



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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HB 4076 instructs TRU campuses to develop a pilot program that offers fixed cost bachelor's degrees. Two degrees must be offered as part of each pilot, with at least one degree having a direct connection to the workforce needs of the associated region. The tuition price of degrees offered should be at a comparatively reduced cost than their current rate. Pilots created under 4076 can be replicated from programs already in place at each university. The HECC shall be involved as a collaborator to ensure accreditation standards are met, help development of a tracking method to record results of each pilot, and to address questions of incentivizing, funding, and long-term sustainability of each pilot. HB 4076 states the pilot programs should be operational by fall 2015 with a follow-up report to the legislature during the 2021 session.

If we are going to achieve 40-40-20 by 2025, we must incorporate innovative pathways that reflect the adapting landscape of higher education. The Presidents of the TRU campuses have taken a proactive approach by developing modern pathways while accounting for the needs of students. Tuition debt is a pressing issue among students and by employing new methodologies (Southern), increasing dual accreditation through regional partnerships (Eastern), guaranteeing a fixed tuition (Western), or forging private-public partnerships (OIT) each of these universities have provided new opportunities for their students to be successful without the burden of crippling debt. HB 4076 recognizes these efforts and builds upon them. The intent of HB 4076 is to compel a conversation between the TRU campuses and the HECC to produce stable, innovative, and low cost pathways for achieving a bachelor's degree. 4076 can be differentiated from other legislation because it does not introduce a new concept but rather allows TRU campuses to advance their own mission, calls on the strategic plan of the HECC to promote this mission, and incorporates the incentivizing of innovative pathways which all combine to promote the economic and social goals of 40-40-20. Passage of 4076 will move Oregon further along in its attainment of a quality and productive public education system and subsequent workforce.

In a draft of its 2014 strategic plan, the HECC outlines the shift from managing the sustainability of educational institutions to ensuring that students can maximize their success in our public education system. This shift includes a focus on "the creation of seamless pathways...by which students can advance at their best pace, learn in their best environments and achieve to their full potential". 4076 envisions individualized pilots that utilize a variety of tools and methodologies: dual accreditation; online and distance learning; proficiency based learning; regional partnerships between High Schools, Community Colleges, and Universities; and even





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public/private partnerships. These tools are vital reaching all types of learners. HB 4076 supports TRU campuses to continue their work, while calling on the HECC to collaborate on how these pathways can be expanded and encourage students to reach their full potential. With two degrees included in the pilots, there will not be an overwhelming burden on universities to restructure their current systems. Rather, it will be an opportunity to revisit current processes and accounting for the governance changes within the entire public education system.

The HECC also states: "Our success will require more than good intentions or the construct of aspirational goals; it will require reinvention, recommitment and reinvestment." HB 4076 draws from this statement to promote incentivizing initiatives to embed them into our university structure. TRU President's demonstrated their commitment, and invested finically in the success of their students. 4076 calls on the HECC to address 'reinvestment' opportunities through a conversation that must include further research of funding formulas and their correlation to higher education attainment. Reinvesting and incentivizing is key to providing fixed cost bachelor degree at a reduced tuition rate. HB 4076 highlights the funding aspects required to increase the amount of students who achieve baccalaureate degrees while employing the HECC to solidify its strategic mission and therefore, will have a positive impact upon the entire system of education in Oregon.

The pilots envisioned in HB 4076 move the needle on delivering education, and support the connection between education and the workforce. In the current education landscape, students are required to learn a specific curriculum, and then translate that knowledge into a skillset that employers need. Often, the education and the skills are not directly correlated. Statistics show that there are a high number of STEM-related employment opportunities available in Oregon, yet many of those jobs go to out-of-state applicants; this is a strong example of how the education/workforce relationship needs to be strengthened. HB 4076 requires at least one degree offered to have a clear connection to the regional workforce needs, giving students a direct link to future employers. Vice-versa, employers will be encouraged to engage with the scholastic institutions in the form of internships, workshops, and/or curricula assistance.

HB 4076 is a timely piece of legislation that will remain valid throughout the reimagining of higher education in Oregon. The collaborative process between the HECC and TRU campuses addresses 40-40-20 by: removing barriers to higher education achievement and recognizes the adaptive and flexible atmosphere needed to consistently promote student-centered outcomes.

