



Lift Every Voice

Diversity and Multicultural News from around the Oregon University System

SPRING 2008



Eastern Oregon University, La Grande
Oregon Institute of Technology, Klamath Falls
Oregon State University, Corvallis
Portland State University, Portland
Southern Oregon University, Ashland
University of Oregon, Eugene
Western Oregon University, Monmouth
Oregon Health & Science University
Affiliated, Portland



Improving College Participation and Completion

In March 2007, the Oregon State Board of Higher Education finalized its Strategic Plan: *An Investment in Oregonians for Our Future: A Plan to 2025 for the Oregon University System* [[download at www.ous.edu](http://www.ous.edu)]. One of the concerns identified was that while Oregon's population is growing, the percentage of Oregon graduating high school students attending Oregon public universities has declined from 24.1% in 2001-02 to 20% in 2006-07. Additionally, after years of improvement, college retention rates are beginning to decline.

In June 2007, the Board launched an effort to identify strategies to both improve college participation and increase retention at Oregon University System (OUS) institutions. The *Student Participation and Completion Committee* was convened under the leadership of Board member Dr. Dalton Miller-Jones, Chair of Black Studies and Psychology Professor at Portland State University. In addition to identifying and addressing barriers to college participation and retention, the Committee also worked on identifying the needs of underserved populations, so clear educational disparities of ethnicity, geographic area, economic background, and other factors among Oregon's citizens could begin to be resolved.

Lift Every Voice
Oregon University System
P.O. Box 3175
Eugene, OR 97403
541-346-5725
www.ous.edu/lev

Contributors: Diane Saunders
Endi Hartigan
Editor: Yvette Webber-Davis
Layout & Design: Judy Moll

Oregon's Communities Speak about Students' Needs

From June through November 2007, the Student Participation and Completion Committee convened a number of panels and a statewide symposium to hear directly from community members, experts, practitioners, and students on key barriers to, and strategies for, improving student participation and completion in postsecondary education. The panels brought in representatives from across the state to examine issues facing first-generation, Native American, African American, Latino, Asian American, Pacific-Islander, rural, urban, and low-income students, and students with disabilities. All told, almost 450 diverse voices were heard during this first stage of the Committee's work. While many of the barriers were common to many or all groups, such as the need for more successful adult mentors, others were population-specific. The panels were an opportunity for Committee members to hear directly from Oregon's constituencies about the obstacles that often limit students from attending and completing college.

The Committee also broke into four task teams, made up of Committee members and resource experts. These task teams devoted their time and energy to research, outreach, and identifying best practices in the areas of Financial/Economic Issues; Campus Climate Issues; Academic Preparation/Retention Issues; and Family Dynamics Issues. During the October 2007 Symposium, "*Breaking Barriers and Opening Doors*," each of the four groups met with attendees to produce a list of action steps based on the reported issues facing student populations. The pre-symposium research and action steps produced at the symposium culminated in 1) preliminary findings on key barriers, and 2) recommended priority areas which were presented to the Board in December 2007.

Recommended Priority Areas

Increase student participation by expanding pre-college preparation and outreach services, that includes academically rigorous course work, help with admissions, financial aid, college visits and students becoming familiar and comfortable with the college learning and living environment.

Increase student completion rates by expanding and enhancing in-college retention services, such as academic support services, self-advocacy training, development of college "know-how" (e.g., how to talk to professors, manage study time), and close and frequent connections to cultural resources to help students feel like they belong, including improved accessibility and a more accepting campus climate.

Create a culture of hope, high expectations, and inclusion for all students by enhancing the efforts of K-12 teachers and counselors, and college/university faculty and staff, through the use of inclusive learning pedagogies and environments.

The willingness and urgency with which the many panelists and community members “came to the table” with the Committee to address barriers affecting Oregon’s students was extremely pronounced. The Committee emphasized the need to advocate for initiatives that would target the educational needs of underserved populations in the next two to five years, while recognizing that increasing student participation and completion is a long-term strategy and will require years of work, as the myriad barriers that must be eliminated cannot be addressed through a single biennium of funding.

The expertise and passion of the many contributors to the Committee was certainly heard. At the Board’s December 2007 retreat, it was decided that the work would continue by a standing Committee, reporting directly to the Board, and would be among the priority items for the next two years. The Committee is now in the process of developing specific policy proposals and initiatives for Board consideration. Comprehensive proposals from several Board Committees, that will address statewide and systemwide needs, will be presented for legislative consideration in the 2009-11 session.



Oregon Institute of Technology

Promoting Postsecondary Education

“When some of our students come to us, we are asking them to make a fundamental change that makes them leave behind their whole life. So, if we are going to connect with the family, we have to recognize what we are asking the family to do, and bear this in mind.”

*George Pernsteiner, Chancellor
Oregon University System*

“Parental involvement is important. We should talk about college at whatever point parents are most involved with their students’ education. If that’s at kindergarten, then do it then.”

*Clevonne Jackson, Former Director
Student Support Services/Educational
Opportunity Programs
Portland State University*

“We have a role and partnership to play with K-12 and we need to answer to ourselves what college readiness is and how we can work with K-12 to help with that.”

*Gayle Yamasaki, Director
Sponsored/Pre-College Programs
Oregon Institute of Technology*

“We need to plant seeds of hope in all of our students, not just expectations.”

*Jackie Grant, Chair
Oregon Indian Coalition on
Postsecondary Education*

Findings on Key Barriers, from Public Outreach 2007



“Student preparation and success seem to boil down to this: rigor, relevance, relationships, the right classes at the right time, and the reality of affordability.”

*Stephanie Carnahan, Program Director
Oregon GEAR UP*

Community Testimony Key Barriers to College Participation

- Students are sometimes not adequately prepared for college-level coursework
- Insufficient focus on elevated high school drop-out rates
- Low expectations by teachers, administrators, parents, and communities of students' academic abilities from an early age, leading to low self-expectations
- Not enough students taking advantage of dual enrollment and advanced coursework
- Insufficient capacity and effectiveness of high school advising about postsecondary education
- Lack of technical understanding and student/family training on filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
- Affordability challenges related to tuition increases in recent years, sticker shock, loan fear; students or families "writing off" college as an option
- Dependent students who do not have parental support in filling out the FAFSA
- Insufficient availability/funding of state financial aid
- Institutional aid and fee remissions are very competitive
- Schools not finding ways to engage with all families
- Timing of college outreach and information is not early enough
- Not enough multi-culturally relevant material in K-12 curriculum
- Lack of coordination among college support and outreach programs
- Inequity and gaps in teaching effectiveness among public schools
- Not enough support of students with school disciplinary problems and delinquency issues
- Parents unable to help students with homework due to various barriers
- Family financial hardships resulting from a student's plan to attend college
- Isolation and segregation of students and families in poverty
- Few peer or adult mentors and positive education role models
- Cultural or familial norms that may not embrace the pursuit of higher education
- Lack of exposure to college environments and expectations
- English Language Learner (ELL) students who are taken out of regular classrooms may feel isolated, resulting in lower expectations
- For ELL students, language barriers to thorough comprehension and progress
- Financial barriers to college for students of undocumented parents
- Insufficient technology advancements in some rural areas
- Few or no advanced placement or dual credit courses offered in some schools, especially in rural areas
- Not enough representation by rural Oregonians on education boards
- Rural families and communities concerned that their students will leave the area and not return
- Not enough diversity among K-12 teachers and administrators who serve as role models

Community Testimony Key Barriers to College Completion

- Not enough institutional capacity for campus student services
- Student services not getting to the students who need them the most
- Few interactions with adult or peer role models/mentors
- Lack of student understanding of how to pursue professional career paths
- Need for continued support/training in completing the FAFSA and financial aid documents
- Need for skills in financial crisis management and budgeting while in college
- Loan fear, either personal or cultural in origin
- Distancing and limited communication between campus and cultural communities
- Faculty inconsistently practicing inclusive pedagogies
- Diversity and multi-cultural awareness issues being delegated to one office as a specialty issue
- Stigma attached to multiculturalism and diversity issues
- Institutional focus on individualistic values instead of team or community values
- Lack of student and family understanding of full college costs
- Independent students with children face expensive and limited daycare
- Need for more availability of alternative deliveries such as distance and evening and weekend coursework
- Technological barriers for returning, older students
- The “model minority myth” for Asian American students that often obscures their barriers
- The cultural inclination to not ask for help among some populations
- Limited faculty and staff understanding of the needs and challenges of students with disabilities
- Language barriers resulting in a struggle to meet the reading and writing demands of college
- Insufficient support for first-generation students to become familiar and comfortable with the college “system”
- Family financial hardships resulting from a student’s college pursuits
- Limited understanding of Native American students’ individual backgrounds
- Limited recognition of differences among common demographic categories
- Limited multi-culturally relevant material in curriculum
- Need for ways to stay culturally connected on campus
- Limited understanding of cultural assimilation and its impact on students
- Need for enhanced tolerance and acceptance of all campus populations
- Not enough ethnic diversity among university faculty and administrators
- Students on urban campus lured away by competing priorities

When \$ is the Key: State Spreads the Word on New Increases in Financial Aid

“Don’t Just Dream About College: Go!” is the state’s key message to spread the word about the increases in Oregon’s primary need-based financial aid program – the Oregon Opportunity Grant (OOG). And now is the time to act! The Governor’s Office, Oregon Student Assistance Commission (OSAC), Oregon colleges and universities, community organizations, and many other partners are working to encourage current and future Oregon college students to take advantage of the increased funds. To be considered for an OOG, the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) must be submitted.

Under the Governor’s leadership, the 2007 legislature approved a historic increase in the grant program, more than doubling its funding to \$72 million, and making a college education more affordable for Oregon families. The increase will support larger grants to more low- and moderate-income students, including part-time students, enrolling in fall 2008. For many, it may mean the difference between going to college or not. For others, it may reduce student borrowing and work, and help current students be able to stay in college and complete their degree.

Approximately 33,000 students attending Oregon community colleges, Oregon public universities, and eligible Oregon independent colleges will qualify for the grants this fall. Administered by OSAC, the grants vary in amount awarded, based on the students’ estimated financial need. Maximum grant awards have doubled on average, and the maximum family income for eligibility has risen from approximately \$33,000 to about \$70,000 for a family of four.

Many students will receive increases in the grant, and some who were not eligible for help before will now receive aid. For example, a 27-year old full-time student with a \$10,000 income at a public university would not have been eligible for any grant funds before, but

will now be eligible for an estimated \$2,277 a year. A 43-year old married father with an income of \$30,000 attending a public university full-time, previously would not have received grant funds, but now is eligible to receive an estimated \$990. A single mother attending a community college half-time, with an income of \$10,000 would see nearly a doubling of her grant, from \$735 to \$1,296. A 21-year old dependent student with a \$45,000 family income would previously not have received any state grant support for college, but now is eligible for an estimated \$1,555 toward expenses at a public or eligible independent 4-year university in Oregon.

Tamara Henderson, Executive Director of the Oregon Student Association, says, “This will open the doors of access for communities traditionally underrepresented on our campuses. From a first-generation student just out of high school to student parents hoping for a better future for their family, this program will truly increase college access for all Oregonians.”

Anyone who wants to know if they are in the ballpark for grant eligibility can get an immediate answer online at www.GetCollegeFunds.org. The site hosts a “grant estimator” into which users can plug financial information and find out if they are likely to receive a grant, and, if so, how much. To apply: complete the FAFSA at fafsa.ed.gov (or, for those who are unable to apply online, request a paper copy at 1 800-4-FED-AID or get a copy from your counselor). All Oregon residents who submit a FAFSA are automatically considered for an Oregon Opportunity Grant, and will be notified by e-mail if they appear to be eligible. Actual grant amounts will be provided by the college financial aid office as part of a student’s total financial aid package. For more information on the Oregon Opportunity Grant, as well as other grants and scholarships, go to www.GetCollegeFunds.org.

The Near Horizon: Next Steps for the Student Participation and Completion Committee

As a result of ongoing conversations, research, and listening carefully to public input, the Oregon State Board of Higher Education's Student Participation and Completion Committee has identified several best practices to further promote student success. Contributions by resource experts and community representatives have been critical to the efforts of the Committee. Through a variety of planned funding sources, including legislative requests, foundation requests, and federal grant applications, the Committee will seek to implement these practices through expanded statewide outreach efforts, campus-level initiatives, and key connections to enhance the complex support systems that are necessary for student success in college. Examples of preliminary areas of Committee focus include:

Collaborations to Foster Access and Success

Initiatives such as family and community focused communication and outreach efforts on all aspects of college-going, mentorship programs, partnerships between schools and community organizations, and statewide education networks provide critical opportunities to motivate students and influence college-going trends.

Promoting Academic Preparation

Expanded academic enrichment programs that support students throughout the education pipeline, enhanced professional development focused on fostering student success at elementary and secondary levels, dual credit opportunities, campus visits and bridge programs, and innovative technology applications for students and counselors represent selected exemplary approaches.

College Affordability and Financial Aid

Financial aid workshops, outreach to promote the newly expanded Oregon Opportunity Grant/Shared Responsibility Model, targeted outreach to low income families, and the provision of effective financial management

information are several ways of assisting students and families in planning for and pursuing postsecondary education.

Student Services to Promote College Completion

Once students arrive on college campuses, student support and advising services to help them navigate challenges, innovative programs such as First-Year projects, peer assistance programs, engaging curricular requirements, cross-cultural opportunities, and pre-career guidance provide effective assistance.

The Committee will focus on the development of legislative Policy Option Packages for consideration by the Board during spring 2008 to fund some of the initiatives, and will continue the work of identifying and analyzing barriers and best practices related to student participation and success. Also, the Committee will continue efforts to inform and involve stakeholders throughout the state. A public website with Committee goals, members, and resources is available at http://www.ous.edu/state_board/workgroups/. Representatives of community organizations who wish to be included in the communications of the Committee, including public notices of meetings, Committee reports, and forthcoming materials, are welcome to request information by contacting Endi_Hartigan@ous.edu.



Student Participation and Completion Committee

Dalton Miller-Jones, Ph.D., Committee Chair
Member, Oregon State Board of Higher Education
Professor of Psychology
Chair of Black Studies Department
Portland State University

Patrick Burk, Ph.D., Chief Policy Officer
Oregon Department of Education

David L. Courtney, Superintendent
Burnes-Hines School District

Chris Cronin, Regional Director
Grant County Center
Eastern Oregon University

Eda Davis-Lowe, Director
The Science & Math Investigative Learning
Experiences (SMILE) Program
Oregon State University

Brian Fox, Student Member
Oregon State Board of Higher Education

Brenda Frank, Director
Education & Employment
The Klamath Tribes

Algie Gatewood, Ed.D., Campus President
Portland Community College, Cascade Campus

Tamara Rae Henderson, Executive Director
Oregon Student Association

Emilio Hernandez, Jr., Ph.D., Assistant Vice Provost
Office of Institutional Equity & Diversity
University of Oregon

Agnes Hoffman, Associate Vice Provost
Enrollment Management & Student Affairs
Portland State University
Chair, OUS Inter-institutional Committee on Admissions
& Retention

Mark Jackson, Program Director
Reaching & Empowering All People (REAP)

Jon Joiner, Director
Multicultural Center
Portland State University

Patricia Martinez-Orozco, Member
Portland Higher Education Committee, State
Board of Higher Education
Former Executive Director
Oregon Council for Hispanic Advancement

David McDonald, Associate Provost
Admissions, Retention, and Enrollment Management
Western Oregon University

Vicki Merkel, Division Director
Grants and Scholarships
Oregon Student Assistance Commission

Nan Poppe, Ed.D., Campus President
Extended Learning
Portland Community College, SE Campus

Larry Roper, Ph.D., Vice Provost for Student Affairs
Oregon State University

Hilda Rosselli, Ph.D., Dean/Professor
College of Education
Western Oregon University

Alex Sanchez, Professor
Community College Leadership Program
Oregon State University

Sho Shigeoka, Equity Coordinator
Beaverton School District
Counselor, Westview High School

Diana Sloane, Ph.D., Campus Executive Officer & Vice Provost
Oregon State University - Cascades Campus

Joanne Sorte, Director
Child Development Lab
Oregon State University
OUS Inter-institutional Faculty Senate

Gayle Yamasaki, Director
Sponsored/Pre-College Programs
Oregon Institute of Technology