

Senate Education Committee
SB 231 – Oregon Campus Resilience Consortium
March 26, 2025

Chair Frederick and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the Oregon Community College Association (OCCA) and the 17 community colleges we represent to express our strong support for SB 231. This year will mark the 10th anniversary of the tragic shooting at Umpqua Community College (UCC). Since then, Oregon post-secondary education institutions have weathered wildfires and smoke, the COVID-19 pandemic, and ice and snowstorms. Together we have been working to advocate for state funding to provide better statewide coordination and training around disasters and crisis events that arise. These incidents have a unique impact on higher education institutions and the students and communities we serve. We cannot do this work alone.

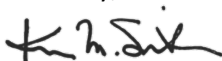
As often is the case in life, you do not fully understand how unprepared you are when faced with an emergency or disaster situation until you are in the middle of it. We learned that firsthand with the shooting at UCC in 2015. With the luck of personal relationships and connections, Andre Le Duc and his colleagues at the University of Oregon were able to assist in pulling together the resources and providing expertise that was needed to help UCC immediately following this incident, in the response phase, and then into the recovery phase. University and other community college resources were joined with state and local resources to manage the aftermath of the crisis. It was truly a community effort and one for which we were completely lacking in preparation and planning.

During that crisis, we learned about resources we did not know existed. For example, OCCA as an ORS 190 government entity was able to play a role through an intergovernmental agreement to facilitate the loaning of current and former staff from other community colleges around the state to UCC to shadow UCC staff and provide assistance when they needed a break. This ensured the continued functioning of the college. This was not something we had ever done before as an organization. It proved critical to the continued operations and administration of the college.

The reality, however, is that we have made little progress on formalizing these efforts statewide and we lack the resources needed to enhance institutional preparedness, safety, and resilience across Oregon's post-secondary education sector. Joining together in the consortium that will be created with the passage of SB 231 benefits all institutions involved. Through a modest investment of state funds, Oregon community colleges and universities will have access to better statewide coordination and training. The time is now to act.

Thank you for your consideration. We urge your support for the passage of SB 231.

Sincerely,



Karen M. Smith
Senior Policy Advisor & General Counsel