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community college

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## Department and Program Review Response Letter Forest Resources Technology

June 6, 2025

Dear Rebecca, Ron, and Brett:

Thank you for taking part in Department & Program Review (DPR) this year. The DPR process reveals critical connections that link your strengths, needs, values, priorities, and plans to those of the College. Further, it supports our commitment to innovation through continual improvement. We commend your dedication to empowering our students, engaging our communities, and supporting our values. This response to your report is based on what we see as your successes, what you and we identified as challenges, and guidance on how to proceed with the goals and needs you have described.

### Highlights of Successes and Kudos

The Forest Resources Technology (hereafter called Forestry) program continues to excel in preparing transfer students for advanced studies and ensuring they are workforce-ready. Graduates consistently display strong technical skills in areas such as field-based learning, plant and wildlife identification, forest measurement, navigation, and silviculture.

Employers frequently note that our graduates are highly prepared, often more so than their peers from other institutions. Graduates are securing positions with federal and state agencies, private forestry firms, and conservation organizations, which reinforces the program's alignment with industry needs.

Faculty and students are actively engaged in professional organizations like the Society of American Foresters (SAF), attending industry events and conferences. These experiences expand networking opportunities, foster industry connections, and contribute to both student success and the program's visibility.

### Challenges

Although the program has high transfer rates, there is concern that many students are not completing their degrees before transferring. We raised this concern in our response meeting, and you provided some useful perspective: Our program has near 100% alignment with OSU/OSU-C. Students do not always take full loads and sometimes our faculty advise them to transfer when they are ready instead of at completion in order to make the most of their time. A couple of ideas arose from this conversation: is there a way to track transfers as a success for the program? Also, could we adjust the technology curriculum to serve technology as well as transfer?

Regarding enrollment, national pressures outside of the program's control will make recruitment and enrollment challenging in the next few years, yet forestry will remain a needed profession. Various strategies we discussed in our response meeting were to encourage students to go to school at this time and prepare for an expansion in the job market later and to focus on adults returning to school. Maintaining our marketing efforts will help us remain visible in the community.

The Forestry Education Workshop (building) remains a critical, unmet need. This facility would provide essential training in chainsaw use, tool maintenance, and woodworking. Despite developing detailed plans and garnering community support, the project has not been prioritized by COCC. Continued advocacy, fundraising, and coordination with leadership could help bring this project to fruition. You have indicated that the needs are not complex: a pole barn-like building with work benches and a non-freeze hydrant are some of needs. You have indicated a willingness to help with construction, which we appreciate, but we would defer to Campus Services for guidance on how to proceed with construction.

Modernizing mapping technology is identified as a critical resource need. The program needs to invest in updated mapping and navigation equipment to align student training with current industry standards, enhancing employability. This year's capital request for tablets to replace paper maps was not successful, but continue working with your dean in order to identify sources such as Perkins funding. It may also be that students need to provide their own equipment, and COCC could have a few tools for those who can't afford their own.

## Needs and Goals

### Increasing enrollment in FRT and transfer-track natural resource programs

Faculty are actively engaged in outreach efforts with local high schools and industry partners, but additional collaboration with COCC's Public Relations and Media programs could amplify these efforts. As Guided Pathways work continues to develop, you may want to explore the creation of marketing materials for the educational pathway.

### Construct the Forestry Education Workshop

Creating a space in which Forestry students and faculty can work on campus remains a high-priority initiative, given the importance of hands-on training in chainsaw operation, tool maintenance, and lab work. Continued advocacy for the project, along with targeted fundraising efforts and alignment with institutional priorities, will be essential to moving this project forward. Continue working with your dean and the COCC Foundation to create a plan and develop funding

### Recruiting new faculty

This year two of your long-time faculty will retire, so finding new faculty is a priority. The faculty search is happening now with plans to onboard two full time instructors for the 2025-2026 academic year. New hires present an opportunity to introduce fresh perspectives and potentially new program directions that align with emerging trends in forestry and natural resource management.

### Modernizing mapping and navigation technology

As noted above, today's foresters use tablets with maps for much of the work they do in the field, while our students are using paper maps. Updating our technology is a priority, particularly in mapping and navigation courses. Acquiring updated equipment will not only improve the quality of training but also align student skills with industry expectations.

### Continue evaluating and submitting courses for the Discipline Studies Science and Science Lab designation

To move forward with this goal, work with your dean on ideas for developing courses.

## Conclusion

Thank you for your ongoing dedication to student readiness. Together, we can build on our achievements, address the challenges ahead, and meet the evolving needs of our students. If you have any questions or need

further clarification, please reach out. We look forward to working collaboratively to enhance the quality and impact of the Forest Technology Program.

Sincerely yours,



Annemarie E. Hamlin  
Vice President of Academic Affairs



Helen Wiersma-Koch  
Instructional Dean



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