both private and public, resulting in more opportunities and better employer and student experiences - at no cost to the employer or the student.

The Oregon Talent Council is providing one-time financial assistance to participating institutions (public and private) to support the transition to a new Career Service Management System for the 2017-18 fiscal year.

The Oregon Talent Council realizes the need to orient employers to the new system (Handshake) as well as create opportunities to strengthen engagement between industry and the colleges and universities, so they have developed a plan for Regional Employer Education Events. The Council is interested in supporting several events around the state of Oregon that bring college career services, hiring managers, the Council and trade association representatives together to both introduce the new system and strengthen industry connections.

Applied, Collaborative Research for Faculty, Students, and Industry:

With annual funding from the Katherine Bisbee II Fund of the Oregon Community Foundation, the Alliance is sponsoring collaborative undergraduate applied research projects in the area of conservation. The projects require a minimum of two Alliance member colleges and universities and one business/industry partner.

Examples:

- 2015: \$15,000 grant managed by the University of Portland in collaboration with George Fox University and Portland General Electric. The project combined the University of Portland's solar-thermal collection system and the electrical engineering and controls expertise of George Fox University. The team worked closely with Portland General Electric to align the long-term research goals with energy needs in the region.
- 2016: Three separate grants totaling \$45,000 to the University of Portland for additional collaborative, conservation-related research projects. Two of these were in collaboration with PGE and George Fox University engineering and chemistry departments; the third was a collaboration between the City of Portland Bureau of Environmental Services and the Lewis & Clark environmental studies department.
- 2017: Two \$15,000 grants to the University of Portland to collaborate with George Fox and PGE for continued study of solar thermal energy production; and with George Fox University and NW Natural to investigate issues related to the design of a prototype isothermal natural gas compressor.

Through continued innovation and the individualized, student-focused teaching and learning environments that characterize our student experiences, the eighteen institutions of Oregon Alliance of Independent Colleges and Universities will continue to produce graduates who pursue lives of meaningful work and contribute to our state's civic and economic well-being.