

# **Mt. Hood Community College 2021-22 Hearing Minutes**

Wednesday June 16, 2021

5:30 pm  
26000 SE Stark  
Gresham, Oregon  
Via Zoom

**Present:**

TSCC:

Chair David Barringer, Vice Chair James Ofsink, Commissioner Margo Norton, Commissioner Mark Wubbold, Commissioner Harmony Quiroz, Executive Director Craig Gibons, Incoming Executive Director Allegra Willhite, and Budget Analyst Tunie Betschart

**Absent:** None

Mt. Hood Community College:

Board of Directors: Chair Diane Noriega, Vice Chair Annette Mattson, James Zordich, LaVerne Lewis, Andrew Speer, Diane McKeel, Kenney Polson

Staff: College President Dr. Lisa Skari, Chief Operations Officer Jennifer DeMent, Executive Dean of Student Development John Hamlin, Executive Director of Development & District Communications Al Sigala, and, Director of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Traci Simmons

Chair David Barringer opened the public hearing and asked the Commissioners and staff to introduce themselves. He then asked if any of the Commissioners have business relationships with Mt. Hood Community College that could be perceived as a conflict of interest. The Commissioners each said they had no conflict of interest.

Chair Barringer asked the College Board and staff to introduce themselves. Following introductions Chair Barringer turned the floor over to Dr. Skari to make brief introductory remarks about the budget and then the TSCC Commissioners would ask a few questions. Succeeding the questions, testimony from the public would be taken.

Dr. Skari gave a brief overview of the 2021-22 budget for Mt. Hood Community College saying:

Thank you for the opportunity to share the 2021-22 proposed budget. While this has been anything but a normal year we've had a whole host of opportunities for creativity and challenging the status quo.

In our budget, much like our operations, we focused on being thoughtful, strategic and mindful of student needs in an uncertain reality. While you may not necessarily see it as you look at the line items in the budget numbers, much work was done this year centering

on students' inequity including a few targeted investments, while maintaining reserves of 13%.

In serving students, we feel the most important work we did this year was to present a budget with no tuition increases. This is the first time in eight years we've been able to do this. We know how financially fragile our Community is, and the pandemic did nothing to make matters any better. We've had to make some difficult choices over recent years, and aided by the stimulus dollars we've been able to avoid a tuition increase this year. In addition to holding tuition steady we also did some reallocation of funds to better address student needs.

Now, I just want to briefly talk about looking into the future and our goal of becoming a more equity-minded institution. The College embarked on two significant efforts this year that's going to influence our budget in the future. The first is the adoption of an equity lens. The second is launching a new strategic planning process.

The equity lens which was adopted last month, will be used in all cabinet and board decision making in the future, including next year's budget proposal. In that we're looking at keeping racism and inequities at the center of our considerations around policies, practices and procedures. We're ensuring that we're effectively and persistently challenging the dominant ideology and status quo. We're working to establish institutional commitment to social justice and do no further harm. We will center the experiences of our students and our communities, so that we can become a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive organization. At the core we're going to use data and diverse perspectives as part of this transformation.

As I mentioned, we're also looking at a new strategic plan, the current one was adopted in 2013 and reformed in 2016. The current mission, vision and values are void of references to equity, which really runs counter to the very purpose of what community colleges are and what we do. To remedy this, we've launched a Strategic Equity Planning process that will be grounded in stakeholder input. This isn't a standalone plan or a separate plan. The Strategic Equity Plan will be our Strategic Plan. It will align with other work at the College, including an integrated enrollment facilities and Academic Master Plan.

Despite a somewhat uncertain world, Mount Hood Community College is progressing in a strategic, fiscally prudent, student centered, and equity minded fashion. The College has learned how to innovate. We have very dedicated faculty and staff who have shown how amazing, resilient, and resourceful they can be over these last 15 months. Because of them, with the leadership of the board, Mount Hood Community College is positioned well to move forward in the post pandemic reality. With that we are happy to answer any questions you might have.

Chair Barringer thanked Dr. Skari and moved to the TSCC prepared questions.

## **TSCC Questions**

### **Chair Barringer asked the following questions:**

What have you learned from this experience and how will you apply it to the lasting impacts of the pandemic?

Dr. Skari responded saying the College has slowly moving toward that post pandemic reality. In the spirit of continuous improvement, they know it would be a missed opportunity if they didn't taken some time to reflect on where they been and what they have learned.

So from the leadership level they are learning about the comprehensive needs of the students and how the College can be more focused and structured around student basic needs and have that be a critical part of the services going forward.

Online and hybrid courses offered more flexibility for students. Being forced to make that happen, the College also learned the value with these modalities and bringing it to students. Faculty realized the freedom and opportunities that gave them in the classroom. However, the cycle of technology adaptation accelerated sometimes faster than desired, both in the classroom and in the operations, but it allowed staff to be more nimble and more efficient.

Traditional office or workspace will be changing. The college is focusing on how they can continue to meet student needs in a way that might also allow for some better work life balance with employees. Getting there because the College's future state impacts the campus community as a whole, they are engaging their government structure. Mt. Hood Community College has five Councils that address access and diversity, institutional effectiveness, infrastructure, learner success, and people strategies. They have basically asked them to do an analysis and let staff know what worked well, what did they learn, and what to keep. In addition, what are some of the areas that didn't translate well to that remote environment that the College needs to return to a prior practice? Then through it all, what are the opportunities to become a more resilient, learning institution post pandemic? What are some of those things that the College needs to tweak?

This work is going to be taking place through Fall term with the idea that recommendations that come out of it will align with unit planning and the budget cycle for next year. MHCC will look very different going forward. As they continue to emerge they will have a clear picture of what that's going to look like, but having the College's governing body helping to determine that direction will increase that likelihood of success.

It is amazing that you were able to find some silver linings in this pandemic, becoming more student focused and increasing your resilience. Those are good things.

**Commissioner Ofsink asked the following questions:**

We know that many education districts have received extra federal, state or both sources of funding to deal with the added costs of the pandemic. We're wondering how much pandemic related funding Mount Hood Community College has received and how you anticipate using it? Is there new additional funding that's still in the pipeline for the College? Is it reflected in the budget that we have in front of us?

Ms. Jennifer DeMent answered, saying MHCC has received almost \$11 million in federal aid, both direct and through the state that is earmarked for aid to students. These funds are included in the Student Aid Fund budget and are meant to help students pay for extraordinary expenses related to the disruption of campus operations due to the coronavirus. This includes eligible expenses under a student's cost of attendance such

as food, housing, course materials, technology, health care, and childcare. These funds are passed through to students. They cannot be applied to outstanding student balances.

They have received just over \$15 million in federal aid to support the institution. These funds have been used for

- Purchasing laptops and other technology for students, and developing some student basic needs infrastructure that MHCC will be able to sustain after the funding goes away
- Providing additional emergency financial assistance to students, particularly students that maybe weren't eligible for some of the other earlier more restrictive aid
- Providing additional technology and support needed to work and to teach online and remotely
- Installing expanded Wi-Fi access to parking lots and public spaces on campus, and making cyber security improvements
- Implementing campus safety protocols such as plastic shielding in open areas
- Covering additional costs related to operating additional class sections to enable social distancing
- Supplementing revenue lost due to the pandemic

A substantial portion of these funds, \$14 million, was awarded in the most recent American Rescue Plan legislation in late May. This resource is reflected in next year's budget. It is budgeted in the Special Projects Fund and Student Aid Fund.

Do you have a sense how much of the \$15 million was by direct payments to students?

Ms. DeMent said she was not sure. But they were over \$80,000 on the last round of student aid disbursements that they made during winter-spring term. They had figured out who would receive this assistance, based on the qualifications. It was about \$80,000 short, so they just covered that to give all of those students money.

The College has also been doing some other initiatives with students that have outstanding balances that are preventing them from registering for school and so looking at bringing those balances down under the threshold, so that they can register for the next term. About 40% of the students that they have done that for have been able to reregister and get lined up with financial aid and continue with their education.

That's great. Thanks so much for investing and removing those impediments.

**Chair Barringer asked the following questions:**

That federal and state funding will not continue indefinitely, but the impact of the pandemic may. What services do you plan to continue and how will you pay for those services when the extra funding stops?

Ms. DeMent responded saying while MHCC used a flat enrollment assumption for the 2021-22 budget. They have also established a larger target enrollment level for the 2022-23 budget year. This target is slightly above where the College would have been had they continued experiencing the 7% annual enrollment decline trend. They do not feel this is overly optimistic. This target represents about 16% growth from the current year pandemic low and represents full recovery back to pre-Covid levels.

They have included this target in the budget discussions with staff and the board. They are doing initiatives to retain the students and recruit new students to bolster enrollment. They anticipate when they start to reopen and have classes on campus this will open up some doors for students, that have chosen not to pursue on-line education.

If the College is unable to reach this target, they will need to identify expenditure reductions or new revenue to balance the 2022-23 budget.

**Commissioner Quiroz asked the following question:**

Student enrollment has decreased by 7% over the last 8 years. How have staffing and overall costs changed to this point in response?

Ms. Dement fielded this question as well, saying MHCC has lost over one third of the full time equivalent enrollment over the past eight years. It is fairly significant. They were at about 9,000 and are now at just over 5,000 FTE. They haven't lost as many students, but the students are taking fewer classes. They are experiencing declines of about 7% for several years. This trend is not unique to MHCC and is being experienced at community colleges across the state and across the nation.

Since 2018-19 when those trends started, MHCC has implemented a 6% decrease in staff FTE, and a 20% reduction in employees, and that is a head count. Mostly part-time so the ratio of full-time instructors increased to 74% this year. The College is seeing a shift from part time to full time instructors.

This last year the College offered retirement incentives which allowed for savings, both through holding positions and lower costs for entry level employees and allowed them to have a little flexibility without eliminating a lot of incumbent positions.

They are also making investments so they can better support the students through initiatives like the Strategic Enrollment Plan, and building and supports that meet students' basic needs. When someone is worrying about where they are going to sleep, or what they're going to eat, they are not worrying about registering for school.

**Commissioner Wubbold on asked the following questions:**

I have the question that you just alluded to, which is, with these challenges with staffing during the pandemic and this declining enrollment period, how can you continue to support students and faculty?

Ms. Traci Simmons responded saying the college has developed a Basic Needs and Response Task Force which was formulated based on seeing the digital divide. There were students who couldn't access online because they didn't have the right technology and equipment, high quality internet and they were really struggling to connect and complete their classes. So MHCC used \$500,000 of the CARES funds that they received to purchase over 150 laptops, and a number of contracts for hotspots for students. They developed a strategy for delivering these implemented tools to students.

Using the Student Affairs professionals they developed some infrastructure for other

emergency needs such as health care, child care, transportation, food, housing, fuel cards, and a variety of other essentials. MHCC recognizes that the pandemic exacerbated some of these equity issues of student basic needs, and these needs will not just disappear. Because of that, the college is working on developing long term strategies to support student basic needs. They have partnered with the Mount Hood Community College foundation in developing a fund to sustain the resources for students over time. Currently, they are looking at \$300,000 endowment with the Foundation to support this work. In addition they are working with the Hope Lab and Real College, which is a nonprofit institution that is helping community colleges and four year institutions across the country develop strategies for supporting student basic needs and security. They are working to build capacity in the organization, with the help of the Hope Lab and Real College to support that.

In addition they have developed a regional consortium to look at housing and new innovative strategies for developing housing on campus, short term, temporary housing, for students who are houseless. They continue seeking other strategies in collaboration with other higher education organizations in the region to support this long term goal of getting students housed, fed and needs supported, so they can persist in their goals toward education.

Mr. John Hamblin added that MHCC Online Learning department has extended support hours for faculty and staff, including evening hours during the week and weekend hours at the start of spring, summer and fall terms. Support includes phone, e-mail, Zoom, chat, assistance request forms and separate faculty and student resources sites which are continuously updated. In March 2020 the college added academic continuity strategies to the faculty resources, including how to pivot instruction to a remote environment quickly and best practices for creating successful courses.

The College has provided faculty, staff, and students technical and navigational support and best practices for all types of courses including specific support in:

- Technical support navigation through the various platforms
- Pedagogy
- Course design
- Accessibility
- Media development
- Culturally responsive teaching
- Open Education Resources adoption and integration of no or low cost text books
- Test proctoring software and services

During spring break last year, the Online Learning Department offered 19 group trainings and workshops that focused on that transitional period for faculty to transition their courses and get the support that they need to quickly become experts in the shifting environment. Through the Teaching and Learning Center, they continue to offer certification courses for online and hybrid instruction. They offered a five week remote training opportunity dedicated to part time faculty as well. In addition there were multiple training opportunities in the lunch and chat with online learning director and other staff and Online Learning Department as well too.

This past year MHCC has had to reinvent many of the ways in which they interact with students and each other. During Spring break of 2020, the College quickly pivoted all

services to remote and not only moved students online but all staff. Ensuring they were ready for this unique environment was the priority. The College made a significant shift in how they manage teleworking, equipment uses, and overall trying to make the experience for both staff and students the best possible. During the past year, they have added a chat feature and implemented a chatbot, to provide service after hours. They have also re-purposed a form traditionally use for student conduct and made it function as a tool to connect students to services. Both shifts have resulted in an increase in student connectivity and access to supports, with over 10,000 chats and referrals reported and responded to, with over 95% satisfaction ratings. MHCC believes that much of this shift will stay, even when they return, as they have learned the impact of easier access is incredibly positive both for staff and for students.

You mentioned a food insecurity, does MHCC have a food pantry for students?

Mr. Hamblin responded saying yes, they do have a food pantry. He thought they were one of the first community colleges in the state to develop a food pantry. The food pantry has expanded considerably over the past number of years, serving hundreds of students each term. With the shift to the remote environment and a closure of campus they had to shift how resources were provided to students.

Students can request food, toiletries, sanitary items and other needs online. The college has shifted from a day or two days food supply to a three weeks supply of food with boxes that are coming in nearly 50 pounds. In addition they have expanded their partnership, not only with Oregon Food Bank but to a partnership with Amazon which has literally has been bringing trucks full of pallets to the College. The volume of donations MHCC has received has been fantastic.

**Commissioner Norton asked these follow-up questions:**

I have a follow up question for Director Simmons. I wanted to confirm that I heard her say that as an aspirational future look, you are looking at housing on campus. Did I understand that correctly? Could you speak a little bit more about that in terms of what concept you are entertaining? Is this a college venture, a partnership venture, an outside party venture?

Ms. Simmons answered saying they have developed a team of people from Portland Community College, Chemeketa Community College and, College Housing Northwest, in collaboration with architects and builders and other folks to focus on student housing. They are looking at all possibilities and being very creative with that and the resources. Many campuses have spaces that are unoccupied. That offers an opportunity.

**Commissioner Ofsink asked the following questions:**

We would like to know more about the plan to deal with enrollment. In the budget message you identified three primary strategies for rebuilding enrollment, apprenticeships and other course offerings, DEI staffing and programing, and an enhanced digital presence. Why did you choose these strategies and what about them leads you to think they will attract students?

Ms. DeMent said the enhanced digital presence is referring to some investments they are making in the website. The college feels the website is a significant factor for students deciding where to go to school. Having a better web layout will improve MHCC

presence in web searches and students' perceptions about the school.

Recognizing that the website is behind the times and not laid out in a way that is prioritizing students first, they are looking at making investments into overhauling, redesigning, reassigning and updating. That is one of the initiatives to help students get the information they need. In that way, the website can be used not just a recruitment tool, but also a tool to help build MHCC's digital presence and brand.

Mr. Hamblin added that over the years MHCC has worked on developing many Strategic Enrollment Student Success plans. They have done a really good job of building these plans. A challenge they ran into is that the plans were built in silos. With this new planning process the focus is going to be more on recruitment and retention through both Recruitment and Outreach Offices and the advising Offices. Just as a comparison, there's 150 plus full time faculty; MHCC has six full time advisors within the Academic Advising and Transfer Center. That is a team that's primarily responsible for that focus.

However, the reality is it is much broader than just in Student Development. The design and concept behind having a unified plan that works on an Academic plan, a Strategic Enrollment Management plan, Facilities and Fiscal plans and aligning those comprehensive plans together is key. Doing that work, the College has consulted with Ruffalo Noel Levitz (RNL), who does consultation services for Strategic Enrollment Planning. This process will take place over the next nine to fifteen months. They will be building a five to ten year Strategic Enrollment plan that will combine each of those plans together.

The key components of this are:

- Fostering long term enrollment and fiscal health
- Providing realistic quantifiable goals for student recruitment, student success and the market position of the campus
- Delivering clearly defined cost effective results by using a return on investment, an action item approach
- Knowing when to say yes, and when to say no, and the method and process of how to do that
- Aligning with the College's mission and its current state, with the changing market environment
- Recognizing without bond funds MHCC has to get creative

Planning is a key piece of how MHCC can be creative, how to move ideas forward, and how the College aligns the multiple components.

He gave an example why this is important by saying if an academic department decides, they want to start a new program but they don't have the facility space, the funding or the services to support the students, it won't be as successful as if the College aligns those three different efforts together. Through this planning process MHCC will adapt recruitment and retention strategies to rapid market change while supporting diversity.

Diversity is a key piece of MHCC's focus intertwined with their three goals:

- Aligning academic and co-curricular trends within institutional capacity, ensuring that MHCC actually has the supports to go along with the programming that exists



- Preparing graduates for changing demands on the modern economy and workforce
- Responding to increasing calls for accountability

This is this is the first time in over 20 years that the College has engaged a consultant in doing this work. MHCC has tried to do this internally. Ruffalo Noel Levitz is a highly successful organization that has worked with a number of colleges and universities and, most importantly, they know that the College is working on the Strategic Planning process and they will align those two processes together as well.

**Commissioner Wubbold asked this follow-up question:**

Five to ten years seems like a long horizon for such a dynamic and quickly changing environment. Why such a long horizon?

Mr. Hamblin explained that it is driven by how the district makes decisions, how they evaluate what plans to move forward, what plans to press pause on. But also looking at when you're developing academic programs MHCC doesn't have the versatility to pivot overnight. Some of this programming takes time, so you have to look at what is in the future, four or five, even ten years out of what the job prospectus and what the market may be. If the culture is leaning towards more healthcare jobs or machine jobs or fill in the blank type of work so the apprenticeship opportunities are expanding as well too. The College needs to be able to pivot over time to be able to account for and accommodate those changes in the market. There is a lot of organizations that have research and information that show what the future trends are going to be and some projections into those future trends. It's a little less like playing darts in the dark with a blindfold on and a little bit more strategize and focus on real data. This will allow the college to plan using that information.

But still allows for the opportunistic situation that might come up an opportunity that might come up.

Ms. Simmons said she would like to speak to the DEI staffing and programming. She is in a new role as of February of 2020. Having a director to lead the work of DEI has been critical for the institution. In addition the College has a new position, Multicultural Student Success Coordinator. Other positions that have been around for some time are, the Diversity and Multicultural Resource Center Coordinator, Director of Student Life and Leadership and Diversity Councilor. Having a director to build capacity in the organization has been important for directing the work.

East Multnomah County is one of the most diverse parts of the County. There is a growing diversity with over 80 different languages spoken in the County. In addition, there is a pooling of poverty. In building capacity for the organization with regard to instruction in the space of culturally responsive and culturally relevant teaching, she is working to help build skill sets for faculty, and have those culturally responsive practices happening in all of student development as well as the ways in which the students are engaging with the College. Knowing that representation matters. Knowing that there are people who have a similar lived experience as the students and knowing that the students ultimately are going to see themselves in the institution, when they see themselves reflected in the institution. That's a retention strategy. It's a strategy to develop culturally specific programming, cultural events that are centered in learning and developing a critical understanding of the context in which they live and the future MHCC wants to create as a community. It's been

important to have that and continue building that institutional capacity to meet the needs and be responsive to the needs of ever growing diverse community.

**Commissioner Ofsink made the following comment:**

Thanks. That gives us a deep understanding of each of those strategies, so thank you for taking the time to lay it out for us.

**Commissioner Norton asked the following questions:**

I'd like to talk about facilities. Director Hamlin mentioned the relationship between facilities and enrollment building. We see it that way, as well. The largest projects in your capital spending plan for next year have a relationship to service to students and to enrollment areas. You mentioned specifically the dental hygiene building, roofing projects and the ADA project. The College has had a difficult time with capital improvements and capital maintenance. It appears that these very important projects are the target of grant applications. What will happen if you do not secure these grants?

Ms. DeMent fielded this question, saying the three projects that you referenced are things that MHCC has to do. They are things the College would do if there was extra money. They're all things that must be done.

The dental hygiene lab remodel is a requirement to maintain the program accreditation. The current layout doesn't meet privacy concerns for patients. The ADA improvements are needed to maintain legal compliance. In addition, the College has several roofs that are near the end of their lives. These are "have to do's".

MHCC has multiple strategies under way to secure funding for these projects, including a statewide effort to get support to cover the required local match for statewide State Capital. MHCC hasn't been able to generate the match through a General Obligation bond, but has revised the project to cover these. There is an initiative at the state, although the time is winding down to cover that. If not, the College is also exploring the possibility of some federal capital dollars that might be in the works. There are \$2.5 million state and federal legislative earmark funds that MHCC has lobbied to obtain for some of the capital projects.

If these other funding strategies don't come to fruition, then the College will have to pursue a plan B to reprioritize existing funds and projects as they work through the needed updates and deferred maintenance items. She gave the example of pushing the elevator upgrades out another year. It will be a matter of prioritizing.

I heard you say that each of the three projects that were highlighted in your budget request and the largest projects are absolutely compliance critical. Projects don't happen overnight. If your funding is not secured, or if you have to go to plan B, will these projects proceed in the coming year?

Ms. DeMent fielded this question saying the ADA projects are not necessarily the largest project but they are the most urgent projects. The College has found ways to do the bare minimum ADA improvements. They can use the Capital Project Fund and just reprioritize the things that they would like to do with the things that have to do. They have the funding to do the ADA projects.

As for the roofing, they have had some leaks on the roof in the gym. They were able to leverage the insurance reimbursements to cover and start working on the roof. They are prioritizing the most ominous in order to prevent leaking which would create other costs associated with that. Again it's a matter of prioritizing the deferred maintenance.

The dental hygiene issue is about \$5 million total with the full remodel including new equipment. Some other ideas are if MHCC can't get all of the funding for the full remodel, looking at capital campaign or looking at downsizing the project. Downsizing may not create as awesome space for students but, there are other alternatives there.

And I presume that the dental hygiene remodel and move to compliance is an example of a program which has either retention or enrollment building potential. Is that correct?

Ms. DeMent responded saying it's not a building program as it is small cohort program that is limited by space. MHCC couldn't expand the program but it is a high retention program. By the time students get into it, they complete it so, of course, the College does not want to lose that program.

**Commissioner Wubbold asked the following question:**

Earlier you shared some data with us about your staffing and your students: 30% decline in students since 2018, 20% decline in employees, 6% decline in faculty. So the trend lines are going down in terms of staffing, and yet the trend lines that we've identified in the budget for wages and salaries are going up. Can you help us reconcile those two? It wasn't clear to us how that could happen.

Ms. DeMent explained that there was an error related to the FTE reported for both the Student Aid fund, and the Federal, State, & Special Projects Fund. Staff will publish the adopted budget with the corrected FTE. Planned FTE increases for both funds was omitted in the approved document. With the corrected FTE, the same wage and salary increase of 13% from 2018-19 to 2021-22 has a resulting FTE increase of 7%, rather than the previously published 14% decrease. The fact that the wages are increasing 13% and FTE has increased only 7%, is explained through the higher rate for employee annual salary increases.

**Commissioner Norton asked this follow-up questions:**

My question has to do with what's being discussed at the national level with regard to Community Colleges in general, and how it will fit into your long range strategic plan. When he discusses his infrastructure plans, the President talks and promotes his idea specifically with job creation and jobs that do not require a college degree. When he talks about relief to middle and lower income class Americans, he talks about student loan forgiveness and Community College for all, so my question is how does that fit into your plans? And what do you think the likelihood of that is?

Mr. Hamblin reported that in Oregon they have had the Oregon Promise for the past five years. He had the opportunity to serve on the Senate Bill 81 Advisory committee. During these meetings, his biggest concern was that it was not funded to the extent it needed to be for sustainability and overall impact. He was questioning if it would help enough students to survive a biennium. It did, and has been expanded, still volatile in nature, due

to funding being tied to the biennial budget process, he hopes for a more stable and substantial funding source. The first year \$10 million was approved; the next year \$40 million was approved for the biennium. The state has struggled with challenges associated with eligibility for students, where one year there were students that were told they were eligible, but that decision was reversed. The next year students weren't told they are eligible and later were told that they were eligible. It's been a volatile process. It has helped out a significant number of students, over 11,000 statewide last year.

As for having this come from the Federal Government this would be a terrific opportunity for the college and students. Access to college has a direct correlation to socio-economic factors. Removing the cost challenges for students would result in an increase in access to many underserved populations. As for the debt reduction, similarly with the Oregon Promise, at the least it would reduce the amount of money students needed to borrow; at the most it may even eliminate the need to borrow for some. Reducing debt, can lead to keeping more of a family wage, home ownership, escaping poverty, and a wide range of other opportunities that can set a person back for years. The current options for debt forgiveness fall short of truly forgiving debt and are limited. An overall forgiveness of debt and free community college would have substantial impact on not only students, but also on communities.

Mr. Al Sigala added that he echoes what John said. The district is one of the most diverse in the state. It has one of the highest poverty rates. To provide free tuition and assisting them in obtaining a higher education is very welcomed. If it helps decrease debt, if it works towards improving retention and completion rates, but also increases graduation rates, this would be welcomed outcomes for any college.

MHCC is experiencing a downward trend in enrollment. If this could assist the College in getting more students, that's a big plus. Universities are questioning this because they fear that more students will pick community colleges.

The topic of free community college also brings up the question of its impact on private fundraising for college foundations. While scholarships have been a main concentration for college foundation efforts, other areas of funding have including classroom equipment and support for student basic needs. The College does not know how it might affect these fundraising efforts.

Unfortunately there are still many unanswered questions regarding how free Community college would roll out and there's much to understand as far as how the funding would be appropriated.

Thank you for your thoughts. We also asked Portland Community College about this as well, and they shared similar views, so thank you.

**Commissioner Ofsink asked the following questions:**

Commissioner Ofsink said with the MHCC Board meeting following the hearing he would not ask the following question but will skip to the last question.

This has been an unusual year in many ways. We would like to hear from the board members about how the college was able to pursue the Board's strategic plan in spite of

it all. What were you able to accomplish this year? As a board, what are the key strategic plan outcomes you expect next year?

Skipped to final question due to time (since this was directed to the board, MHCC Staff did not provide a written answer).

**Commissioner Norton asked the following questions:**

This should be a relatively brief question. We see that you're getting out of the book selling business. We are not surprised. There are many other institutions that have done that. Our question has to do with service to students. What are their options for used texts, and how moving to the online purchasing environment either helps or hinders your equity goals?

Ms. DeMent said the bookstore has been operating online entirely for the last 15 months, so students have had a taste of what it's like to order books on line and then have to either pick them up or have them shipped.

The opportunities that come from working with a new vendor and especially one with a national, very broad presence, will provide the best experience for students and faculty. These opportunities include:

- Increased ease for instructors to identify and integrate Open Educational Resources (OER), low to no cost course materials, into their courses and deliver to students through the Blackboard Learning Management System
- More bookstore customer service hours
- One-stop shopping with direct to customer shipping and options to ship to campus if the student does not have a secure address to receive their orders
- Lower student costs, expanded used textbook options
- One week of free shipping each term

So overall it will be a better experience for students.

It is true that you've been able to do this as a pilot project, not necessarily a pilot that you planned.

**Chair Barringer asked this follow-up question:**

Does your vendor cover supplies for classes for the labs and things like that?

Ms. DeMent responded, saying yes, they do. They can put together a kit that the students can purchase. They also have suggested things that the students might need or want, such as a calculator that's not necessarily required. The students can see all of that, when they pull up the course. The site will show what's required, what's suggested including all the supplies and textbooks. The website also includes spirit material like logo sweatshirts and things like that.

Chair Barringer thanked Dr. Skari and staff for their contribution to the discussion on Mt. Hood Community College's 2021-22 budget. He asked if anyone had indicated that they would like to speak at this hearing. No one had.

He then closed the hearing and opened a meeting of the Tax Supervising and Conservation Commission. He asked if any of the commissioners had any comments on the budget. There were no comments.

Chair Barringer asked Executive Director Gibons to give a brief overview of TSCC staff's observation of the budget and the budget process.

Mr. Gibons said the budget was prepared in accordance with Local Budget Law and was balanced. Staff has no recommendations or objections to include in the certification letter.

Commissioner Wubbold moved certify the Mt. Hood Community College's 2021-22 Approved Budget as presented by staff. Commissioner Ofsink seconded the motion which passed with a unanimous vote of the Commissioners (5).

There being no other business, Chair Barringer closed the meeting.

Minutes approved at TSCC Regular Meeting 7/27/2021