

Pathways to Advancement: Higher Learning & Higher Earning in Oregon

Pathways to Advancement is transforming Oregon's community college education model to focus on helping Oregonians attain certificates or degrees that lead to high-demand occupations and higher wages. Pathways to Advancement is a student-centered, demand-driven innovation community colleges have launched to proactively adapt to the dynamically changing needs of students and employers. For most adults, postsecondary education is about blending work and education over time. For employers, getting the qualified workers they need requires a rapid education and training delivery cycle to meet dynamic labor market demands. Pathways to Advancement focuses on easing the transitions for all students across the education continuum. Oregon's community colleges are developing model programs that realign curriculum, provide alternative delivery methods as well as flexibility for adults to gain skills and advance in the labor market more quickly to address employer and student needs.

Oregonians can get on the fast track to higher learning and higher earning with a Pathways to Advancement approach. They can achieve:

- Faster attainment of skills and pay in high-demand occupations;
- Expedited professional and technical certificates and degrees.

The goal is to increase the number of students attaining certificates and credentials using these flexible schedules, driven by industry needs and program designs at the local level, and providing student supports to increase access, persistence, and success.

The Governor's highest priority is growing Oregon's economy and ensuring that its citizens have the skills to compete for family wage jobs. Many Oregonians will be left behind in the 21st century economy unless they can gain language, literacy, technology and post-secondary skills. Pathways to Advancement is a fundamental piece of the Governor's overall education and workforce strategy that ensures that all Oregonians can share the benefits of economic growth and contribute to our nation's economic stability and security.

Outcomes. The "eye on the prize" for Pathways:

- Increase number of Oregonians accessing postsecondary education
- Increase number of Oregonians who persist attaining degrees and other credentials
- Decrease the need for remediation at postsecondary level
- Increase entry into employment and further education
- Increase wage gain over time for student completers

Types of Pathways. Community colleges are implementing pathways approaches in four transition arenas across the education continuum:

- Secondary to postsecondary
- Pre-college (ABE/GED/ESL/DE) "bridges" to credit postsecondary
- Postsecondary education for skills upgrading and career changers
- Community college postsecondary to university system.

Accomplishments. Activities and achievements in 2005 to the present have reinforced Oregon's reputation as a national leader in Pathways. Some successes to date include:

- Pathways Alliance colleges (Chemeketa, Linn-Benton, Mt. Hood, Portland, and Southwestern community colleges) have collaboratively created roadmaps and certificates in demand occupations;
- Pathways Alliance colleges planned and convened a statewide Pathways Academy in June 2005 that included teams from each community college and representatives from four state agencies;
- Development of 29 Career Pathway "roadmaps" by Alliance colleges and access to these tools by students and advisors/counselors via the statewide Pathways website in 2006 (www.oregon.gov/WORKSOURCE/PATHWAYS);
- State approval of eight pathway certificates and planned application for an additional 12 certificates from Alliance partner colleges;
- Implementation of seven secondary education pathways projects through the Regional Professional Technical Education Network (including development of Career Pathways websites at Lane ESD and PCC PAVTEC)
- Many community colleges are advancing a pathways strategy to increase access and success in credit college programs by pre-college (ABE/GED/ESL/DE) students using Incentive Grant funds;
- Development of the Degree Completion Initiative (DCI) by the Department of Human Services providing TANF recipients within reach of a degree support to meet their goal.
- Career Pathways Trainings offered in partnership at Portland and Mt. Hood Community College in 20 entry-level occupations (www.pcc.edu/cp), and;
- Pathways Trainings offered at Linn-Benton Community College in seven occupational areas.

Looking to the Future. Oregon is at a critical juncture in its effort to integrate Pathways to Advancement across Oregon's 17 community colleges. Support from the Governor's Employer Workforce Training Fund, the Oregon Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development, and the Oregon Department of Education has up-leveled the statewide dialog about the critical role Pathways plays in preparing students for the global economy.

Resources are needed to build capacity for each community college to expand pathways approaches including:

- development of roadmaps for demand occupations
- development of replicable models for statewide certificate programs
- development of replicable models for secondary and pre-college pathways
- development of supports for students to increase access, persistence, and success
- development of replicable approaches to re-tooling college catalogs, schedules, & websites

Colleges with existing capacity will continue to expand and continuously improve and evaluate Pathways approaches. These colleges will also mentor and facilitate learning across colleges about sustainable Pathways practices and lessons learned.

For more information contact: Mimi Maduro, Pathways Initiative Statewide Director, Columbia Gorge Community College, 541-506-6015, mmaduro@cgcc.cc.or.us

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