

Joint Task Force on Student Success for Underrepresented Students in Higher Education

**Meeting Summary – Gresham Field Trips
March 31, 2022**

**Community Leaders Roundtable
Vista Dining Center, Room AC 2000, Building 10
Mt. Hood Community College
26000 SE Stark St.
Gresham, OR 97030**

Members Present: Rep. Alonso Leon, Chair; Sen. Dembrow; Sen. Wagner; Sen. Frederick

Members Excused: Rep. Owens; Rep. Ruiz; Rep. Zika; Sen. Findley; Sen. Robinson

Non-Member legislators present: None

The task force convened at 8:00 AM for a roundtable discussion with education and community leaders. The group included presidents, board chairs, board members, and student government leaders from Mt. Hood Community College, Portland Community College, and Clackamas Community College, as well as the superintendent and board chair of Gresham-Barlow School District, business and industry leaders, and representatives from community-based organizations that serve students in higher education. Rep. Alonso Leon, Chair, began the discussion by asking the participants what student success would look like to them. Discussion points touched on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students, non-metric indicators of success, working toward better alignment of the K-12 and higher education systems, guided pathways for students, affordability and perceptions of the cost of higher education, wraparound services for first-generation students, the value of teaching financial literacy, the complexity of financial aid applications, caseloads for benefits navigators, state funding for higher education, the state's 40-40-20 goals, and enrollment challenges faced by community colleges in the current economic environment.

Faculty and Staff Roundtable

**Vista Dining Center, Room AC 2000, Building 10
Mt. Hood Community College
26000 SE Stark St.
Gresham, OR 97030**

Members Present: Rep Alonso Leon, Sen. Dembrow, Sen. Wagner, Sen. Frederick

Members Excused: Rep Owens, Rep Ruiz, Rep Zika, Sen. Findley, Sen. Robinson

Non-member legislators present:

The task force met with faculty and staff at 9:45 AM. Representative Alonso Leon welcomed the task force and participants, and task force members introduced themselves. Representative Alonso Leon asked the participants to discuss what steps the legislature could take to better support underrepresented students in higher education. Among the topics discussed were the needs of students receiving financial aid; the need for diverse mentors; the extra work being asked of diverse educators; the need for additional funding; free or reduced tuition; the need for diverse educators; the basic needs of students (housing, food, child care, transportation); staff shortages; adjunct pay and job security; wraparound services for students; institutional budgets and transparency; partnerships with community based organizations; the need to promote college-going among K-12 students; students who need help with financial aid paperwork; efforts to expand Oregon Promise; tutoring, non-credit courses and academic supports; broadband access and technical support for students; the inequities of a higher education system that requires tuition payments; systemic barriers; "Oregon goes to college;" collaborative space for research and innovation; access for students with disabilities; systematizing the state's community colleges; the need for diversity, equity, and inclusion staff on every campus; classified staff salary schedules; universal access; and the contribution of higher education to quality of life among Oregonians.

Student Listening Session

Town and Gown Room, Room AC 2057, Building 10

Mt. Hood Community College

26000 SE Stark St.

Gresham, OR 97030

Members Present: Rep. Alonso Leon, Chair; Rep. Ruiz; Sen. Dembrow; Sen. Wagner; Sen. Frederick

Members Excused: Rep. Owens; Rep. Zika; Sen. Findley; Sen. Robinson

Other legislators present: None

Approximately 20 students from Mt. Hood Community College, Portland Community College, and Clackamas Community College attended the listening session. Each of the attending task force members sat at tables with groups of five or six students. The students described their educational experiences and responded to questions from the

task force members. Approximately every 40 minutes, the task force members rotated to new tables to talk with each group of students.

Site Tour

**Applies Technologies Building
Mt. Hood Community College
26000 SE Stark St.
Gresham, OR 97030**

Members Present: Rep. Alonso Leon, Chair; Rep. Ruiz; Sen. Dembrow; Sen. Wagner; Sen. Frederick

Members Excused: Rep. Owens; Rep. Zika; Sen. Findley; Sen. Robinson

Other legislators present: None

Members began a tour of the Mt. Hood Community College campus at the Applied Technologies building. There, they learned about the college's Career Pathways programs, including welding, machining, and automotive repair, which attract a large number of English language learners. The tour continued to the Adult Basic Skills Resource Center, which serves speakers of more than 75 languages and provides adult basic skills education and high school equivalency degree programs. The members then viewed the forthcoming Equity Center, which is being constructed using funds from the federal Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund and will host the basic needs navigator, the food pantry, the student government, and the Multicultural & Diversity Resource Center. The tour concluded at the current Multicultural & Diversity Resource Center located in the Student Union and learned of its history and current utilization rates since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.
