

Enrolled House Bill 4124

Sponsored by Representative MARSH, Senators WAGNER, PATTERSON, Representatives ANDERSEN, EVANS, FRAGALA, MCDONALD, RIEKE SMITH, Senators BROADMAN, GOLDEN, SOLLMAN; Representatives BOWMAN, HARBICK, LEVY B, NOSSE, SOSA, WALLAN, WALTERS, WATANABE, WISE, Senators FREDERICK, MANNING JR, NASH, WEBER (Presession filed.)

CHAPTER

AN ACT

Relating to the state post-secondary education system; and declaring an emergency.

Whereas about a decade ago Oregon established a statewide system of independent universities and the Higher Education Coordinating Commission; and

Whereas Oregon’s post-secondary education institutions have unique missions and should serve distinct populations; and

Whereas Oregon’s system of independent boards at public universities and community colleges provides essential oversight and direction to the mission and operation of these institutions of higher education; and

Whereas market competition among Oregon’s post-secondary education institutions has eroded cross-institutional collaboration, impaired focus on regional and state needs and undermined public confidence in the system as a vital source of economic development and employment opportunities; and

Whereas after about a decade of operations, Oregon must reevaluate the accessibility, financial resiliency, efficiency, effectiveness and coordination of its post-secondary education system to ensure the system meets the diverse needs of Oregon’s students, economy and workforce; and

Whereas recent, current and projected demographic, enrollment and market conditions and trends coupled with the competitive landscape for post-secondary education institutions, including the effects of online and out-of-state programs, require Oregon institutions to strategically assess financial and enrollment sustainability; and

Whereas Oregon’s community colleges are locally governed with taxing authority and fiscal responsibilities, so any statewide study, review, evaluation or recommendation regarding the structure, coordination, funding or governance of post-secondary education institutions must recognize and account for the distinct governance structure of community colleges; and

Whereas Oregon’s public universities and community colleges are cornerstones of our communities and engines of economic growth and should be aligned to meet regional and state economic needs; now, therefore,

Be It Enacted by the People of the State of Oregon:

SECTION 1. (1) The Higher Education Coordinating Commission shall conduct a study of the condition of Oregon’s post-secondary education system and develop detailed recom-

mendations for the design, implementation and operation of a viable and superior institutional framework that:

(a) Supports access to post-secondary education institutions for students across geographic location, including rural communities and other underserved populations;

(b) Fuels regional and statewide economic development and employment opportunities; and

(c) Improves the financial viability of each post-secondary education institution in Oregon and the post-secondary education system as a whole, including by addressing projected enrollment, increased personnel costs, changes in federal law or priorities, sector-specific inflationary costs or other related factors.

(2) The study must evaluate and make recommendations on each of the following subjects:

(a) The distinct objectives and missions of each category of post-secondary education institution, including community college, public university, regional university and research university, in consideration of key variables such as research, public services, instruction, academic programming, educational model and the student population served; and

(b) Opportunities for collaboration, restructuring or integration in the post-secondary education system.

(3) The study may evaluate and make recommendations on each of the following subjects:

(a) Development of academic programs and specialties to support current and emerging regional and state economic development and workforce needs;

(b) Criteria for the review of unnecessary program duplication across post-secondary education institutions and unmet program needs statewide;

(c) Structures and supports to connect students and graduates to employers and employment opportunities;

(d) Funding strategies, including strategies to foster collaboration, restructuring or integration in the post-secondary education system; and

(e) Metrics of affordability for students and financial health for post-secondary education institutions.

(4) In developing recommendations under this section, the commission shall engage the expertise of and consult public institutions of higher education, including faculty, staff and students, and any other interested stakeholders identified by the commission.

(5) The commission shall submit a preliminary and final report on the results of the study, in the manner provided under ORS 192.245, along with any recommended legislative changes, to the interim or regular committees of the Legislative Assembly related to higher education no later than:

(a) October 1, 2026, for the preliminary report.

(b) April 1, 2027, for the final report.

(6) The commission may utilize third-party contractors to carry out all or part of this section.

SECTION 2. This 2026 Act being necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health and safety, an emergency is declared to exist, and this 2026 Act takes effect on its passage.

Passed by House February 27, 2026

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Timothy G. Sekerak, Chief Clerk of House

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Julie Fahey, Speaker of House

Passed by Senate March 4, 2026

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Rob Wagner, President of Senate

Received by Governor:

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Approved:

.....M,....., 2026

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Tina Kotek, Governor

Filed in Office of Secretary of State:

.....M,....., 2026

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Tobias Read, Secretary of State