



# Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

**Higher Education Coordinating Commission**

Office of the Executive Director

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Salem, Oregon 97302

[www.oregon.gov/HigherEd](http://www.oregon.gov/HigherEd)

April 7, 2025

Co-Chair, Senator Janeen Sollman  
Co-Chair, Representative Ricki Ruiz  
Joint Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Education

Dear Co-Chairs Sollman and Ruiz,

Thank you for the opportunity to answer questions that arose during the **April 3, 2025** Higher Education Coordinating Commission presentation to the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education.

**On slide 172**, Rep. Wright inquired about the definition of “frontier communities” that HECC uses to identify areas served by our ASPIRE program. We use a federal definition from the U.S. Department of Agriculture that is also used by OHSU’s Office of Rural Health. It identifies four kinds of frontier areas: ZIP code areas with majority populations living 60 minutes or more from urban areas of 50,000 or more people; 45 minutes or more from urban areas of 25,000-49,999 people; 30 minutes or more from urban areas of 10,000- 24,999 people; and 15 minutes or more from urban areas of 2,500-9,999 people. Our Office of Research and Data uses all four kinds of frontier areas, such that ZIP codes meeting any of the above criteria are included. The distinction between “frontier” and “rural” allows us to identify the reach of public services to Oregonians in the most remote areas.

**On slide 186**, Rep. Ruiz asked whether there is a risk that federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars for Future Ready Oregon could be retracted. HECC is closely following direction from the Department of Administrative Services (DAS), which acts according to U.S. Treasury guidance. At this time, all ARPA funds for Future Ready grant programs have been obligated through December 2026. It would take extraordinary federal action to jeopardize these funds, a risk we believe is minimal. We welcome committee members to remain apprised of updates about the potential impact of federal directives on HECC at [our new webpage here](#).

**On slide 195**, Sen. Frederick asked if a certain school-based firefighting training program in Chiloquin is a grantee of the Oregon Conservation Corps (OCC) program administered by HECC. Although OCC does not directly fund school-based programs, OCC grantees often partner with schools. [Lomakatsi Restoration Project](#) runs OCC crews in Klamath, Jackson, and Josephine counties, and OCC funding allowed Lomakatsi to expand its Youth Ecological

Forestry Training Program to form an inter-tribal crew of young adults from the Chiloquin/Klamath Falls community of Klamath County.

*Corrections*

During the hearing, we stated that there are approximately 800,000 Oregonians who have earned college credits but did not complete a credential (“some college, no degree”). In fact, we estimate that in 2023 there were 600,000 adults ages 25 and up with some college and no credential. While the U.S. Census Bureau reports approximately 800,000 adult Oregonians in this category, HECC estimates draw on additional data to account for Oregonians who have earned postsecondary certificates.

**On slide 180**, we mentioned that SB 1552 (2024) did not allocate funds to HECC to administer the direct admissions program. In fact, HECC received funding for a limited duration, half-time Research Analyst 4 position to support this work. We note that the lack of full-time, permanent staff dedicated to this work will likely contribute to slow progress for the direct admissions initiative over the next biennium.

If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact Kyle Thomas, Director of Legislative and Policy Affairs, at [kyle.thomas@hecc.oregon.gov](mailto:kyle.thomas@hecc.oregon.gov) or at 503-480-9596.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ben Cannon". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ben Cannon  
Executive Director