



Testimony on Senate Bill 730
Senate Education Committee
February 13, 2019

Chair Wagner, Vice-Chair Thompson, and members of the Committee. My name is Kyle Thomas, and I am the Director of Legislative and Policy Affairs for the Higher Education Coordinating Commission. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on Senate Bill 730. This bill represents a continuation of some of the most important work HECC has been doing since 2017, and we are hopeful to have your support.

Senate Bill 730 follows up on 2017's House Bill 2998. This legislation required the adoption of a unified transfer pathway for a 30-credit core curriculum, and separate major-specific pathways covering up to the first 90 credits of a student's higher education experience. The goal of House Bill 2998 was clear: to make a student's transfer experience as simple and efficient as possible, resulting in a reduction of excess credits transfer students have at graduation and saving students time, money, and frustration in the process.

This goal applies statewide. A biology student transferring from Rogue Community College to the University of Oregon should have an experience equivalent to a biology student transferring from Portland Community College to Portland State University.

Staff at the HECC, institutional leadership, faculty, registrars, and advisors are working vigorously to meet the spirit of the initial legislation on the timelines prescribed, and are making progress. The 30-credit foundational core curriculum is complete. One major transfer map is complete, and three others are in progress. Each year, three additional major pathways will be constructed, with the goal of completing a statewide-unified transfer system. As we built these tools, we must now think about the new challenges of maintenance and communication. SB 730 addresses these two needs.

On the issue of maintenance, SB 730 builds on the framework of the Transfer Student Bill of Rights and Responsibilities. The new language places the new transfer pathways into statute alongside the older Oregon Transfer Module (known as the OTM) and Oregon transfer degrees, like the Associate of Arts in Oregon Transfer (or AAOT). This gives HECC the ability to develop standards for these transfer pathways that will serve to further clarify the tenets of HB 2998. These standards include processes that will ideally help to guide future major pathway workgroups in their work, and will set expectations for how institutions should work on questions of ongoing alignment as these transfer tools face the need to respond to future curricular changes.

The bill requires HECC to consult a stakeholder group in doing this work. The HECC meets this requirement by working with a group that is already doing this work, the Oregon Transfer and Articulation Committee (OTAC). This body is a representative group of faculty, advisors, and registrars that has the expertise and ability to communicate back to campuses actions necessary to address maintenance, process, and troubleshooting.

Finally, SB 730 requires HECC to develop an electronic communications and database system (called the 'transfer portal'). The new transfer system will be a powerful tool for students and advisors, but will only be effective if it meets students' needs and they understand how to use it. One goal of the system would be to aggregate all of the campus specific course information required to build transfer maps, so that a student or an advisor can visit a web site, type in their intended community college and major, and receive a customized course sequence guaranteed to minimize credit loss and ease transfer. The system may also go so far as to allow universities to more easily assign the credits students bring with them from any college into the courses necessary to assure seamless transfer – improving the ease of transferring the carefully constructed thirty credit core. The bill does not presuppose who owns this system.

Funding for this bill is provided for in the Governor's investment budget. This funding also establishes the limited duration positions given to HECC in 2017 as a permanent position, necessary to keep this work progressing. In addition, this funding also provides for pass through funding for institutions for faculty participation. Lastly, it devotes funds to the initial planning and potential initial implementation of the transfer portal.

Thank you for your time today.