

LEGACIES

Central Oregon Community College Foundation Magazine | 2025

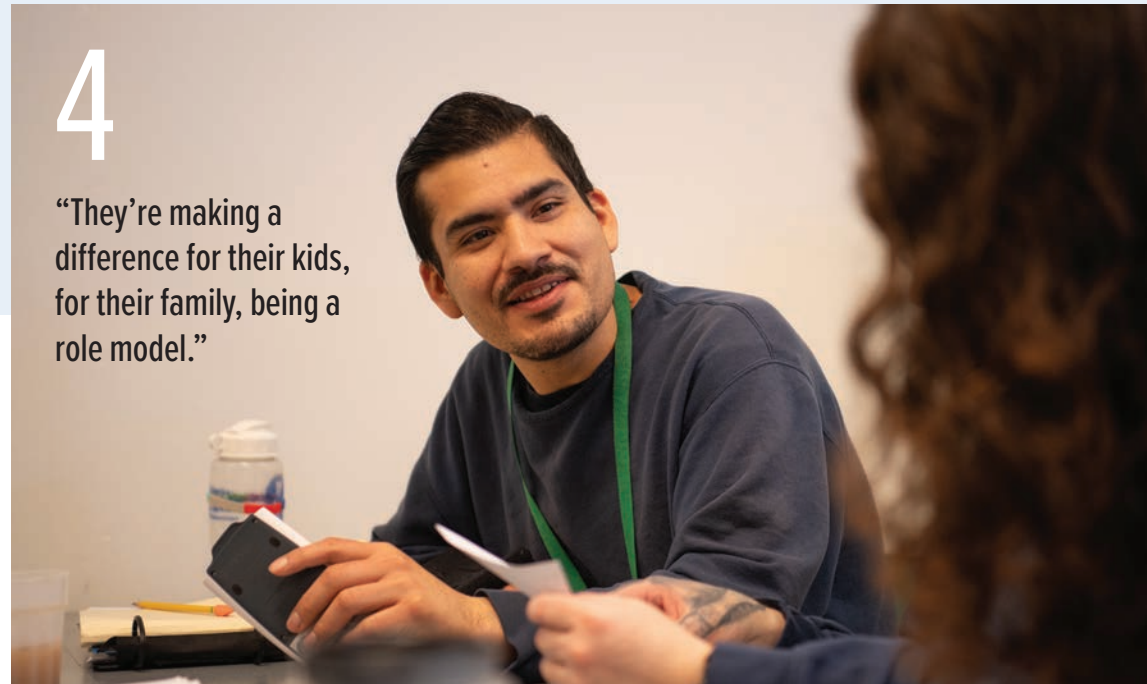


**Learning
a New Way**

The Pereira Era
For Dr. Greg Pereira, the
College's new president,
connection and innovation
go hand in hand

**Impact of
Giving Report**

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On the cover: Dr. Greg Pereira gets to know a couple of Bobcats.

front, back and inside covers: Rosie Day

left: Opsis Architecture, middle: Rosie Day,
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LEGACIES

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Letter From the President

Hello Foundation friends,

What an incredible honor it is to be part of such a remarkable institution! Since joining COCC in July, I've been inspired by how deeply this community values its college — and how much of COCC's success is driven by passionate supporters like you. Together, Central Oregon and COCC have built something truly special.

At the College's 75th anniversary celebration in May, I had the joy of meeting Bobcats past and present, sharing stories and taking a stroll through our vibrant "memory lane" exhibits. I even squeezed into a photo booth with a few of COCC's former presidents — a fun and fitting moment! The event was a moving tribute to our shared history, and a reminder that COCC is shaped not just by its legacy, but by the heart and dedication of the people who make it thrive. I returned to Arizona (before moving to Bend with my family) feeling even more connected to this community and our mission.

Fall term is now upon us — a time filled with fresh energy and opportunity. We're continuing to explore new ways to support our students, strengthen lives and connect with our community.

Despite some challenges in federal funding earlier this year, we're thrilled to be moving forward with our Madras expansion, having received over \$5 million in private funds through the "Growing Together" campaign to date. Our community continues to rise to the moment — from \$100 commemorative brick donations to transformative major gifts, your support keeps our mission moving forward.

Thank you for being such a vital part of what we do. Your belief in the power of education makes all the difference.

Warmly,



Greg Pereira, COCC President

P.S. I look forward to connecting with you in person. Until then, please feel free to reach out to me at gpereira@cocc.edu. I'd love to hear from you.



COCC's 75th Anniversary Celebration
COCC Presidents past and present: Greg Pereira, Laurie Chestley,
Shirley I. Metcalf, James Middleton, Robert Barber

📷 Rosie Day

CREATING LASTING CHANGE

Retired Bend physicians Dr. Durlin Hickok
and Dr. Carol Wallace share why they're
supporting the "Growing Together" campaign

By Wendy Patton,
Assistant Director, COCC Foundation



When Dr. Durlin Hickok and Dr. Carol Wallace talk about their passion for COCC and the "Growing Together" campaign in Madras, one word rises to the top — community. "COCC is important to us because we care about our community." Their recent pledge to support the Madras expansion reflects a deep belief in the power of education, access to care and investing in the next generation. Here, they reflect on why philanthropy matters to them, what inspired their gift, and how they see the impact of this project reaching far beyond the classroom.



📷 left: Rosie Day
right: Submitted photo

GROWING LOCAL OPPORTUNITY

As retired physicians, Dr. Durlin Hickok and Dr. Carol Wallace bring a lifetime of experience in health care to their support of the Madras expansion. They understand firsthand the vital role health care workers play in creating healthier communities. "Rather than giving back to the institutions where we trained, we've made a deliberate choice to invest in Central Oregon — the place we call home — by supporting COCC and its mission to grow local opportunity and care."

GETTING INVOLVED WITH THE COCC FOUNDATION

A connection to the Foundation began with a shared commitment to community health. Through their professional experiences working with underserved populations, they witnessed the critical role community health workers play in sustaining the well-being of communities. When they learned that COCC was developing a dedicated program for community health workers, they saw an opportunity to make a meaningful impact locally. Introduced to the Foundation's work, they were inspired by the chance to support scholarships for future health care professionals — by creating an endowment in 2022 — and have remained actively involved ever since.

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO SUPPORT "GROWING TOGETHER"

"The Madras expansion will have a significant impact on Jefferson County. We believe access to education is one of the most effective ways to reach a diverse population and create lasting change." They see the expansion as a crucial stepping stone — for students just beginning their college journey, as well as those returning to advance their careers and better serve their communities.

WHAT DOES GIVING BACK MEAN TO YOU?

"For us, it's about creating opportunities. We believe in supporting the systems — like education and health care — that help people build better lives." Their philanthropy is guided by a deep sense of responsibility and gratitude, and a desire to leave a legacy of care, access and empowerment in Central Oregon.

Learn more about the life-changing impact of "Growing Together" at cocc.edu/growingtogether.



LEARNING A NEW WAY

By Mark Russell Johnson

At Deer Ridge Correctional Institution, a new associate degree program — sustained by Pell Grants and COCC Foundation scholarships — is part of a robust reform-with-education mission



Getting into the headspace of a mock job interview, three students at the back of a morning “Career Planning” class are engaging in an exercise of conveying job strengths to one another. Seated in the middle, Jordan is role-playing the part of employer, drawing out some decisive answers from his classmates.

Their replies are earnest, mixed with some nervous-energy chuckles. The students mention strengths like being “detail-oriented,” “working as a team” and “enjoying a fast-paced environment.” When it’s his turn, Jordan, a former concrete worker and cook, quickly lists “working under pressure, removing my personal (needs) to get the job done and being investigative, analytical.” He seems attuned to the task, rising to the make-believe moment.

Just behind the students, a high window — overlaid with vertical steel bars — frames a cloudless late-May morning taking shape at Deer Ridge Correctional Institution. It’s a stark reminder of the setting.

But the space otherwise feels like an average COCC classroom: rows of desks, overstuffed notebooks, a whiteboard jotted with thoughts. On the walls, COCC’s “Outside of Expected” outdoorsy-themed posters, a world map and several College pennants imbue the room with purpose. The lid of a travel mug proudly wears a COCC “First Generation” decal.

The small class is the vanguard of a new educational opportunity taking shape at the minimum-security prison five miles east of Madras. Of the roughly 1,100 adults in custody that are currently (as of this writing) housed at Deer Ridge, 16 are enrolled in the College’s associate degree program, launched in the spring term of 2024, that has become part of a broader COCC education focus at the facility. Sixteen is actually the cap — 40 applied for the first term, and the interest has snowballed since.

“These students are motivated, pragmatic and appreciative for the opportunity,” says Emma Chaput, a Biology professor with the College since 2011, who has spearheaded the program. “It’s an opportunity for these people to redefine themselves.” Chaput’s tenure at COCC earned her a sabbatical which she used, in part, to attend a two-week summer residency in 2022 at Bard College’s Prison Initiative in rural New York. She came away inspired, hoping to implement a degree-based prison education program.

When Congress lifted a 26-year ban on Pell Grants for incarcerated individuals in 2023, and with accreditation secured later that year for COCC’s fledgling prison degree program, Chaput was one of the first in the country to apply for, and the second in the country to receive, the national grant certification. Most students are able to receive Pell support. For those that are not, like Jordan, the Foundation has stepped in with pilot scholarship funding.

SILVER LININGS

A number of faculty members have eagerly volunteered to teach at Deer Ridge since the program’s launch, bringing not just core knowledge in subjects like History, Biology, Communication and Math, but also inspiration, and validation, for students. Each term, three different classes are offered; faculty undergo Oregon Department of Corrections training to join the roster.

On class days, instructors pass through multiple security checkpoints and wear a radio at all times. There’s a dress code — to avoid blending in, denim and blue clothing are banned. Head counts

regularly, and sometimes randomly, cleave the class time. Smartphones must always be left in instructors’ vehicles.

For those in custody, that same absence of personal devices is something that can thwart the Pell Grant application process, preventing access to prior accounts, passwords, tax records, all things that are needed to apply for FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid), a precursor to requesting Pell aid. Seeing an immediate need, the Foundation worked with Chaput and the College’s Financial Aid office early last year to begin offering some \$10,000 in scholarship support from the Robert and Margaret Turner Endowment. Three students are presently receiving funds.

The faculty find a focused, attentive group of students — Chaput hears that feedback again and again. The program has even benefitted from collaborators afar, such as a University of California-Berkeley postdoc researcher, one of several cold-call contacts Chaput has made, who reformatted an online lab related to the university’s Museum of Paleontology.



COCC’s Deer Ridge Prison Education Program team.

“

These students are motivated, pragmatic and appreciative for the opportunity,” says Emma Chaput, a Biology professor with the College since 2011, who has spearheaded the program.



The practicality of teaching in a locked-down environment can certainly require rethinking some demos and lessons, as not all learning materials are permitted inside. But there are computer labs and flat-screen TVs for video calls with colleagues, plus a well-stocked library. Even the hallways of the “schoolhouse” and other workspaces conjure a learning atmosphere — talented incarcerated artists have filled open walls with large murals of Einstein, Yoda (and his fabled quote, “Do, or do not, there is no try”) and an incredible rendering of COCC’s snarling Bobcat. At its essence, the site functions as a campus.

Members of the program will be able to earn an Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer degree in roughly two years behind bars. Some have earned college credits prior to imprisonment and just need a term or two to finish. That general timeframe syncs well

with a minimum-security prison, where shorter sentences, or the final part of a longer sentence, are served.

“The average stay is one to five years,” says Jay Sklenar, director of education at Deer Ridge, who has helped Chaput roll out the program. A former middle school math teacher, Sklenar oversees the facility’s long-running education program, home to a welding school and a partnership with WorkSource Oregon that brings resume services and job-search support. Perhaps the largest piece of COCC’s prison-based programming, in operation since 2008, is its GED test prep.

“We have 7.1% of the (GED) students in the state and 14% of the grads,” beams Sklenar, knowing that some of those completers — 51 this past year — can now immediately apply to pursue a college degree. That’s been the path of Andrew. He soared through his GED attainment but still had over three years to serve. Soon, he was an enrolled college student, nurturing an interest in creative writing and getting work published in a new COCC student literary magazine called “The Thread.” His dedication earned him the honor of being Deer Ridge’s GED graduate speaker at the ceremony in May. His theme: “silver linings.”

RUNNING TOWARD SOMETHING

Both inside and outside prison, countless students have found a fresh start at COCC. They include Bruce Stewart, who, while serving time at Deer Ridge, received the College’s Walter G. Coombs Distinguished Achievement Award in 2018. It’s presented each COCC commencement to the one-year certificate recipient — in this case, for Welding — who has the highest scholastic average with the most credits. Nancy Pance, unable to get hired anywhere after her time in prison, decided to earn a Business degree at COCC in 2013. She went on to found Opportunity Oregon, a Springfield-based firm that partners with the Oregon Department of Corrections and helps formerly incarcerated people find jobs.

As a career success coach at COCC, Malissa Silacci knows something about that mission. Silacci assists in administering the SNAP Training and Employment Program, or STEP, that serves low-income students receiving federal SNAP aid. “We support a diverse group of learners with a wide range of experiences and goals,” she shares. A number of those students, she adds, do have a record; currently, it’s about 10. While some occupational paths aren’t feasible for convicted felons —

many health care fields, for instance, come with strict licensure policies — she opens her students’ eyes to their potential in areas like Manufacturing, Graphic Design, Computer Information Systems and Addiction Studies.

That last one is a fit for many who have experienced their own struggles. When he was released from Deer Ridge last October, Ken was starting over — again. It was his third time doing time, having dealt with a crippling addiction. Now he’s helping others heal. “I became certified as a recovery mentor in December,” he says proudly, and clearly grateful.

Instrumental to this new chapter: the eight college credits Ken earned behind bars. Combined with the 84 credits he’d already earned, begun long ago, his associate degree suddenly felt within reach. “I don’t know if I would have done it without those classes in prison,” he shares. “Guys have goals. That’s really important when you’re in there.”

While his previous attempts at sobriety were focused solely on avoidance, this time it’s a very different approach: “I’m running toward something,” he says resolutely. Prior to COCC’s commencement in June, the

former partner of Ken’s deceased son reached out unexpectedly — she’d like to come to the ceremony, she explained, and bring his granddaughter.

LEARNING TOGETHER

Last year, 1.8 million people were incarcerated across the U.S., reports the Vera Institute of Justice. And every day, more than 1,000 adults in custody are being released from state and federal prisons, suddenly rejoining society. Some are able to persist on the outside; some aren’t.

But recidivism rates plummet greatly when education is part of the equation. The U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics released a report in 2018 that looked at a nine-year window of data and found that some 68% of formerly incarcerated people were arrested within three years. Within six years, that number jumped to 79%. Within nine, it was 83%.

However, if an adult in custody earns their GED while incarcerated that likelihood drops to 50%, reveals an analysis by the RAND Corporation, a global research institute. If they earn an associate degree, it falls to 13.7%.

Sara Henson, professor of Human Development, has taught at Deer Ridge for two terms and sees the intrinsic benefits up close. “They’re

making a difference for their kids, for their family, being a role model,” she says. And she also hears from those in custody about “repaying society” and how an education can help them do that. “We’re here to learn together,” she adds.

When COCC was invited in 2024 to become a member of the national Bard Prison Initiative Consortium for Liberal Arts in Prison — the first community college in the U.S. to be invited to join this community of practice — it joined prestigious partners like Yale, Boston College and Grinnell. It’s a seat at the table in helping other colleges and universities make college-in-prison a reality. Pell grants will greatly impact that work. So will having input from program pioneers.

At COCC, Chaput is hoping to grow what she started, expand the cohort and bring in a coordinator and maybe someone who can focus on faculty recruitment. “There are many lenses through which we can explore why this is important, from reducing recidivism to increasing public safety to decreasing public funds spent on incarceration,” she says. “For me, the most resonant lens is education equity and access — it’s a foundational principle of COCC’s.”



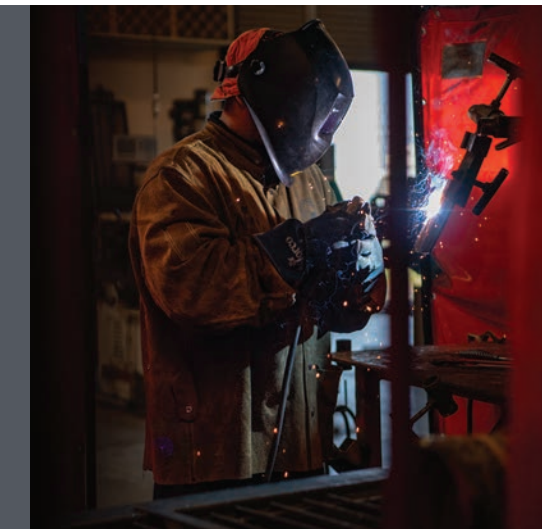
Professor Sara Henson



Jordan

“

I don’t know if I would have done it without those classes in prison,” he shares. “Guys have goals. That’s really important when you’re in there.”





THE PEREIRA ERA

For Dr. Greg Pereira, the College's new president, connection and innovation go hand in hand

By Mark Russell Johnson

Placed like a good luck charm on his water bottle, a COCC sticker was clearly evident when Dr. Greg Pereira took the stage on the Bend campus this past January for one of the final — and most interactive — legs of his interview process. It was the meet-and-greet presentation with faculty and staff, and Pereira was all-in on becoming a Bobcat.

The candidate had done his homework, revealing to the audience a deep-dive grasp of the College's mission and its wide-ranging focuses — from workforce and community collaborations to first-generation student fluency. He handled varied questions lobbed by staffers with warmth, ease and a steady supply of contagious energy. It made a strong impression.

During the months-long interview process, that same impression formed for those tasked with selecting the College's newest leader. Soon, Pereira would receive the offer to become the seventh president in COCC's storied 75-year history. The Pereira Era (yes, a rhyming device) had begun.

In a way, Pereira has long connected with COCC. Though he's spent the past 15 years in Arizona, most of it as an administrator and instructor with Tempe-based Rio Salado College, he grew up in Clackamas, where a number of his peers from Rex Putnam High School departed for COCC after graduation. The place had a reputation, he recalls. One of his cousins graduated from COCC; his uncle attended the College in the '70s. For his own higher learning journey, Pereira moved to Southern California, but he'd sampled the spirit and setting of Central Oregon in visits to family over the years. It felt like a place he wanted to return to.



COCC is different — it's always been different," he says. He liked the College's history of being an innovator, of being a community college that offered, for instance, a residence hall and a holistic approach to education.

INNOVATION AS A SYSTEM

Making a move was actually not on Pereira's mind when a recruiter contacted him last fall. "I was not looking for another job," he admits, having settled into a meaningful role as vice president for student affairs at Rio Salado, serving a student population of some 40,000. The fact that it was COCC got his attention.

"COCC is different — it's always been different," he says. He liked the College's history of being an innovator, of being a community college that offered, for instance, a residence hall and a holistic approach to education.

Among the recent initiatives that caught Pereira's eye, the unique buildout happening at the Madras campus, combining child care and career-centered programs under one roof — with an emphasis on making health care training more accessible — stood out.

"My mother went back to school at age 40 to become a nurse," he shares. "She was a house-keeper before that." In fact, both of Pereira's parents found a fresh start as older students, lifting the family up from a poverty-level station. His father, an immigrant from Brazil, toiled as a dishwasher for many years before training to become an IV technician. For Pereira, his own role models proved the power of education, and he sees with certain clarity that improving opportunities — like the transformation in Madras — can do a world of good.

Still, attracting students into higher ed is an ongoing and competitive matter. Recent data from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, which gathered spring term enrollment figures from colleges around the country, indicates that while the number of students working toward an associate degree grew by 6.3% from a year ago, it still lags behind the spring term of 2020, just prior to when the pandemic forced most learning into remote mode. What followed was an upending of college enrollment, notably for community colleges.

Higher education is still in a recovery phase, with a troubling datapoint mixed in: The number of students earning college credits but not a complete credential rose by 2.2% between the 2022-23 and 2023-24 academic years, the same research organization found. Colleges are vying for students — and trying to keep them on track.



It's a dual objective that Pereira has recently faced with success. At Rio Salado, he helped orchestrate workforce-connected initiatives that boosted both enrollment and academic persistence. For the 2023-24 year, his college saw a 16% increase in conferred credentials.

"We have to be a college of choice," he says of the work that lies ahead. "I want to push for COCC to stand out. I want to do things that community colleges have never done. That's why I took the job." To get there, he plans to do something he's centered a successful career around: actively listening. In his first 180 days (which began July 1), Pereira aims to have a personal visit with every staffer at the College, not only to hear about their role but to best understand where the College can go. He also plans to head into the community to engage with partners and leaders: "I want to prioritize my time, early on, with building relationships and learning from the experts in our community."

With four campuses that serve a diverse region, COCC provides incredible college access across the heartland of Oregon. It's a unified mission, but being spread over 10,000 square miles with myriad branches of programming — from English as a second language to degrees in the latest computer technology — is not without challenges.

"The College has done a tremendous job of expanding programs, locations and services to meet the needs of Central Oregon," Pereira says. "We now have an exciting opportunity to connect with

our students and ensure that everyone feels that they are part of our community and striving toward a college degree and critical workforce skills. Whether you are an incarcerated student, learning English proficiency or enrolled in traditional college classes, we are all Bobcats.” As COCC begins to integrate a well-established, student-success learning model called Guided Pathways (which Pereira is versed in, having served as project lead at Rio Salado), he aims to empower every single student to see their full potential. It’s long been his beacon.

CLEAR-EYED PURPOSE

While COCC’s new president holds a doctorate in education from Arizona State University and both a Master of Arts in organizational leadership and a Bachelor of Arts in communication studies from Azusa Pacific University, one of his formative educational experiences came from elsewhere. It’s rooted in the four years he spent working as a program manager at the Salvation Army in Los Angeles, beginning in 2006.

It was work that revealed how advocating for people and believing in them is just as important as providing tools and resources. He helped people get jobs, get back on their feet and find clear-eyed purpose. He would later take that immersive understanding with him to Central Arizona Shelter Services, where he was director, and then on to Rio Salado, where he was a staunch advocate for many underserved groups, from tribes to rural communities to prison populations.

“It’s all about the willingness to meet all students where they are,” he explains. “To do innovative and different things that meet the unique needs of all students.” As Pereira’s executive responsibilities and spheres grew at Rio Salado — to include academic affairs, student affairs and community development — along with faculty experience as a business and marketing instructor, he found new ways to reach students.

He would establish a streaming classroom for the local U.S. Air Force base. He’d create, and head, a council for equity and belonging. He helped open an online pantry, together with community partners, that drop-shipped food boxes straight to students in need. Committed to expanding college access, and with nonprofit fundraising experience, he was actively engaged with the Maricopa Community Colleges Foundation, his college’s philanthropic office, a group that raises more than \$13 million annually.

Pereira is excited to direct those energies into a new challenge, of serving COCC students, and all of Central Oregon, with connection and innovation. He believes that the College can do the kind of work that sets a national model.

Together with his wife, Anissa — who has a master’s degree in organizational leadership and has worked as a recruiter and trainer in nonprofit and health care settings — and his sons Grant (13) and Luke (6), COCC’s new president is looking forward to calling Central Oregon home. “We’re excited to be your neighbor, to be part of the community,” Pereira shares. COCC is rather excited too.



Submitted photo

On the “A” Team

This year’s selections for the elite All-Oregon Academic Team all have a Foundation scholarship in common

Three impressive Bobcats were chosen to represent the College on this year’s statewide All-Oregon Academic Team — an honor that recognizes high academic achievement, leadership and service to others, culminating in a mid-April celebratory event in Salem with legislators



Taylor Taliesin

Emma Bloss, of Sisters, has been taking COCC classes over the span of eight years while working at a preschool full time, focused on an Early Childhood Education degree. For ErinRae Cook, an Indigenous Canadian, being a new mom and wanting to

contribute to the wellness of others encouraged her to seek a degree in Massage Therapy. Taylor Taliesin, of Bend, didn’t see a way to best connect with Public Health studies until they received a diagnosis for autism — and it opened up new possibilities.

While each came to COCC with their own unique backstory and future plans, one noteworthy thing connects Bloss, Cook and Taliesin: the endorsement of a Foundation scholarship.

At COCC, as with Oregon’s 16 other community colleges, two to four individuals are selected from a pool of faculty-named nominees every fall term, a number that fluctuates slightly year to year depending on qualifying students. Only a handful of students make the cut across Oregon, usually a little more than 50.

Criteria includes a minimum 3.5 cumulative GPA, at least 54 credits earned and current enrollment status of at least nine credits. Most nominated students are making straight A’s. A faculty committee reviews all nominations and selects the finalists, with an emphasis on students who go above and beyond in their classes or community.

Notably, many on the COCC team in recent years have been Foundation scholarship recipients. In just the past five years, more than half — 53%, in fact — of those selected have been scholarship-backed. It’s an extra

impressive stat when considering that only about 7.4% of all credit-enrolled Bobcats are receiving aid from Foundation donors.

Recent team members with Foundation scholarships have gone on to study in Stanford University’s engineering program and at the University of Oregon’s biobehavioral health lab. Some have earned national scholarships. They’ve given back to their communities.

“It is important to me that every step in my education enables me to help people,” says Taliesin, one of this year’s team members. The dean’s list student is a member of COCC’s Q+ Club (formerly the S2LGBTQIA+ Club), helped start the Umbrella Club for neurodivergent students, and serves as an advisory council board member for the Central Oregon chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

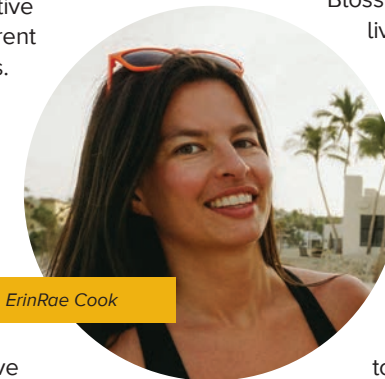
After completing Peer Support Specialist training at COCC, Taliesin became the College’s first completer of a brand-new certificate in Community Health. They earned an associate degree in Human Services, with aspirations to ultimately become a physician-scientist.

Bloss hopes to keep making a difference in the lives of children — on a new level. “My end goal is to transfer to a university to become a child psychologist,” says the educator, regarded as a natural leader by her Early Childhood Education faculty. Cook “blossomed into the person that I have always wanted to be” on her way to achieving a Massage Therapy degree, serving in the Big Brothers Big Sisters program since 2019 — “my ‘Little’ is now 18!” — and working toward a practice focused on spiritual and physical healing. “I have so much gratitude for my time at COCC,” she says.

All three students graduated this past June.



Emma Bloss



ErinRae Cook

left, right: Rosie Day
middle: Submitted photo

Change a Life Today!
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 Learn more at cocc.edu/give

CENTRAL OREGON
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THOUGHTFUL PLANNING

Two former staffers, with great affection for the College, ensured the full effect of their generous wishes

By Mark Russell Johnson

When he received the “State Star” award in 2022, bestowed by Oregon’s office of the national Small Business Development Center network, it was estimated that Jim Wilcox — known for his patience, supportive feedback and resourcefulness — had helped create 600 jobs and facilitated more than \$39 million in loans and capital across the high desert. That legacy unfolded over a nearly 26-year career with the College, beginning in 1997 as a business instructor, and then, for more than two decades, as director of the highly regarded management training program with the Small Business Development Center.



Jim Wilcox advises an entrepreneur

When he retired in 2023, with emeritus status, Wilcox had assisted hundreds of Central Oregon businesses mature from the dream-it phase to a fully realized venture — in ways both pertinent to a small business’s bottom line and to the greater well-being of the region.

“I truly believe working with him, both in class and in our one-on-one sessions, is the reason Dudley’s has been able to weather so many changes downtown over the last six years,” says Tom Beans, owner of Dudley’s Bookshop Café in Bend. “You just knew that he really wanted you to succeed. Our success was his success.”

Beans learned small business principles and persisted in the pandemic economy with loan and grant guidance from Wilcox. He embraced Wilcox’s idea of joining the “1% for the Planet” movement, estimating he’s donated some \$36,000 to local environmental nonprofits from his sales. “I think of how many other businesses Jim coached over the years, and how many of us are able to give back in so many different ways. I can’t imagine what that total number might be, but I bet he would be really pleased to know how big that part of his legacy here in Central Oregon really is.”

Wilcox passed away less than a year after retirement at the age of 67. Yet his effect on both students and his community is carrying on in new and meaningful ways. Wilcox included the Foundation in his estate plans, with an unrestricted bequest that will greatly support scholarships for students in need, endowments, the Small Business Development Center and the campus expansion at Madras. He ensured, with forethought, that COCC would be a central beneficiary of his life’s work.

Of that philanthropic-minded sample group, only 8% reported that they included a bequest or other form of planned gift in their estate planning.



But estate planning isn’t necessarily a high priority for many. In a 2017 issue of Stanford University’s “Stanford Social Innovation Review,” a report explored data around bequests. The authors interviewed 150 Baby Boomers, between the ages of 53 and 71, all of whom had donated to a nonprofit in the prior year. Of that philanthropic-minded sample group, only 8% reported that they included a bequest or other form of planned gift in their estate planning — and 47% didn’t have an estate plan set up at all, citing reasons like “I just don’t want to think about it” and “I don’t know where to start.” Of those who had created an estate plan, hardly any had been asked about charitable giving considerations.

“It can feel daunting to nail down a plan for 30 to 40 years,” says Erin MacDonald, a partner with the Bend office of Best Best & Krieger and a COCC Foundation trustee since 2016. “I encourage people to think of it as an every-four-year process.” It’s an evolving document, she explains, and an ongoing checkup is encouraged; beneficiaries can easily be updated, as can fiduciaries. Trusts can be created to offer funding while the donor is alive or after they’re gone.

With a charity bequest, dollar-for-dollar impact can be assured through strategic choices. “I love to use the IRA as a charitable-giving vehicle — the charity doesn’t have to pay income taxes,” she adds. When it comes to naming specific causes or programs within a nonprofit, MacDonald encourages her clients to reach out to the organization and discuss where gifts might be best directed.

Oregonians in particular are well served by planned giving because the state’s low estate-tax exemption rate — the lowest in the nation, actually — means that estates of \$1 million or more are subject to Oregon’s taxes, which for 2024 were in the range of 10% to 16% (depending on an estate’s total value). Thoughtful planning can help minimize taxable assets.

Most plans start with an initial meeting of an hour or two, move into a homework phase, and then circle back to a follow-up meeting or two. “It can take several months to get a plan in place,” MacDonald says. But there are so many benefits to having a plan, including options like the formation of a living trust and setting medical directives — with a well-placed legacy as part of the payoff.

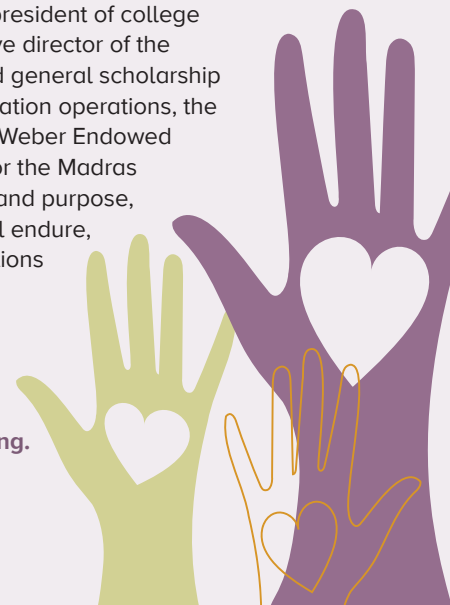
Nearly 50 years ago, John Weber, Ph.D., came to COCC as an instructional dean. He joined the College in 1977 and spent about a decade of his career in that role, becoming an advocate for higher learning in Central Oregon, with a special devotion to adult learning. “He loved COCC,” recalls Jack McCown, emeritus professor of Math, who worked with Weber in the ‘70s and ‘80s. “He thought it was the best community college.”



John Weber

While traveling in Central America in the summer of 2021, Weber passed away unexpectedly. His estate plans revealed an unrestricted gift to the COCC Foundation.

“We worked with his son to allocate the funds,” explains Zak Boone, vice president of college advancement and executive director of the Foundation. “That included general scholarship support, support for Foundation operations, the establishment of the John Weber Endowed Scholarship and support for the Madras campaign.” With planning and purpose, Weber’s love for COCC will endure, improving lives for generations to come.



Visit cocc.edu/departments/foundation/ways-to-give to learn more about planned giving.



The Nancy R. Chandler Lecture Series Fall 2025 Programming

THE LIFE OF A WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER

Suzi Eszterhas, award-winning wildlife photographer

THURSDAY, OCT. 2, 7 P.M. | Tower Theatre, Bend

Part artist, part scientist and part sociologist, Suzi Eszterhas will give us a glimpse into the life of a wildlife photographer. She will share her passion for conservation and how her work helps to raise awareness of the issues facing wildlife today.



In honor of Native American Heritage Month:

BEAUTIFUL STRENGTHS OF INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Michelle Jacob, Ph.D. - member of Yakama Nation,
professor of Indigenous studies and co-director of the
Sapsik'watá program, University of Oregon



SUNDAY, NOV. 2, 1 P.M.
COCC Bend Campus, Coats
Campus Center, Wille Hall

Dr. Michelle Jacob emphasizes that understanding Indigenous history must go hand in hand with celebrating the vibrant contributions of Native peoples today.



AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY IN A NEW ERA

Jane Cramer, Ph.D.,
associate professor and
director of undergraduate
studies-political science,
University of Oregon

TUESDAY, OCT. 14, 6:30 P.M.
COCC Bend Campus, Coats
Campus Center, Wille Hall

Jane Cramer will explore the contours of the U.S. foreign policy debate as it plays out in a world of multiple and escalating crises and domestic polarization.

For more details and to register:
cocc.edu/foundation/cls



CENTRAL OREGON
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Nancy R. Chandler Lecture Series

2024-25 Impact of Giving Report

CENTRAL OREGON
community college
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TOGETHER, WE CHANGE LIVES

Our Mission

The COCC Foundation provides funds for scholarships and capital improvements, cultivates relationships with stakeholders to support COCC and its students, and develops programs that foster COCC student success.



IMPACT OF GIVING A NOTE FROM SOFIA STRANIERI

As your capital campaign coordinator, it is so fulfilling to be part of a project that creates accessible educational opportunities for our students in Central Oregon, and to see firsthand how Foundation friends are such a strong part of that effort.

Foundation donor generosity, in fact, is a central reason I'm in this position. After moving to Bend from Springfield right out of high school in 2017, and receiving a Foundation scholarship, I quickly learned that

COCC would give me more than just an education — it gave me a roadmap to where I really wanted to be. I went on to earn my bachelor's degree in human development and family sciences at Oregon State University, while also working at COCC as an admissions coordinator, and then served as COCC's education career pathways "navigator" in the Education department. In February of this year, I was very pleased to accept a position with the Foundation to support the fundraising efforts of the Madras expansion.

Since then, I can tell you it's been a joy to be part of the community connections across Central Oregon and see the deep partnerships in Jefferson County, all aligned for this project. The excitement and support — whether it's through our \$100 Adopt-A-Brick program, a monthly pledge or a different kind of contribution — has been incredible. Please reach out with any questions about the campaign at sstranieri@cocc.edu.

On a personal level, I hope to show the Foundation a sliver of the support that it has given to me. It is such an honor to support our students at COCC.

Sofia Stranieri

Sofia Stranieri
Madras Campus Capital Campaign Coordinator

THE POWER OF SCHOLARSHIPS

BY THE NUMBERS



\$ 2.24 million

offered in scholarship support

375 scholarships awarded to hard-working students

7.3% of COCC credit students received a Foundation scholarship

27% of scholarship recipients identify as BILAPOC*

1.6 more credits earned per term than the average COCC student



86 students received donor-supported child care assistance and student emergency awards which totaled \$73,000

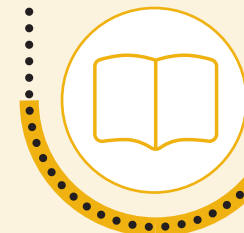


3.41 average GPA of scholarship recipients

*Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian and people of color

DEGREES PURSUED

3% Associate of General Studies degree



4% Exploratory degree

41% Transfer degree



52% Career and Technical Education certificate or degree



STUDENT IMPACT Kyleigh Winchester



Kyleigh Winchester, Former COCC Foundation Scholarship Recipient

When Kyleigh Winchester was just eight years old, her mom made a memorable declaration: “You have to go to college.” It was as much a yearning as a demand. “I come from a low-income, single-parent household,” says Winchester, who grew up in Redmond and began attending COCC classes while still in high school — the first in her family to attempt college studies. She knew her mom wanted a future for her defined more by possibilities than limitations.

Winchester’s journey is a fantastic one: graduating high school a year early, earning an associate degree at COCC (in 2016) with support from a Foundation scholarship, then transferring to Oregon State University for a bachelor’s in sociology, cum laude, and then a master’s in college student service administration with a 4.0 GPA. Today, she’s a doctoral student at Kansas State University, pursuing her Ph.D. of student affairs in higher education, fully online, while working full time as an enrollment technical specialist in COCC’s Admissions department. She’s also obtaining a graduate certificate in educational technology and found time to co-author a book chapter with a member of her OSU graduate committee.

That determination and work ethic have touched others. “She has helped me endlessly with my own schooling and I am so grateful to have such a brilliant colleague and friend,” says Katie Foltz, transcript and degree evaluator at COCC. “I find her personal experience inspiring and I think COCC students do too.”

Winchester’s dissertation, which she will defend in 2027, is both a deeply personal and much-needed study. Titled “First-Generation Low-Income Student Success in Distance or Online Learning,” it examines the motivational forces and intrinsic barriers that first-generation students contend with in the higher education landscape. And while Winchester is proud of her many accomplishments — to be “the first” in so many ways — she is even prouder to work in higher education, to help others strive for more.



Madras Campus Director James Rodriguez, Instructional Dean Julie Downing, President Laurie Chesley, Instructional Outreach Dean Cindy Lenhart and Professor Amy Howell.

Madras Milestone

Some 40 community members, COCC staffers and personnel from Kirby Nagelhout Construction company gathered for a “Topping Out” party on May 16 at the Madras campus, celebrating the new building’s final beam placement with signatures made across the steel.

COMMUNITY IMPACT COCC Automotive faculty collaborated with the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs and Jefferson County School District

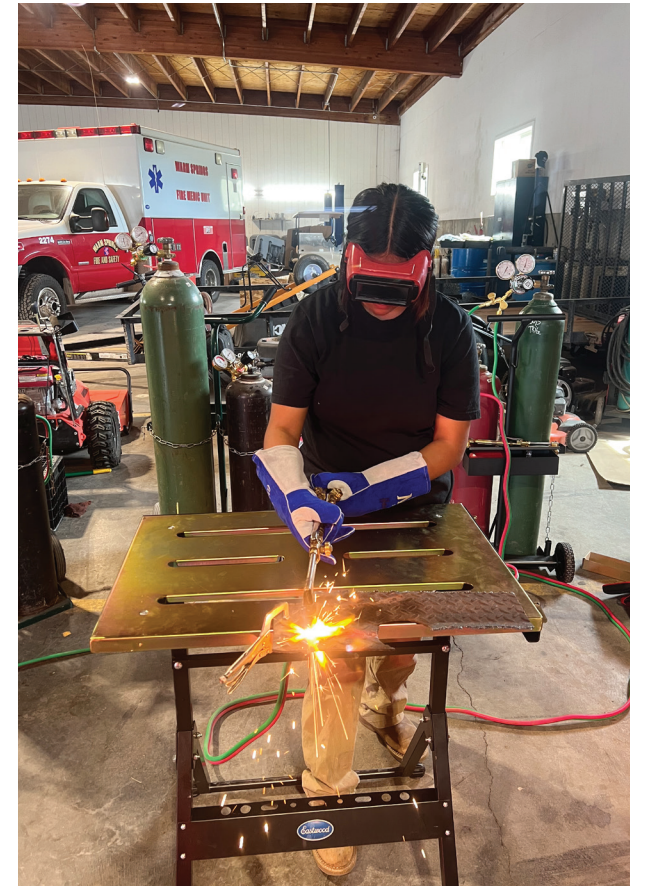
Sparks of learning flew at the Warm Springs Pony Express Training Facility this past spring term, where a new Automotive program welding opportunity got underway.

With generous funding from the Roundhouse Foundation (\$10,000), Oregon Community Foundation (\$30,000) and Reser Family Foundation (\$30,000), COCC Automotive faculty collaborated with the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs and Jefferson County School District 509J to launch a new career entry for area high schoolers.

“The students set up the equipment and welding booths, and just last week they started learning how to weld,” Helen Wiersma-Koch, Ph.D., instructional dean of career and technical education at COCC, reported in May. “For this first cohort, there are 13 students from 509J Bridges High School in Madras and the Tribes. We expect this high-demand, competitive-wage program to grow in need and popularity over the next year.”

The certificate-based training, encompassing up to five classes in all, will allow students to enter the workforce with a credential or easily shift into the Automotive program for further learning. The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs collaborated with COCC to upgrade the facility with needed electrical requirements while the school district is providing transportation.

“This is the ultimate example of demonstrating our strategic goals of student access, community engagement and workforce development as COCC is meeting the needs of these students where they live and is providing the skills to a better future,” Wiersma-Koch added.



The certificate-based training, encompassing up to five classes in all, will allow students to enter the workforce with a credential.


“This is the ultimate example of demonstrating our strategic goals of student access, community engagement and workforce development as COCC is meeting the needs of these students where they live and is providing the skills to a better future.”

Your Gift at Work: Making Education More Affordable for All






\$5,250 

Annual tuition and fee cost for most in-district students attending COCC full time.

\$8,000 

The increase in earnings each year the average associate degree graduate from COCC will receive compared to someone with a high school diploma working in Oregon.


\$29,700 



Estimated annual cost of attending COCC for a student living on their own. This includes tuition, fees, books, supplies, personal needs, transportation, food and housing costs.



By Supporting the COCC Foundation, You Build Lifelong Success for Students and Enrich Our Communities

In 2024-25

\$446,000 

has been generously donated to endowments.

711 

Individual and business donors contributed to our projects, campaigns, events and scholarship program.*

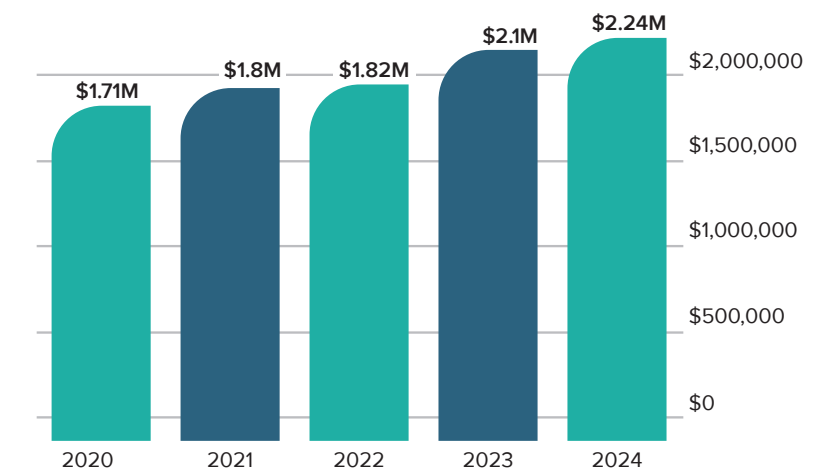
 **\$5,250,693**

has been raised from individuals, businesses, grants and planned gifts for the **Growing Together campaign** which supports the expansion of the Madras campus.



*For a full listing of current donors, please visit: cocc.edu/foundation

TOTAL AMOUNT OF SCHOLARSHIPS OFFERED





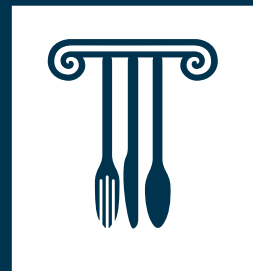
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APRIL



MEAL
OF THE
YEAR

