



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Higher Education Coordinating Commission

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March 18, 2019

Co-Chair, Senator Lew Frederick
Co-Chair, Representative Susan McLain
Joint Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Education

Dear Co-Chairs Frederick and McLain,

Thank you for the opportunity to answer questions that arose during the March 14 presentation.

Referring to Slide 59 addressing rising completion rates, Representative Drazan requested information about community college 2-year completion rates and public university 4-year completion rates. On the same slide, Senator Frederick also requested information about a national comparison of completion rates. Answers to both requests can be seen in **Appendices A and B**.

Data on community college completion in comparison to national completion rates are presented in **Appendix A**, and data on Oregon public university completion compared to national statistics are presented in **Appendix B**.

For community colleges, completion rates need to accommodate the vast majority of students who enroll part-time; 80 percent of those taking for-credit classes (excluding high school students) are part-time students. Oregon has adopted a completion rate that includes part-time students and counts certificates, degrees, and transfers as completions. It is a four-year rate to account for these part-time students; this is the HECC's Key Performance Metric (KPM) number 5. About 20 percent more students have earned a certificate or degree, or transferred to a four-year institution within four years as within two years. This measure is modeled after the American Association of Community Colleges' Voluntary Framework of Accountability (VFA) measure. VFA uses six-year outcomes and, unlike our rate, also includes transfers to other two-year institutions. VFA does not show four-year outcomes for comparison with other states, but if we examine VFA's six-year rate, Oregon's outcomes are similar to other colleges nationally that have adopted VFA.

For public universities (**Appendix B**), graduation rates show the percentage of first time, full-time freshmen who earn a bachelor's degree. HECC's KPM number 7 is the percentage who earn a bachelor's degree within six years. About 20 percent more students graduate within the six-year window than within the four-year window. Additionally, Oregon public university rates are higher and have risen somewhat faster than national rates.

Senator Frederick asked, on **Slide 59, for the reasons that students do not complete**. There are many contributing factors, broadly categorized as financial, social, personal and academic. We do not have specific data regarding the primary factors resulting in non-completion in Oregon.

On slide 60, referring to state data about rates of increase in degree completion between 2008-2017, Representative Alonso Leon inquired about Arizona's 119% jump in total degrees awarded, the largest out of all other states represented. While we do not have background on all new developments in Arizona higher education, we believe that this could be due to online enrollment at Arizona State University and Grand Canyon University. The online enrollment numbers at both of these institutions

have grown rapidly over the past few years, increasing the amount of online degrees awarded, and therefore the state's total degree completion.

In response to Slide 61 focused on the tuition-dependency of postsecondary education, Senator Roblan asked about the success rates of low-income students in higher education. Specific information to address this question is shown in **Appendices C & D**. To measure low-income status, we use receipt of the need-based federal Pell grant as well as the receipt of the need-based Oregon Opportunity Grant (OOG).

As seen in the figures in Appendices C and D, students from higher-income backgrounds have higher rates of completion at postsecondary institutions. About 10 percent more non-Pell students complete their programs than students who receive a Pell grant. Similarly, higher-income students without an OOG are more likely to complete their programs than lower-income students who receive an OOG. However, this gap has narrowed recently.

Representative Alonso Leon inquired about financial literacy for loan recipients, referencing both loan counseling and general opportunities.

The U.S. Department of Education advises higher education institutions to “provide borrowers with counseling at various stages of enrollment, interactive tools to manage debt, repayment options, school contact information and information about the income potential of occupants relevant to their course of study.”¹ Federal regulations prohibit institutions from requiring that students complete additional counseling as a condition of participating in the federal financial aid system.

Additionally, [SB 253 \(2017\)](#) requires institutions to provide plain-language loan information to students at the time of enrollment.

General financial literacy education is neither standard nor universal across institutions. In responses from six community colleges, five public universities and one private university, institutions reported a variety of strategies, including: offering a course on the topic, offering mandatory online modules, hosting on campus events, and delivering information on the financial realities of college to prospective students in high school. There is no single, unified strategy to address financial literacy among postsecondary institutions in Oregon.

Lastly, I would like to correct a remark I made verbally about **Slide 67**, which focuses on Oregon's national position with regard to student grant aid. In my remarks I said this included both the Oregon Opportunity Grant and the Oregon Promise. The information on this slide in fact represents need-based grant aid so it does not include the Oregon Promise funding.

If you have further questions, please contact Kyle Thomas, Director of Legislative and Policy Affairs, at kyle.thomas@state.or.us or at 503-480-9596.

Sincerely,



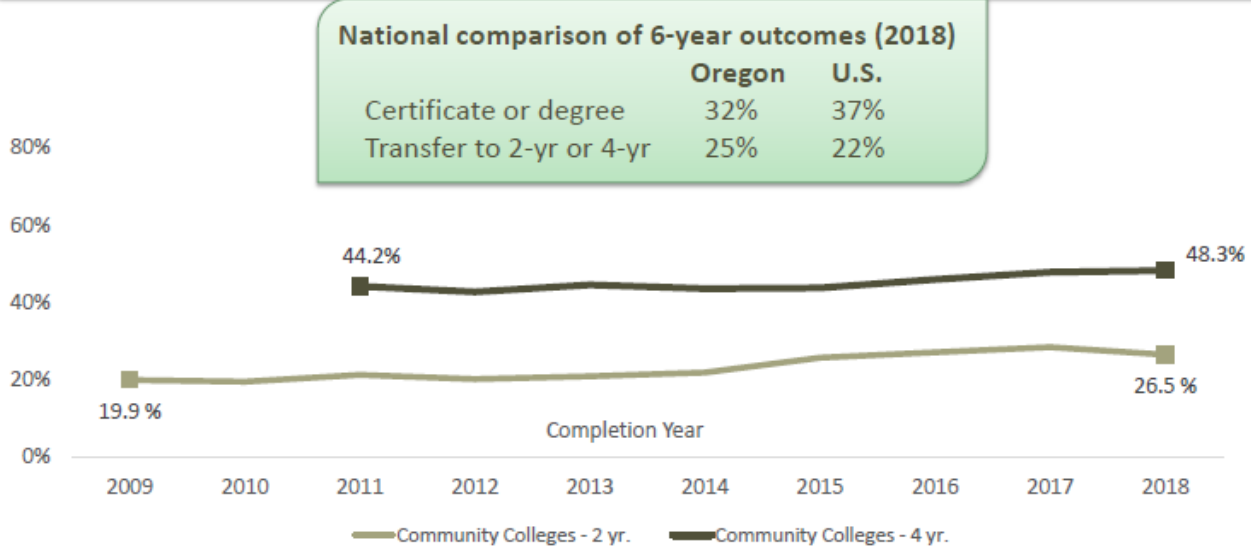
Ben Cannon
Executive Director

¹US Department of Education, *Federal Student Aid Handbook*, pgs. 168-169.

Rising Completion Rates at Community Colleges

Key Performance Metric #5

Over-time rates show the percentage of full-time and part-time credential-seeking students who earn a certificate or degree or transfer to any 4-year institution nationwide



Source: HECC analysis of student-level data from 17 community colleges. Community college rates include students who attended full- or part-time, enrolled for the first time at the college, completed at least 18 quarter credits in their first two years at the college, and completed a certificate, degree, or transfer to any four-year university nationwide. This overestimates the completion rate to the extent that it excludes credential-seeking students unable to complete 18 credits in two years. The 2011 community college rate may be biased upward because data are left-censored, and the 2018 rate excludes summer term completions (data not yet available). National rates from American Association of Community Colleges, vfa.aacc.nche.edu.

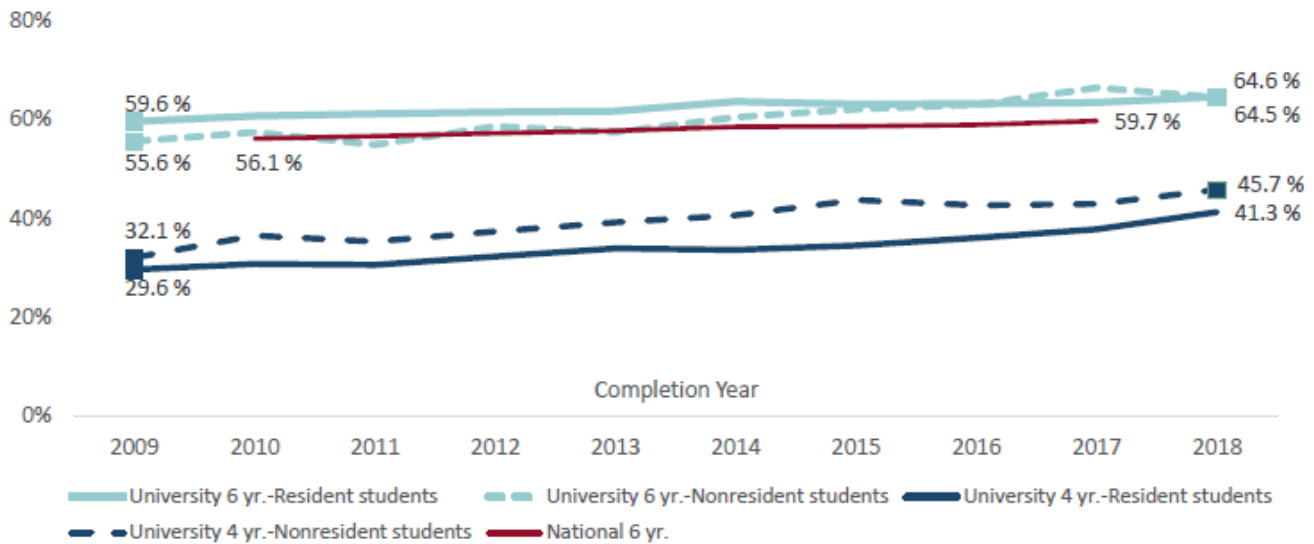


APPENDIX B

Rising Graduation Rates at Public Universities

Key Performance Metric #7

Oregon graduation rates have risen slightly faster than U.S. rates
 Oregon public university students earn a bachelor's degree in 4.5 years, on average



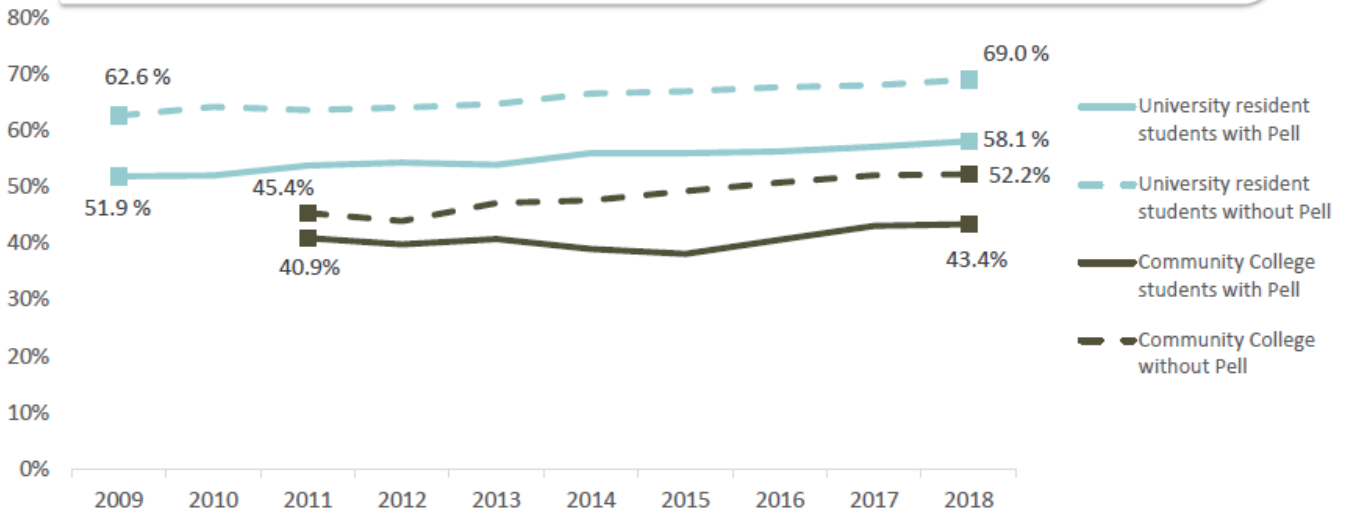
1 Source: HECC analysis of student-level data from seven public universities. University rates include resident and non-resident, first-time, full-time freshmen and include inter-institutional graduations. National rate from National Center for Education Statistics, nces.ed.gov.



APPENDIX C

Completion Rates Are Notably Higher for Students from Higher Income Families

At both community colleges and public universities, about 10 percent more non-Pell students complete their programs, compared to students who do receive a federal Pell grant



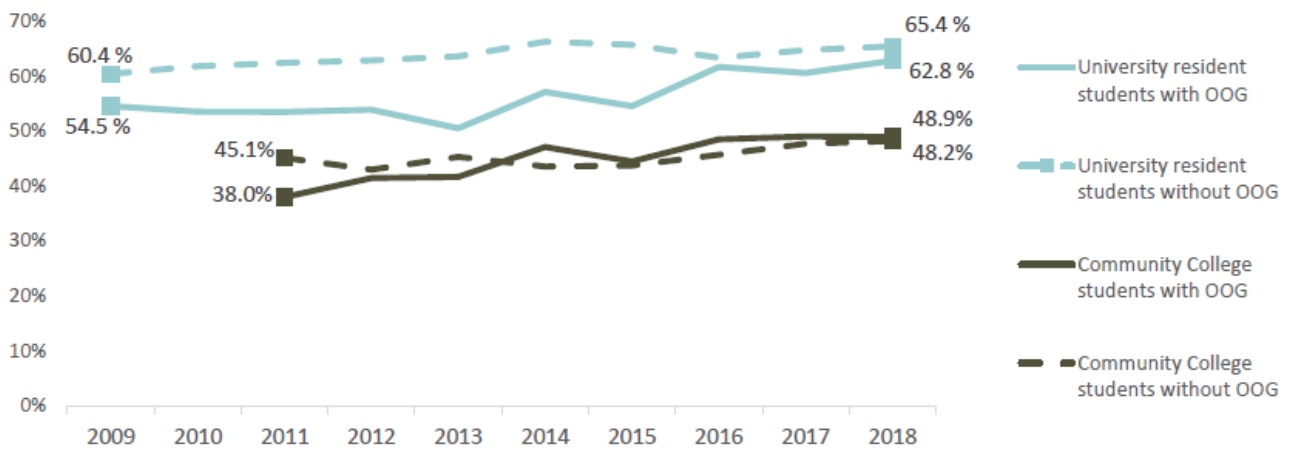
Source: HECC analysis of student-level data from 17 community colleges and seven public universities. University rates include resident and non-resident, first-time, full-time freshmen and include inter-institutional graduations. Community college rates include students who attended full- or part-time, enrolled for the first time at the college, completed at least 18 quarter credits in their first two years at the college, and completed a certificate, degree, or transfer to any four-year university nationwide. This overestimates the completion rate to the extent that it excludes credential-seeking students unable to complete 18 credits in two years. The 2011 community college rate may be biased upward because data are left-censored, and the 2018 rate excludes summer term completions (data not yet available).



Appendix D

Completion Rates Are Notably Higher for Students from Higher Income Families

Higher income students (those without an OOG) are more likely to complete their programs than lower-income students
 This gap has narrowed recently, likely in part because of increased OOG funding



Source: HECC analysis of student-level data from 17 community colleges and seven public universities. University rates include resident and non-resident, first-time, full-time freshmen and include inter-institutional graduations. Community college rates include students who attended full- or part-time, enrolled for the first time at the college, completed at least 18 quarter credits in their first two years at the college, and completed a certificate, degree, or transfer to any four-year university nationwide. This overestimates the completion rate to the extent that it excludes credential-seeking students unable to complete 18 credits in two years. The 2011 community college rate may be biased upward because data are left-censored, and the 2018 rate excludes summer term completions (data not yet available).

