

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### Background

The Joint Task Force on Student Success for Underrepresented Students in Higher Education (JTUSHE) is a bicameral legislative task force established by [House Bill 2590 \(2021\)](#). The measure charges the task force with visiting public post-secondary institutions of education in order to meet with current, former, and prospective students from underrepresented backgrounds, and with developing policy and funding proposals that focus on increasing the likelihood of student success for underrepresented students in the areas of access, retention, graduation, and entry into the workforce. The bill also authorizes the task force to pre-session file legislation for the 2023 session and directs the task force to issue a report by December 15, 2022.

### Process

Between March and July 2022, the task force conducted four two-day site visits to nine higher education institutions across the state. The task force also conducted virtual site visits to additional higher education institutions and correctional facilities where adults in custody participate in education programs. During these visits, the task force members held roundtable discussions, small-group conversations with underrepresented students, and formal public meetings in order to learn about the barriers to student success faced by underrepresented students.

Due to construction at the Capitol and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the task force met virtually on a regular basis throughout the interim when it was not conducting site visits. These meetings featured presentations by subject matter experts, state agency staff, and higher education stakeholders in addition to public comment from students.

Following the site visits, the task force formed three work groups to focus on policy development: Financial Aid and Affordability, Student Support and Wraparound Services, and Systemic Accountability and Continuous Improvement. Each work group was co-chaired by two task force members and consisted of interested stakeholders, including students. The work groups met regularly from September through November 2022. Each group solicited policy proposals from participants, which form the basis of the task force's findings and recommendations.

### Findings, Recommendations, and Policy Proposals

***Financial Aid and Affordability.*** The task force developed a set of findings, recommendations, and policy proposals related to addressing the financial barriers faced by underrepresented students, including the cost of attendance, housing, child care, and educational resources such as textbooks. The task force's findings and recommendations in this area focus on:

- increasing need-based financial aid for low-income students;
- expanding emergency and completion grants;

- expanding access to low-cost open educational resources;
- alleviating housing cost burdens for students;
- expanding access to child care;
- increasing mentoring and advising opportunities for prospective students;
- reinforcing benefits navigator positions on campuses; and
- examining the value of work-study opportunities.

***Student Support and Wraparound Services.*** The task force also developed findings and recommendations related to providing supplemental on-campus support for underrepresented students who face additional barriers to completion compared to their peers. The task force’s findings and recommendations in this area focus on:

- providing institutions with the resources to identify students in need of support;
- centralizing and promoting available support services on campuses;
- maintaining benefits navigators on campuses;
- increasing state support of institutional student support programs;
- expanding access to mental health services for students;
- addressing the needs of students with disabilities; and
- transitioning to corequisite learning models for developmental education.

***Systemic Accountability and Continuous Improvement.*** Lastly, the task force developed findings and recommendations related to addressing nonprogrammatic and systemic barriers to student success for underrepresented students, including strategies to promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accountability at every level of the state’s higher education system. The task force’s findings and recommendations in this area focus on:

- improving clear communication of student outcomes between public higher education institutions and the state;
- encouraging institutions to adopt hiring, training, and cultural competency practices that promote responsiveness to students’ needs;
- recognizing additional expectations placed on diverse faculty and staff;
- a statewide initiative to develop equity-minded systems on campuses;
- addressing disparities between tenured and adjunct faculty;
- encouraging roles for institutional leadership positions for practitioners of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ); and
- encouraging broader campus community involvement in institutional resource allocation decisions.

## **Access to Full Report**

The full report can be found online at the [Oregon Legislative Information System \(OLIS\)](#).