



Testimony on Senate Bill 76

Senate Education Committee

March 1, 2021

Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Thomsen, 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 (HECC). Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB 76. This HECC sponsored bill complements SB 233 and common course numbering work, and builds on work already done under HB 2998 (2017).

With the amendment being proposed to SB 233, the statutory language of which was only available to HECC late last week, it is clear SB 76 will require conforming amendments, and some portions of the bill may no longer be relevant. HECC looks forward to working with the committee and stakeholders to amend this bill to make it work in the confines of the new common course numbering and transfer structures being created in SB 233.

First, HECC, community colleges, and public universities can do the hard work of developing transfer pathways, but without a clear set of guarantees that ensures that the credits students earn count, without regard to originating institution, receiving institution, or program of study, and adequate communication tools to inform students, advisers and families, we will have accomplished little.

This bill proposes investigating web-based tools where students, parents, advisors, families, faculty and staff can go to understand how courses articulate to degree completion for all of Oregon's public universities and community colleges. It further proposes work with staff, institutions, registrars, advisors, and students to design a solution that automates course articulation between institutions, smoothing the process of accepting transfer students.

In Oregon, where different institutions use different student information systems, and the core and major transfer maps are not built on specific individual courses that span multiple institutions, but course outcomes that can be achieved by multiple courses, this a complex undertaking that requires careful study and planning.

This effort complements language in the amendment to SB 233 requiring recommendations for best practices to 'increase communication and facilitate student acceleration and the transfer of students,' as well as language that requires the Commission to maintain a website and provide logistical support to the work of the Transfer council. Though, even without this language, clear communication to students is critical.

Second, when HB 2998 was being considered, HECC requested, but was not provided, research staff support. Providing such support would allow HECC to provide policy makers and the

public with robust information about the successes and failures of the new transfer system. With staffing, and some statutory language modification, HECC can provide an analysis of the success of community college to public university transfer, where “success” means completion of a bachelor’s degree equitably across student groups, consistently across institutions and majors, and efficiently with minimal loss of credit.

With this language and associated appropriation, HECC will be able to determine precisely who is completing successfully and who is not. The Commission can also determine how this has changed over time, and create recommendations for further development. The Commission will also be able to identify to what extent colleges and universities have implemented the transfer system, determine how many students are completing core and major transfer maps, who these students are, and where they attend.

These are important questions to answer, and will better position the Commission to undertake the recommended auditing process if it continues to be established in SB 233.

Thank you for your time today.