



Oregon
Kate Brown, Governor

Higher Education Coordinating Commission
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Co-Chair, Senator Rod Monroe
Co-Chair, Representative Betty Komp
Joint Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Education

Dear Co-Chairs Monroe and Komp,

Thank you for the opportunity to answer questions that arose during the March 31 Higher Education Coordinating Commission's presentation to the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education.

Co-Chair Komp inquired about fees for the GED®. In 2002, the GED® test series included five tests at \$35/test for a total cost of \$175. In 2014, that had been reduced to four tests, due to writing tests being combined into a single test, at \$38/test for a total cost of \$152, a savings of \$23 from the older test series.

Co-Chair Monroe asked a question regarding comparison between the postsecondary preparedness of students with GED®s and those earning high school diplomas. Nationally, 67% of GED® graduates applied to college and 60% of GED® graduates are currently accepted to a college¹. In addition, 90% of those who applied have enrolled or will be enrolled next semester. However, this data reflects the 2014 test series only, and since this test is new, no data on persistence or degree attainment is yet available. By contrast, 62.5% of high school students nationally enter postsecondary institutions directly from high school. In Oregon, this rate is only 47.8%, according to National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) data from 2010, the most recent data available. The 2014 GED® tests have increased in rigor since they are now aligned to the national College and Career Readiness Standards, the subset of the Common Core State Standards specifically developed for adults. The other two alternative high school credentials, HiSET (High School Equivalency Test) developed by ETS and the TASC (Test Assessing Secondary Completion) developed by McGraw Hill are also aligned with the College and Career Readiness Standards. Alignment is intended to better prepare GED® graduates for entry into postsecondary institutions.

Representative Smith Warner asked us to clarify how students are generally referred to either Adult Basic Skills (ABS) or GED programs. There are many pathways for referral into either GED® or ABS. Students may self-refer to receive necessary skill upgrades in reading, writing, math, and/or English language. In addition to self-referral, ABS students receive referrals from community-based organizations, employers, educational partners, workforce and social service providers. These may include alcohol and drug treatment centers, community-based

¹ Source: GED® Testing Service, American Council of Education, owners/operators of the GED® test.

organizations, community colleges, libraries, religious organizations, K-12 school districts, state agencies and WorkSource Centers.

Co-Chair Komp asked how the work of regional collaborations such as STEM hubs fit into the Community Leverage Fund and Innovation Center. We have provided a table that identifies, within each economic development region, the lead organization and key contacts for the STEM hubs, Regional Achievement Collaboratives and Early Learning Hubs. Also attached is a list of the STEM hub priorities to demonstrate their alignment with the goals and outcomes the Community Leverage Fund seeks to support.

Co-Chair Monroe asked that we compare the tuition and state investment in community colleges from 2007 to today, adjusting for inflation, in order to demonstrate how much additional investment would be needed to maintain the same inflation-adjusted tuition as was the case in 2007. We are working on this analysis and will provide this information in the near future.

Representative Huffman asked us to clarify the mechanics of how the tuition buy-down is calculated for both community colleges and universities. HB 5101 in the 2013 Special Session provided significant additional resources to both the universities and community colleges by offsetting tuition increases. These funds were provided mid-biennium and on a one-time basis. To continue this level of funding, HECC has recommended that the legislature “biennialize” the cost of the tuition offset, as it was not included in the CSL budget calculation. Because the tuition offset provided funding for only a part of the biennium, in order to continue the offset and prevent “catch up” tuition increases, these funds must be increased to reflect both years of the 2015-17 biennium. This is reflected in HECC Package 101. It is important to note that these funds do not prevent all tuition increases as they act in place of prior increases. The HECC recommendations are to reinvest in public colleges and universities, empowering institutions to intentionally focus on student success and keep tuition levels manageable.

Finally, we would like to provide some additional follow up information on questions that arose March 30. We have additional details in response to Co-Chair Monroe’s question from March 30 on how the tuition and fees are applied for students who are dual-enrolled at a community college and public university. We have heard from several more universities and community colleges (including OSU, WOU, SOU, UO, Lane CC, Chemeketa CC, Rogue CC, Blue Mountain CC, Mt. Hood CC, and Treasure Valley CC) that students who are dual-enrolled pay tuition based on where they are taking a particular course. So, a student taking classes at a community college who is double-enrolled at a university pays the community college rate, while a student pays the university rate for all classes taken at their home university. Institutions may differ in determining the “home” institution for financial aid purposes. Agreements between the universities and community colleges spell out the specific terms in order to determine which institution will act as the “home” institution. This is largely a procedural matter, however, and does not have a significant impact on students, except in determining which financial aid office serves them.

In our letter dated March 31, we responded to a March 30 question from Co-Chair Komp regarding changes to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and indicated more information was forthcoming. Attached is a summary of changes to the FAFSA from 2005-06 through 2005-16. Also, we would like to correct the March 31 letter which incorrectly named the acronym FAFSA as the Federal Application for Student Financial Aid; it is the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact our legislative deputy director Dana Richardson at 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

Changes to the FAFSA from 2005-06 to 2015-16

The U.S. Department of Education modifies the FAFSA each year. Sometimes these modifications are the result of changes in federal statute, policies, or lines on federal tax forms; sometimes questions are reworded to provide more clarity. A summary of changes to each section of the FAFSA from 2005-06 to 2015-16 is included below:

Step One: Student demographic information

- Student's marital status: revised in 2014-15 from three options: "1) single, divorced, or widowed; 2) married/remarried; and 3) separated" to four options: "1) single; 2) married/remarried; 3) separated; and 4) divorced or widowed".
- Gender (question 21): revised in 2007-08 from "Are you male? (Most male students must register with Selective Service to get federal aid) Yes/No" to simply, "Are you male or female? Male/Female".
- Selective service registration (question 22): response changed in 2009-10 from asking if the student wanted to be registered, Yes/No, to "Register me."
- Questions 23 through 31 in Step One: renumbered, rearranged, and streamlined as follows.
 - Convictions for Drug Possession or Sale: In 2007-08, question was clarified to ask not if the student had been convicted of possession or selling illegal drugs, but if the student had ever been convicted of possession or sale of illegal drugs for an offense that occurred while receiving federal student aid (such as grants, loans or work-study).
 - "Grade-level" question: changed from a table-driven code to selection from a list in 2009-10.
 - "Degree/certification working on" question: changed from table-driven code to selection from list (grade level and degree/certification questions reordered) in 2009-10
 - Question about whether the applicant was interested in student loans: removed starting in 2011-12.
 - Question about parent's highest level of schooling completed: changed from Father/Mother to Parent 1/Parent 2 in 2014-15.
 - Fields for listing the Name, City, and State of the applicant's high school, question 27: added in 2011-12.

Step Two: Student's taxes, income, assets

- Question 34 added for 2013-14 – "What is or will be your tax filing status according to your tax return? 1) single; 2) head of household; 3) married-filed joint return; 4) married-filed separate return; 5) qualifying widow(er); 6) don't know."
- Separate worksheets A, B, and C from the 2005-06 FAFSA (and earlier): simplified and included in the FAFSA itself starting in 2006-07. Questions collect information about adjusted gross income, income tax paid, exemptions, earnings from work, current balance of cash and savings and checking accounts, additional income (e.g., tax credits), and untaxed income.

Step Three: Student's responses to determine if student needs to provide parental support

- Several questions have been added or revised since 2005-06 in this section:
 - One new question asks if the student is currently serving on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces.
 - An existing question that establishes a student's legal status as an orphan or a dependent or ward of the court was expanded to include "students in foster care."
 - Five new questions ask about a student's current relationship to his/her parents– determined by a court to be an emancipated minor, or in legal guardianship, or determined by certain government officials to be an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or self-supporting and at risk of being homeless.

Step Four: Parents' demographic information, taxes, income, assets

- In 2014-15, all fields to collect parent information changed from “Father” and “Mother” to “Parent 1” and “Parent 2.”
- In 2014-15, a new category was added to the “marital status” question – “unmarried and both parents living together” – and “single” was changed to “never married.”
- Field for parents' email address: added in 2009-10.
- Question about receipt of benefits from means-tested federal programs: added in 2007-08 – Supplemental Security Income (SSI); Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); Free or Reduced Price Lunch; Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).
- Changes to questions about parents' taxes, income, and assets are similar to those for the student, i.e., moved from separate worksheet to the FAFSA form. (See Step Two above.)
- Parents' tax-filing status question added in 2013-14.
- Question about whether parent is a dislocated worker was added in 2009-10.

Step Five: Student's household information

- Question about receipt of benefits from means-tested federal programs added for 2007-08: Supplemental Security Income (SSI); Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); Free or Reduced Price Lunch; Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).
- Question about whether student is a dislocated worker: added in 2009-10.

Step Six: Student's list of colleges to receive FAFSA information

- Only four colleges can now be listed on the paper form, reduced from six in 2007-08. However, students can list up to ten colleges on the electronic FAFSA, and can revise their list of ten at any time.
- Question about the student's intended enrollment status “full-time, ¾-time, half-time, less than half-time, or not sure”: removed in 2007-08.

Step Seven: Student and Parent certifications and signatures

- No changes to signature fields. However, although the option to complete, sign and submit a paper form still exists, most students and their parents now use a PIN to sign the FAFSA electronically.
- “School Use Only” changed to “College User Only” box.
- Box to indicate “homeless youth determination”: added in 2012-13.