

February 2, 2020

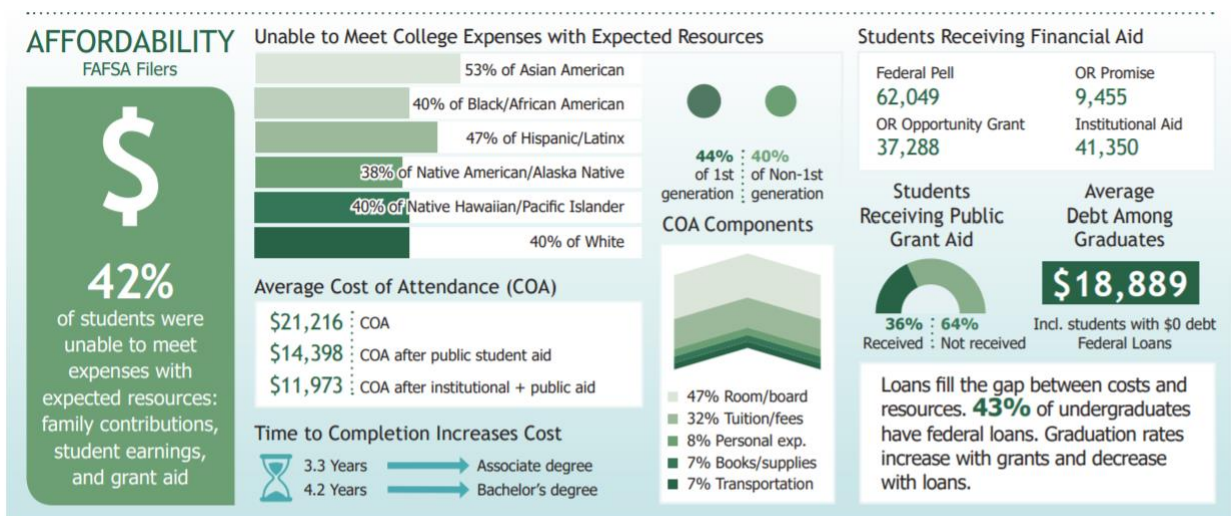
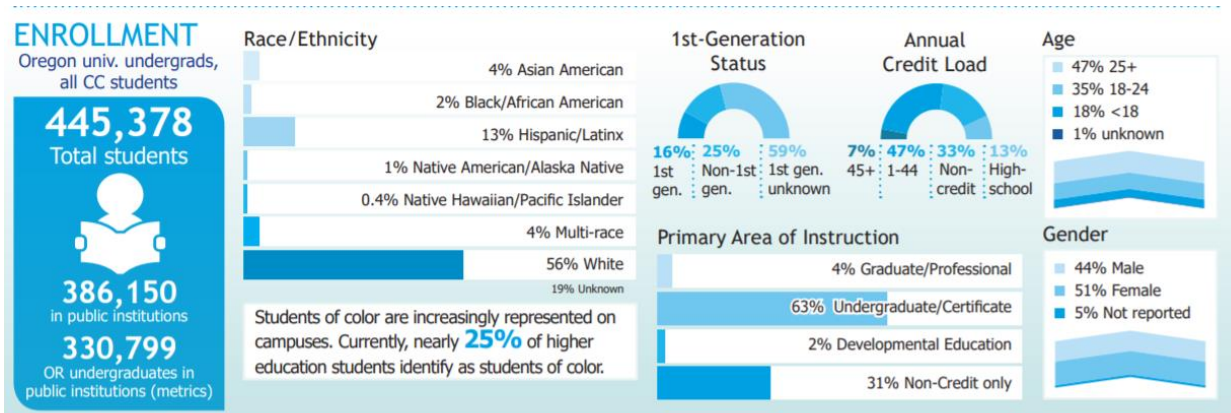
Dear Chair Doherty, Vice Chair Alonso Leon, Vice Chair Helt, and Members of the House Education Committee,

We write this letter to express our support for HB 4160, which creates a taskforce focused on supporting the success of underrepresented students in higher education.

The work of this taskforce is both urgent and important, especially as we examine access, persistence and completion of higher education among underrepresented students.

Even as enrollment increases steadily, underrepresented students still struggle to access and afford higher education.

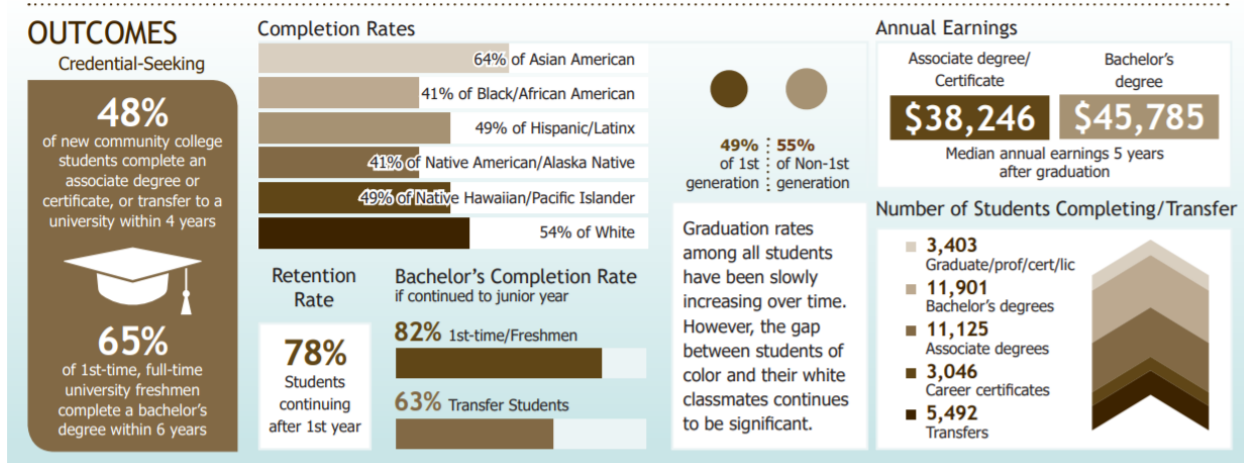
Here are some [key statewide snapshots from the Higher Education Coordinating Commission](#) that illustrate our state’s need to focus on supporting underrepresented students in achieving their post-secondary aspirations (released spring 2019, data from 2017-18):



#### Time to Completion Increases Cost

3.3 Years	Associate degree
4.2 Years	Bachelor's degree

Loans fill the gap between costs and resources. **43%** of undergraduates have federal loans. Graduation rates increase with grants and decrease with loans.



This taskforce can help identify pervasive systemic barriers and develop recommendations on how to dismantle these barriers, so that more underrepresented students can access higher education.

Additionally, when it comes to completing higher education and entering the workforce, significant disparities remain. This taskforce is critical in examining structural and collaboration challenges as well as identifying the bright spots that shape students' educational experiences in higher education. Drawing on those taskforce examinations will be key to: shaping future policies; improving collaboration; increasing equitable investments to address those challenges; and building on successes.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please support HB 4160.

Sincerely,



Parasa Chanramy  
 Policy & Implementation Director