



Co-Chair, Senator Rod Monroe  
Co-Chair, Representative Betty Komp  
Joint Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Education  
March 25, 2015

Dear Co-chairs Monroe and Komp,

Thank you for the opportunity to answer questions that arose during the March 24 Higher Education Coordinating Commission's presentation to the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education.

Representative Sprenger asked about the assumptions in slide 28 titled "Oregon Public High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity, 2000-01 to 2012-13 (actual), 2013-14 to 2013-34 (projected)," and specifically asked why the number of American Indians/Alaska Native high school graduates declined in these projections. We have determined that these projections are calculated taking into account the number of high school seniors of each ethnicity, the graduation rates, the retention rates of students from year to year, and birth rates. While the birth rate has been stable or increased, the number of American Indians/Alaskan Natives that have graduated high school from 2008-2013 has dropped both in raw and relative terms. Specifically, the number of American Indian/Alaskan Native high school seniors dropped 17% and the graduation rate of those students dropped from 69% to 60%. For this reason, the projections show a decline in graduates exceeding the decline in high school seniors. In addition to the declining graduation rate during this period, there has been a drop in retention rates for these students in earlier grades as well. The model extends these factors into the future, which is the reason the American Indian/Alaskan Native portion is shown to decrease into 2023-24. This decline is based on the mathematical modelling described here, but it is important to note the difference between projections based on recent trends and policy directions which can alter these trends. Our hope and intention is that working toward 40-40-20 will lead to increased graduation rates for students of all underserved communities and certainly for students of tribal communities.

Representative Taylor also asked a question about the eligibility of students and schools for the Oregon Opportunity Grant. Students at all Oregon-based public and non-profit private schools are eligible for the grant. The legal requirements for eligibility are set out in ORS 348.180<sup>1</sup>. In order to be eligible, students must have demonstrated financial need, and have filled out a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Students must also be Oregon residents, have not earned a bachelor's degree, be enrolled at a Oregon-based public university, community college, OHSU, or accredited private nonprofit institution. Students enrolled at private for profit institutions are not eligible for the Oregon

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<sup>1</sup> ORS 348.180 <http://www.oregonlaws.org/ors/348.180>

Opportunity Grant. Full information on Oregon Opportunity Grant eligibility is available at <http://www.oregonstudentaid.gov/oregon-opportunity-grant.aspx>.

If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact our legislative director Dana Richardson at [Dana.Richardson@state.or.us](mailto:Dana.Richardson@state.or.us).

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ben C", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ben Cannon  
Executive Director, HECC