



April 17, 2013

Co-Chairs Komp and Monroe, Members of the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education:

Please accept the following as written testimony given to the committee regarding the research capacity at the Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development.

As recently as two years ago, CCWD did not have any form of research team. Thanks to the vision of Commissioner Preus and her recognition of the growing importance of research and data in decision making and leadership, she developed my position, Director of Research and Communications, and started our team in March 2011.

The Research and Communications team for CCWD has 7 members, including me; we also currently have one contractor whose work focuses solely on the Oregon Community College Unified Reporting System (OCCURS). Of the 7 permanent positions, only 3.75 are "research" related meaning they directly interact with the community college data or assist in policy related work, which entails some research. This is similar in size to several Oregon community colleges but Portland CC has a larger research staff than CCWD.

Even though this team's work heavily focuses on general fund activities, such as KPMs, Achievement Compacts, and lending support to some of our smaller community colleges who have .5 positions designated for their data compliance, the team is only funded 20% by General Fund.

1. Have you reduced related positions in the past two biennia?

Due to budget reductions, we lost a Research Analyst 2 position in 2011 and are ending an agreement with a contractor in June 2013.

2. Outline the type of projects that you have done in the past few years. Outline which are more research in nature and which are purely program support.

I would not say that any of the projects completed in the past few years were "research in nature". The majority of time for the team is spent on tasks such as calculating data for KPMs and Achievement Compacts, federal reporting for Perkins and Title II, preparing data for possible inclusion in an outcome distribution model, and submissions for Complete College America (all very time consuming tasks). Additionally, the team spends a great deal of time answering queries from the field, the public, various education boards, and other state agencies. Queries such as:

- What % of CC enrollments are "direct from high school"
- What % of the CC FTE is Career Pathways (SBE)
- How many Associate's Degrees were completed by adult students

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Consequently, due to lack of resources, we are unable to tackle true "research" that would support progress toward "the middle 40" and employment for Oregonians, such as:

- What impact has the \$100M funding reduction had on our campuses and students?
- What impact are our student success initiatives having on student progression and completion?
- Do completers get employed in the area for which they were trained? Do they see wage gains?
- Dropout analysis – which students are dropping out and when?
- Which factors are indicators of success for participants in On-the-job-training? Certain employers? Sectors? Specific trainings?

One bright spot I want to highlight is the current redesign of the Oregon Community College Unified Reporting System (OCCURS). OCCURS began in 1994 when all 17 community colleges agreed on the data to submit to a common repository – unlike OUS and K12, the community colleges are not a system so do not have any type of mandatory reporting. Over the past 20 years additions have been made to that legacy system but with increased accountability from the federal government, such as gainful employment requirements, and the state, in the form of achievement compacts, the challenges with the system became apparent. Building on Dr. Crew's energy around the need for quality, accessible data, CCWD took advantage of some remaining grant funds and decided to redesign our data system. This short clip highlights some of the features: <http://youtu.be/V459S6yaqcU>. Now CCWD has purer data, accessible to stakeholders, in a platform flexible enough to dovetail with the OEIB plans for a longitudinal data system. Our goal is to have this redesigned system and public datamart go 'live' July 2013.

Please let me know if I may answer any questions or provide further information.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Cox Brand, PhD  
Director, Research and Communications

