

TO: Senate Interim Committee on Education

FROM: Brent Wilder
President, Oregon Alliance of Independent Colleges and Universities

DATE: December 4, 2020

RE: Oregon Transfer Pathway to the Liberal Arts (OTP-LA)

In light of your agenda next week, I am excited to share that we are working with our member institutions to strengthen transfer access from public two-year college to private, nonprofit four-year colleges and universities. Now more than ever, we need to consider how we better enroll and serve students seeking to transfer to our member institutions from Oregon's community colleges. The Alliance recently was awarded a "Pathways to the Liberal Arts Initiative" planning grant by The Teagle Foundation. This grant supports the planning work associated with The Alliance's "Oregon Transfer Pathways to the Liberal Arts (OTP-LA)" project, which will develop clear curricular pathways between Oregon's community colleges and Oregon's private, nonprofit liberal arts institutions.

Given that Oregon has the highest completion rate in the country for students transferring from community colleges to private, nonprofit institutions (National Student Clearinghouse, Community College Research Center, and Aspen Institute, 2016), Oregon is well positioned to participate in this important initiative. The project takes advantage of a consortia approach with The Alliance partnering with the Oregon Community College Association (OCCA) to enhance transfer pathways from two-year community colleges to four-year private liberal arts institutions. The Alliance represents 15 of Oregon's regionally accredited, nonprofit private higher education institutions and together enrolls more than 28,000 students and delivers approximately 30% of all baccalaureate degrees and higher awarded in Oregon. All of Oregon's community colleges are joining us in this work. which I outline in more detail below.

We plan on completing the planning work during the first quarter of 2021 and submitting a 2-3 year implementation proposal to The Teagle Foundation and The Arthur Vining Davis Foundations for consideration in fall 2021. Brent Wilder, President of The Alliance and Dr. Samek are meeting regularly with Patrick Crane and Veronica Dujon (HECC) to provide project updates and explore opportunities to collaborate and align our efforts to best serve students.

We look forward to continuing to collaborate with stakeholders to ensure student success and help the state achieve its education attainment goals.

Oregon Transfer Pathways to the Liberal Arts (OTP-LA) Project

The OTP-LA project launched in July, with Bill Zumeta and Nick Huntington-Klein conducting research and analysis on transfers between Oregon community colleges and participating Oregon private, nonprofit liberal arts colleges and universities. Data was supplied by Institutional Research offices from participating Alliance institutions and the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC).

- We have data from seven of the nine colleges, but still working on gathering data from the other 2 institutions. Once secured, will include in the report.

A primary requirement of the grant is that planning be faculty driven and faculty led. Over the course of the 12-month planning grant, the project participants will collect data, learn best practices, establish collaborative faculty learning communities, and define a set of shared goals to develop clear curricular pathways between Oregon's community colleges and Oregon's private liberal arts institutions. The three strategic outcomes of the grant are:

- improved understanding of community college transfer initiatives and transfer student experiences at Alliance institutions;
- strengthened cross-institutional relationships and understanding—particularly among faculty; and
- a unified vision around transfer between Oregon's community colleges and nine Alliance institutions.

Over 80 campus administrators and faculty from nine of the Alliance member institutions and all 17 Oregon community colleges are participating in this planning initiative. Dr. Linda Samek serves as the project director. Dr. Samek has a nearly 40-year history in higher education in Oregon, with experience teaching at community colleges, public universities, and private institutions. She also brings over 10 years of experience on the Oregon Transfer and Articulation Committee, on which she has served as the representative for private institutions in Oregon and as a liaison for agreements between community colleges and public institutions.

Initial OTP-LA meeting with faculty was held on October 16 (two sessions).

- First activity was presentation from Zumeta/Huntington-Klein on their research and analysis. Analyzed most popular majors, success of transfer by college, etc.
- Second activity was a breakout session. Participants were randomly selected.
- Key takeaway
 - Discovered that faculty from the different sectors knew very little about one another, including information about tuition discounting, supports being offered, etc.

Five working groups have been established, pairing private institutions with community colleges.

Working groups have either met or will be meeting in the coming days.

- Goal to connect community colleges with participating Alliance institutions where students have existing pathways/relationships/within geographic proximity. Working to establish connections with remote community colleges (e.g., Treasure Valley, Blue Mountain, etc.) with participating Alliance institutions.
 - Working groups will be gathering to discuss articulation agreements.
 - Faculty influence in transfer, and what their role might be moving forward in this project.
 - Also asked them to start thinking about next steps/implementation grant work.

- Each working group has met at least once. Recurring themes (thus far):
 - Barriers
 - Cost
 - Lack of transparency on tuition and other costs
 - Poor or no information on offerings and opportunities, relationships lacking
 - Non-standard transfer policies
 - Time to completion
 - Culture – residential vs. commuter students, sense of belonging
 - Liberal Arts institutions' mindset around preparedness of students. Are they transfer ready?
 - Semester vs. quarter credits
 - Academic advising too late in transfer process
 - How can faculty help?
 - Inter-institutional departmental collaborations for advising and credit transfer
 - Outreach from Private Nonprofit Liberal Arts (PNPLA) institutions to Community Colleges (CC)
 - Transfer days on PNPLA campuses
 - Recommend transfer students who can return to CCs to share their experiences – student ambassador program
 - Hospitality toward transfer students, connections with Student Life staff and programs, promoting publicly open and inclusive culture
 - Annual transfer success reports between institutions
 - Good information for PNPLA faculty on transfer process and students
 - Piggyback on Major Transfer Map work
 - To consider for the implementation grant proposal
 - Website with general information
 - More articulation agreements
 - Faculty focus groups and training
 - Funded networking positions
 - Restructure PNPLA programs to be more transfer friendly – i.e., specific major courses begin in year three
 - Dual enrollment between CCs and PNPLA institutions
 - Advising guides