

# Portland Community College

## 2025-26 Hearing Minutes

Wednesday, May 15, 2025

3:00 P.M

Sylvania Campus, 12000 SW 49th Ave

Portland, Oregon

### Present:

#### **TSCC:**

Chair Harmony Quiroz,  
Vice Chair Matt Donahue,  
Commissioner Tod Burton,  
Commissioner Dr. Rita Moore,  
Allegra Willhite, Executive Director  
Brittanie Abayare, Budget Analyst

**Absent:** Commissioner Allison Lugo Knapp

#### **Portland Community College (PCC):**

Dr. Adrien Bennings, President of Portland Community College  
Dina Farrell, Vice President and Chief Financial Officer of Finance and Business Services  
Tiffani Penson, PCC Board Chair  
Kurt Simonds, Vice President for Strategy Policy, Integrated Planning  
Dr. Jennifer Ernst, Vice President of Academic Affairs  
Vicki Lopez Sanchez, Interim Vice President of Student Affairs  
Ryan Clark, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management and Strategy  
Rebecca Ocken, Director of Planning and Capital Construction

### Opening Remarks and Introductions

Chair Harmony Quiroz called the Portland Community College budget hearing to order.

- She welcomed everyone and thanked PCC for understanding their tardiness due to getting lost on campus, and:
- Explained the TSCC's role: a community oversight commission established by the Oregon Legislature over 100 years ago, overseeing budgets of all TSCC member taxing districts, and annually conducting a thorough budget review and certification process. Noted that the TSCC also holds public budget hearings to engage with district leadership and provide additional opportunities for public comment before budget adoption.
- Outlined the meeting agenda: introductory remarks from the district, opportunity for public comment, TSCC questions and budget discussion.
- Encouraged direct and open speaking, and brief comments to allow for more back-and-forth discussion, given the limited time.

Dr. Adrien Bennings, PCC President, stated that she's honored to have the commissioners and staff present.

Dina Farrell, PCC Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, thanked the commissioners for allowing

opening remarks.

- She stated that the PCC board approved the budget on April 17<sup>th</sup>, and:
- Provided background on PCC's budget process, which is grounded in the principles of fiscal stewardship.
- Emphasized that PCC must be efficient and strategic in budget planning, focusing limited resources on advancing the college mission, institutional priorities, strategic objectives, and goals.
- Stated that the guiding principles for the budget began with the launch of the Fiscal Sustainability Action Plan (FSAP) in summer 2024.
- Described the FSAP as designed to ensure long-term financial health and stability through a 6-year scenario plan, which is a "living, breathing document" to be continuously updated as financial conditions change.
- Explained that the 2025-2027 biennium budget is designed to be student-centered by focusing on quality education, affordable tuition, and fees through long-term resource planning and program sustainability.
- Confirmed the approved budget meets FSAP objectives by establishing budget reduction targets, cost-saving measures, encouraging revenue-generating opportunities, and setting tuition and fee assumptions aligned with enrollment targets and affordability initiatives.
- Stated that the FSAP and budget reflect coordinated planning efforts across the strategic plan, enrollment plan, academic sustainability plan, and the President's work plan, informing budget decision

### Public Comment

No members of the public had signed up for testimony.

### Commissioner Questions and District Responses

**Question from Vice Chair Donahue:** This question is for the board members in attendance – what do you see as the biggest challenge facing the college at the moment? And what is your plan to address it?

Answer by Tiffani Penson, PCC Board Chair:

- **Biggest Challenge:** Uncertainty of revenue. State and local revenue is not expected to increase, and federally sponsored programs are at risk of losing or having funding canceled. While PCC controls spending, it cannot control income. This is a common issue across all levels of education and government.
- **Student Demographics:** Reduction in numbers of students aged 18-25, with an increase in adult learners seeking to transition into new careers, addressing workforce gaps.
- **Program Costs:** High demand, high need programs (e.g., semiconductor, dental, welding) require expensive equipment, and often have smaller cohorts.
- **Plans to Address Challenges:** Despite optimism, PCC must plan accordingly, be nimble, and able to shift. It needs to follow trends, identify workforce gaps, and set itself up to fill those gaps.

**Question from Chair Quiroz:** The college adopted a 2020-2025 Strategic Plan in 2020. Now that we are in the final year of the plan, what can you tell us about progress made on objectives in the plan? Are there any achieved goals you are particularly proud of?

Answer by Kurt Simonds, VP for Strategy Policy, Integrated Planning:

- Four high-priority initiatives with major community impact from the 2020-2025 strategic plan:
  - Bold Innovative Growth (BIG program): Expanded and improved access and quality of online learning. Involved curriculum developers, faculty training, and a student help desk. This was timely with the pandemic's start and was a successful effort.
  - Comprehensive Transition Plan for Accessibility: Created opportunities to remove physical and online barriers for students with disabilities and embedded universal design thinking into spaces and online activities.
  - Opportunity Centers: Invested in centers at 42nd Avenue and Willow Creek, making them hubs for training and job placement, reaching underserved and high-need populations.
  - Credit and Noncredit Integration: Enabled seamless pathways for students to move from noncredit to credit programs, increasing credential attainment incrementally.
- All four efforts were related to outreach, retention, and student success.

**Follow-up Question from Chair Quiroz:** And as a follow up, what's the plan for any strategic plan projects currently in process – when do you anticipate the remaining projects will be complete?

Answer by Simonds:

- Two projects from the previous strategic plan rolled into the 2025-2028 strategic plan for greater implementation:
  - New Student Onboarding: Building systems to make it easier for students to access courses and enroll.
  - Strategic Course Scheduling: Creating an annual class schedule based on data analysis, allowing students to plan an entire year of courses instead of term-to-term.

**Follow-up Question from Chair Quiroz:** How have students and the larger community been involved in that? In the development of the new goals and the new strategic plan?

Answer by Simonds:

- Involvement began about 18 months prior with focus groups and feedback sessions.
- Conducted 20 "deep dive" conversations with faculty, staff, and students, with 24 specifically involving students.
- The student leadership team facilitated student forums to provide context and background for student input.
- An online survey with the same questions was available for additional input.
- Total participation: 769 faculty and staff, and 649 students provided input.

**Question from Commissioner Burton:** We've read about the college's Fiscal Sustainability Framework and Action Plan you started last year. For the planned cuts in the current biennium to personnel services, how many faculty positions and what academic/degree programs are potentially affected? And what are the on the ground impacts to students that we can expect to see?

Answer by Dr. Jennifer Ernst, VP of Academic Affairs:

- No faculty positions have been cut or recommended for cuts at this time.
- Some "behind the scenes" positions have been eliminated and services moved (e.g., career services position moved to the full career services area, some online services moved).
- Program Review Process:
  - All 95 programs were reviewed using a data-informed database process.
  - 14 programs underwent a full self-study with specific questions.
- Recommendations (currently in appeal process, so may be reconsidered):
  - Sunsetting two programs and one discipline:
    - Gerontology Degree: Sunsetting this Career and Technical Education (CTE) degree because it's unable to link to jobs in the community that require an associate's degree (jobs typically require high school diploma or higher degree).
      - Impact: The discipline is still considered important; classes will be maintained within the sociology and psychology departments. PCC is exploring articulation agreements and encouraging other programs (like nursing) to embed these classes as electives.
    - Music and Sonic Arts Degree: Sunsetting this CTE degree as it's unable to link directly to community jobs that require this degree level (jobs typically require high school diploma or higher degree).
      - Impact: Will undergo a DACUM process (bringing in employers and transfer institutions to reverse engineer skills needed for programs). The goal is to reconfigure the degree (not as a CTE degree) potentially by integrating it with the classical music program, as the skills themselves are useful.
    - Russian Discipline (World Languages): Faculty determined that sunsetting Russian would allow for better investment in other world languages and would not interfere with student transfer opportunities.
  - Cost Savings: Anticipated primarily from reducing sections taught by part-time faculty. Additional savings from not monitoring or conducting program reviews/learning assessments for sunsetted degree programs as part of accreditation.
- The program sustainability evaluation was conducted in concert with the fiscal sustainability action plan, ensuring alignment. Dina Farrell confirmed other reductions not related to faculty and programs.

**Follow-up Question from Commissioner Burton:** I'm curious what your board chair said about the changing demographic of the student body. You have more adult aged people coming in. What are they looking for as far as advancing their education? Are there particular disciplines or programs that they're leaning towards?

Answer by Dr. Ernst:

- Statistically, adult learners are fairly spread out across the college.
- However, there are upticks in CTE programs, such as welding and healthcare.
- Overall enrollment is increasing, but this cannot be attributed to a specific demographic.

**Follow-up Question from Commissioner Burton:** Have you seen a trend of individuals who left the program between ages 18 to 25 now returning as adults, rather than continuing their education at that earlier stage?

Answer by Dr. Ernst:

- PCC is looking into this trend, but it would require extensive research into students' prior credit history, and they do not currently have statistics on it.

**Question from Commissioner Moore:** All the districts we meet with are struggling with uncertainty related to state and federal funds. Tell us about your approach – are you assuming any cuts in federally funded areas in next year's budget? And if so, what services will be impacted?

Answer by Dr. Ernst:

- Approach to Uncertainty: PCC formed a Federal Response Task Force to closely monitor the budgeting situation.
- The task force determined the impact of losing every federal grant.
- Impact of Federal Cuts: Primarily affects support services to students.
- Engagement: Engaged the PCC foundation in this work.
- Monitoring: Closely monitoring changes from the Budget Office Management letter and examining the House of Representatives markup.
- Pell Grants: Changes around Pell Grants are anticipated to be very challenging for students to maintain eligibility, potentially leading to a loss of revenue.
- Mitigation: The best approach is to stay highly informed and mitigate damage to students.
- On-the-ground Impacts: If all cuts occur, support services will look different for students, and faculty, who have strong relationships with students, will need to help fill some of these gaps.
- Federal Funding Ballpark: PCC currently receives about \$15 million in federal grants, impacting 210 employees (mostly full-time).
- Perkins Grant Funding: Currently, there is no discussion of changing Perkins grant funding, which PCC relies on for purchasing equipment for programs, which is fortunate.

**Follow-up Question from Commissioner Moore:** Have you given thought to how a recession might impact the school? Would the college benefit with enrollment increases? Or, on the other hand, would it suffer more from cuts in revenue?

Answer by Dr. Jennifer Dr. Ernst:

- Historically, colleges have benefited from enrollment increases during recessions, which offset state revenue cuts.
- However, Covid has changed some of those statistics, so PCC must monitor carefully.
- PCC's review of all 95 programs this year was partly to prepare for potentially making further decisions to "trim down" programming to meet demand while fulfilling fiduciary responsibilities.

**Follow-up Question from Commissioner Moore:** So the flip side is, suppose things are better than we think, would you be in a position to scale up programs and services if you do encounter increased demand?

Answer by Dr. Jennifer Dr. Ernst:

- Yes, PCC has looked at this.
- Part of the program review process is identifying areas for growth.
- PCC uses a data tool called Gray DI (editor note: Gray Decision Intelligence, program evaluation software for higher education) to analyze market saturation, job opportunities, and living wages to inform investment decisions.

- They are excited to expand programs like nursing, which offers a sustainable living wage and meets a community need.
- Having reviewed all programs, PCC now has a clear sense of where to invest and grow.

**Question From Chair Quiroz:** We've talked about academic programs and how they may be impacted by enrollment changes, as well as the growing needs of students and the uncertainty around social services. How are you approaching the balance between aligning programs academically and ensuring wraparound support for students? Given that student needs are higher than ever—and may increase further if we enter a recession, as some believe Oregon already has—how are you planning on both fronts? Can you speak to how those discussions are unfolding?

Answer by Dr. Ernst:

- Stated PCC is "on the forefront of basic needs" and deferred to Vicki Lopez Sanchez.

Answer by Vicki Lopez Sanchez, Interim VP of Student Affairs:

- **Programs at Risk:** Federal cuts would impact cohort-based programs like the High School Equivalency Program, College Assistant Migrant Program, and TRIO program (for first-generation, low-income students). These programs operate with a holistic model, providing coaching and tutoring.
- **Mitigation Strategy:** If these programs are cut, students would be blended into general student support services available across the college.
- **Basic Needs Support:** PCC has applied for additional grants for basic needs support (currently grant-based).
- **Partnerships:** PCC focuses on providing emergency need and support, but it's not sustainable for the college to be the sole regular resource. They partner with the community and organizations like the Oregon Food Bank to ensure students utilize broader resources alongside PCC's offerings. These partnerships are essential.

**Question From Chair Quiroz:** When we met with you two years ago, you had mentioned the college was working on an Enrollment Management Plan. We assume this plan is now in the implementation phase, is that correct? What outcomes have you seen so far as a result of this plan? What aspects have been most successful?

Answer by Ryan Clark, Associate VP for Enrollment Management and Strategy:

- **Status:** Yes, the plan is in its implementation phase, and success has been seen.
- **Enrollment Trends:** Enrollment is on an increase year-over-year and term-over-term, a new trend after over a decade of significant declines that impacted the college's budget.
- **Retention:** Fall-to-fall retention numbers are up 2% year-over-year.
- **Student Numbers:** Averaged about 25,000 students per term last year (fall, winter, spring), and enrollment is up to about 27,000 students per term this year. Anticipating about 4% growth next year. Much of this stems from enrollment management efforts.
- **Key Aspects and Successes:**
  - **Understanding Data:** Commissioned studies to understand the service district, including the impact of declining birth rates and high school graduates. Good news: expected decrease in PCC's service district is minimal compared to other regions like the Northeast.
- **Serving Direct from High School Students:**
  - **Dual Credit:** Continued investment in college instruction in high schools to build a college-going culture. Hired an additional dual credit coordinator (now 3 staff). Seen an 8%

- increase in dual credit this year. Overhauled the application process for easier student access.
- Innovative Programming: Bringing new student orientation to largest feeder high schools (instead of students coming to campus) to increase access.
- Beaverton School District Partnership: Piloting direct admission for all Beaverton High School seniors (removing an application barrier). First cohort graduates this spring.
- Serving the Adult Market:
  - Data shows significant potential, especially with adults who have "some college and no degree". Main driver for these students is improved socioeconomic outcomes, strongly connecting to CTE programs.
  - Augmented Staffing: Hired dedicated recruiters (recruiting the third one) for their six academic and career pathways. These "pathways" recruiters partner with employers for more targeted conversations.
  - Online Learning: Investments from the previous strategic plan (specifically "Bold Innovative Growth") in online learning bolster support for the adult student market, despite potential conflict with hands-on CTE programs.

**Follow-up Question From Chair Quiroz:** We see tuition and fee increases in this budget - based on past increases, do you expect to see any impacts on enrollment?

Answer by Clark:

- Students are price-sensitive, but PCC does an extensive job involving students in the tuition and fee setting conversation. The Student Senate was intimately involved and endorsed/recommended the tuition increases.
- PCC's pricing is competitive within the market, especially compared to other community colleges in the unique commuting distance situation (Clackamas, Mount Hood, Clark).
- Annualized tuition and fees comparisons:
  - Clackamas Community College: \$6,525
  - Mount Hood Community College: \$6,773
  - Chemeketa Community College: \$6,570
  - Portland Community College: \$6,514
  - Portland State University (4-year public, for context): ~\$10,000
- PCC is just over half the cost of a 4-year program.

**Follow-up Question from Vice Chair Donahue:** Given the shifting funding status of the Oregon Promise program, how is that impacting your enrollment? And with tuition increases and other changes, how does that uncertainty affect your enrollment forecasting and the level of risk you're having to account for?

Answer by Ryan Clark:

- The shifting funding status of programs like Oregon Promise introduces risk to enrollment forecasts.
- PCC is fortunate to have alternative funding sources to help students and reviews each student's funding situation individually.
- However, shifts in eligibility or questions about program existence create an "uphill battle" for PCC to overcome in the market.

**Follow-up Question from Chair Quiroz:** What are the most common dual credit programs that students are taking? What's driving that kind of 8% increase?

Answer by Ryan Clark:

- The increases in dual credit are "all over the board," not specific to one discipline.
- The primary driver is PCC's ability to expand its reach and the strong appetite for dual credit partnerships within the K-12 system, limited primarily by available resources to onboard and support more schools and instructors.

**Question from Vice Chair Donahue:** In recent years, PCC has looked for ways to support affordable housing initiatives through strategic partnerships, including projects at the southeast campus, Rock Creek Campus, Sylvania Campus, and Cascade campus. Can you share the current status of these projects? How many affordable housing units are online or will be coming online in the next budget cycle? For units that are open or nearing completion, do you know how many students will be living in the units?

Answer by Rebecca Ocken, Director of Planning and Capital Construction:

- Current Projects: PCC is currently piloting two projects: one at the Opportunity Center on 42nd Avenue and the second at the Southeast campus.
- Arrangement: PCC has partnered with housing partners who will own, operate, develop, maintain, and facilitate the buildings. PCC provides a 99-year ground lease at a nominal rate.
- Opportunity Center (Oc. 42) Project:
  - Partner: Home Forward.
    - Units: 84 affordable units, ranging from studios to 3-bedrooms.
  - Additional Partnership: Native American Youth and Family Center will offer an early learning center for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.
  - Cost: \$51 million project.
  - Completion: Units are expected to be online this summer.
- Southeast Campus Project:
  - Partner: Just Future.
  - Units: 124 studio to 3-bedroom units, including a community room, play area, exterior courtyard, and on-site parking.
  - Cost: \$58 million project.
  - Completion: Units are expected to be online late 2026, early 2027.
- Student Residency: These units are not designated for students and are not considered dorm housing. This is because PCC students are not consistently enrolled, and tying unit availability to enrollment was avoided. The hope is that they will serve future students who may live in these units and readily access PCC programs.

**Follow-up Question from Commissioner Burton:** Are these the southeast campus and the opportunity center are these units being built on land adjacent to those facilities?

Answer by Rebecca Ocken:

- Yes, these are built on college property, within the campus boundary.
- Opportunity Center: Leased just over an acre of land immediately adjacent to PCC's 50,000 square foot building.
- Southeast Campus: Built on a former, underutilized parking lot along 70th and Division (initially misidentified as 82nd Avenue).
- It was confirmed that no bond funds were used for the housing projects themselves, only for the non-housing buildings. A groundbreaking ceremony for the Southeast campus project occurred that day.



## Closing Remarks and Certification

Chair Quiroz concluded the discussion, thanking everyone for their forthrightness and acknowledging the "deep bench" of PCC staff for addressing all details and follow-ups.

Stated that she would close the hearing and open a regular business meeting of the TSCC Commissioners.

Commissioner Burton expressed curiosity about PCC's experience with the two-year budget process, especially in education, which faces revenue and programming challenges. He expressed that he is an advocate for two-year budgeting, having found it productive for staff and board to focus on other things in the off-year.

Dina Farrell described the two-year budget process as having mixed benefits. It was new to her six years prior, having previously experienced annual budgeting in government.

- Supplemental Budget Process: This is an important piece, allowing PCC to "true up" costs, acknowledge significant revenue changes, and make adjustments through a board process.
- Time Savings: There's not a lot of savings in terms of internal time and effort because the Budget Office still has many adjustments throughout the year. While annual budgeting involves retooling within six months, the two-year cycle aligns with state funding.
- Most Valuable Aspect: It allows for longer-term planning, which is considered the most valuable part.

Executive Director Allegra Wilhite expressed her appreciation for PCC staff and her their ongoing relationship with TSCC.

- Findings of the Review: The TSCC found the estimates to be reasonable for the purposes stated, and in substantial compliance with budget law.
- Recommendations: TSCC staff suggested no recommendations or objections to the fiscal year 2025-2027 approved budget.

Chair Quiroz motioned to authorize the commission to sign the certification letter as recommended. The motion was moved by Commissioner Moore and seconded by Commissioner Burton and approved unanimously by all the commissioners present.

- Result: The PCC budget was certified by the TSCC. Allegra Wilhite would follow up with a letter shortly.

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