

Mt. Hood Community College

2024-25 Hearing Minutes

Mt. Hood Community College Campus

2600 SE Stark Street

Gresham, Oregon

Wednesday, June 12, 2024

6:30 pm

Present:

TSCC:

Chair Harmony Quiroz, Commissioner Mark Wubbold, Commissioner Matt Donahue, Commissioner Tod Burton, Commissioner Allison Lugo Knapp, Executive Director Allegra Willhite, and Budget Analyst Tunie Betschart

Absent: None

Mt. Hood Community College:

Staff: College President Dr. Lisa Skari, Vice President of Finance and Administration Jennifer DeMent, Vice President of Student Development John Hamlin, Interim Vice President of Instruction Betsy Julian, Associate Vice President of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Traci Simons, and Associate Vice President of Facilities, Public Safety & Risk Management Charles George

Chair Harmony Quiroz opened the public hearing by welcoming everyone to the hearing and briefly describing the duties and responsibilities of the TSCC. She reviewed the hearing process and stated the hearing was to engage the district leadership and provide an opportunity for the public to comment before Mt. Hood Community College adopts its budget. She asked TSCC Commissioners and staff to introduce themselves and state if they have business relationships with the college that could be perceived as a conflict of interest. Each commissioner and staff member introduced themselves and said they had no conflict of interest with the college. She asked the college to introduce the board members and staff present.

Following introductions, Chair Quiroz acknowledged the district's receipt of the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award from the Government Finance Officers Association for the 2023-24 fiscal year Adopted Budget. She congratulated the college on receiving this award and said she appreciated how informative, transparent, and user-friendly their budget book is. Then, she asked Dr. Lisa Skari if she wanted to make brief introductory remarks about the budget. Following Dr. Skari's introductory remarks, public testimony will be taken.

Dr. Skari gave an overview of the budget, saying the budget for fiscal year 2025 represents an exciting time for Mt. Hood Community College as enrollment grows. They will continue to oversee their spending. They will minimize tuition increases as affordability has been paramount to the Board of Education while providing quality education for students. This balance was recognized last year in a study of nearly 700 colleges nationwide. Mt. Hood Community College was ranked number four in the country for the highest quality education at the most affordable cost. The college experienced the second year of enrollment growth and anticipates it will remain strong at 5%. This is based on recruitment efforts and the college's continued work around retention. The budget reflects that MHCC is making strategic investments to

strengthen the college, like adding that advisement position, increasing allocations for students' basic needs, investing in technology and equipment to enhance student learning, and expanding the college's marketing. In July, the board will consider placing a \$131 million package bond measure before the voters. It will cost the average taxpayer \$5 per month. The measure will focus on renovating and updating existing facilities funding, allowing MHCC to better prepare for future workforce investment in the college's assets.

Following the overview, Chair Quiroz called on any member of the public who would like to speak, stating that each person is limited to three minutes of public comment and she would let them know when their time was nearing the end. Executive Director Allegra Willhite reported that no one had signed up to speak at this hearing, and no written comments were received. Chair Quiroz said should anyone join this hearing, there will be time allowed time at the end of the meeting for additional public comments.

Dr. Skari said they welcome the conversation around the college's budget.

With that, the commissioners started their questions.

TSCC Questions:

Commissioner Tod Burton asked the following questions:

We see enrollment is continuing to increase - congratulations! What is the big picture for the college's finances? Do you anticipate revenues will keep pace with expenditure growth in the coming years?

Ms. Jennifer DeMent responded by saying enrollment is the driver of the revenue. In 2022, enrollment finally started to tick back up. MHCC experienced a considerable drop during Covid. The college started restoring enrollment in 2022, and MHCC is anticipating that it will reach pre-pandemic levels by the end of next year. Much of the recent enrollment growth has been in tuition-generating revenue. From a budget perspective, that's excellent news.

During the pandemic, the college had a lot of non-credit classes that were still there, and it helps with state support, but it doesn't generate the cash needed in the budget. For the last couple of years, MHCC has also been investing in the Strategic Enrollment Plan and initiatives designed to increase student retention and persistence. So that has built a pipeline of students that will persist until next year, helping the college build on enrollment growth.

MHCC has been fortunate to have increased state support significantly during this biennium. Next year will be the first year the state adjusts the distribution formula to fund priority student populations and student outcomes. There will be a little bit more money in the budget next year from the state, which is the first time Ms. DeMent has ever seen more money in year two than in year one of the biennium. Eventually, that will start increasing as a percentage until it gets to 10%. However, it's rolling out over several years. They anticipate there'll be a little bump next year. The college should be able to maintain its share of the state support.

On the expenditure side, MHCC is dealing with inflation like everyone else. Everything is costing more. The college is negotiating all contracts this year. Healthcare costs and utilities are increasing. All of these are driving expenditures up. The other thing is the investment in the student's basic needs. Students can't focus in class when they're not having their basic needs met. MHCC had some funding during the pandemic that covered that. That funding has gone away, and the college has been trying to build that into its budget. These are all expenditures that absorb the revenue forecast.

Currently, the college is covering the expenditures but must be strategic about where to invest money. Resource reallocation must be considered if the college continues doing new things. Staff will need to identify the things that can no longer be done and reallocate resources to remain

financially stable. MHCC does not have enough revenue to cover future expenditure needs. However, the college will continue managing as it has and stay within its resources.

What is the approximate ratio of state support versus tuition support?

Ms. DeMent said it is about 42%. Recently, state support has increased some. In the mid-90s, there was a change in how property taxes supported education. It was capped with Measure 5 and Measure 50, so state support increased considerably because the state would make up the difference. That gradually declined. There was a recession in 2008. The college had some lean years after the recession. They experienced a significant loss in state support. That's when MHCC started to see substantial tuition increases. Now that state revenue is beginning to balance out and become more stable, it is about equal to tuition.

Chair Harmony Quiroz asked this follow-up question:

Can you talk more about the new distribution formula?

Ms. DeMent emphasized that it is not a funding formula but a distribution formula. There is no additional money in the formula. It is just how the pie is cut. This is determined around priority populations, including older adults, students 25 years and older, students in specific courses, students who identify as students of color, and an underrepresented, historically underserved population.

Commissioner Mark Wubbold asked the following questions:

Last year, you mentioned that attracting an underserved population is one of the strategies used to sustain enrollment. What are examples of those populations? What are the specific student profiles that fall into this category? What work have you done this year, and what is planned for future years to continue to attract an underserved population?

Mr. John Hamilton said the underserved populations can encompass various groups that face barriers to accessing education or are traditionally underrepresented in higher education. Some examples include low-income students, first-generation college students, minority groups, adult learners, students with disabilities, rural students, and LGBTQ+ students. To attract and support underserved populations, MHCC, through the Strategic Enrollment Management Plan, has worked on strategies such as Financial Aid and Scholarships.

The college has awarded over \$900,000 in scholarships this past year and is on pace to exceed that next year. MHCC has also added a Financial Aid and Literacy position in The Financial Aid office. This role is bilingual and focused on opportunities to connect more directly with the diverse community needs and overall support. This position is 90% focused on outside engagement and 10% as a financial aid adviser. This position was funded through the Strategic Enrollment Management work and supports expanding the impact of connecting with underserved populations.

Mr. Hamilton mentioned that last year they spoke about work to bring adults back to MHCC. MHCC surveyed adult learners who had left the institution along with several other community colleges in three different states. Staff wanted to learn why they left and, more importantly, what it would take to bring them back. This study helped staff better understand the importance of clear and timely communication to students, and they have been proactive throughout the past few years in improving timely communication with the appropriate information for the right audiences.

Separate conversations around student basic needs are also evolving, and needs were very different five years ago and even a year ago. The more they learn, the more they modify and change. Staff is seeing overall usage of services reaching an all-time high. For example, the pantry supported over 20,000 visits last year. This is over 100% growth from less than two years ago. As a result, the college is expanding the pantry, and MHCC is also investing in the new Equity and

Community Resources Center to help destigmatize hunger and normalize access supports.

Lastly, MHCC has seen significant growth in the following support areas: Student Employment, Personal Counseling, Academic Advising, Student Services Hub, and student life areas. Each of these areas has been very involved in both the Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) plan and the work to better engage with the adult learner populations. The college has seen over a 2% increase in retention this term compared to spring last year. The most significant areas of growth were in black students and the 40+ year-old learners.

Overall, MHCC is very excited about the success of the SEM plan and the continued work supporting students. A critical feature of the college's work is that it modifies and adapts as staff learns new strategies or ways to support the success.

Does the strategic enrollment plan cross the entire administrative structure?

Mr. Hamilton said the strategic enrollment plan is very expansive across campus. Over 65 faculty staff administrators participated in the process each year. In March, MHCC held a summit. Each of the 11 action teams presents their initiatives for the following year. A steering committee reviews all those proposals, scores them, and makes recommendations to the executive leadership. This is one of the more thorough reviews of data tracking, impact analysis, and potential return on investment.

Do students participate in this process?

Mr. Hamilton said no, they do not have students participating in the Strategic Enrollment Management. It is more of an operational process. The college also collects feedback through each of the initiatives. The Sense of Belonging Task Force surveys students annually to gather feedback on their experiences. The college uses a comprehensive assessment process with all of the service points in the student development areas.

Chair Quiroz asked the following questions:

The landscape of community colleges is changing, and MHCC is now offering a Bachelor's (BA) program for cybersecurity. Also, MHCC has a three-year nursing program that allows students to easily transfer and finish a four-year degree. Do you foresee additional such programs coming in the future?

Ms. Betsy Julian said there had been a conversation about additional programs with two leading contenders. One option is to create a BAS in Physical Therapy Assistant (PTA). OSU-Cascades has recently begun a doctoral program in Physical Therapy and is looking to build a pipeline. The college's PTA program is strong and has the potential to expand into the primary feeder program for OSU-Cascades, using an online version.

The other option is to create a BAS with a strong business leadership component. These courses would expand project management certification, entrepreneurship, and management/leadership. There is a considerable market in public safety - most police and fire go through academies and have nowhere to go for a bachelor's except online. They do not take the academies as transfers. Most need a bachelor's for management positions. Therefore, MHCC could market to the following areas: public safety, applied technologies, and science-based, such as forestry and natural resources.

We keep hearing about staffing shortages, Educational Assistance shortages, or Behavioral Health Specialists, and security staff. Is the college hearing the same thing from other agencies and other government agencies? What are the needs? Where are the shortages?

Ms. Julian said she is hearing about these shortages. MHCC is working with the Gresham Fire

District. They desperately want EMF people trained. There are several EMF programs in the metro area, but MHCC is in Gresham. So, the college is in conversation with them about having MHCC make a collaborative effort to pay for most of the cost of the faculty member. Still, the college provides other support, resources, facilities, supplies, and curriculum. It's another specific need in the community the college could fill.

Commissioner Wubbold asked this follow-up question:

There is a significant development of corporate warehouses close to the college. Are there any emerging partnerships with any of these businesses?

Dr. Skari said these are the Grainger massive distribution buildings. MHCC is trying to understand what the staffing will look like and how much robotics is used.

Commissioner Burton asked the following questions:

MHCC has asked voters to approve bond measures in the past, most recently in 2017. Those measures have failed. Have you completed any polling related to the bond included in the budget? Why is now the "right time" to ask the voters to approve a bond measure?

Dr. Skari said the college is still determining the right time.

The process to date has included:

- Completion of comprehensive facilities plan
- Campus feedback on projects
- Bond development workgroup prioritization
- Community engagement to gauge community interest
- Polling taking place the week of June 24
- Board to decide on July 17 if there will be a ballot measure

When they asked the community members for feedback and prioritized the input, they built a bond they felt would be successful, and the community would get behind the \$131 million, which is about \$5 a month for the average taxpayer. This plan seems to resonate with the majority of the community.

What are the jurisdictional boundaries for the district's voting population?

Dr. Skari said the area is 950 square miles, and the span is from 82nd Street on the west, up along the Columbia River, all the way up to Cascade Locks, loops up around Government Camp, and then cuts through Clackamas County, to include Sandy, Boring, parts of Damascus, and Happy Valley. It is a very mixed district.

With the Governor's moratorium on new tax measures, how does this fit in?

Dr. Skari said this is a reinvestment in the community's economic health, fortifying the ability to educate and train a skilled workforce for area employers.

Commissioner Allison Lugo Knapp asked the following question:

The Office of Student Basic Needs is available to help students connect with resources. We understand this is funded with a variety of sources, including grants and funds from the MHCC Foundation. In the past these services have also been supplemented with federal pandemic aid, which is no longer available. What kind of future revenue trends do you anticipate for these services, and is it enough to meet the need?

Ms. Traci Simons answered that students' basic needs are an ever-changing landscape. Some students are struggling with housing, hunger, not having a reliable laptop or sharing a computer

with another person, not having reliable Wi-Fi, transportation, and several other issues. The college has been blessed to have some federal funds and given an extension on using those funds. It will be used to buy more laptops and transportation cards and help students with emergency funds. However, as those are going away, the staff is looking at other grant funding and the General Fund to continue expanding the Office of Student Basic Needs. The student's basic needs are one of this organization's most significant equity issues and challenges. The college needs to continue to invest in this. It sends a signal to the students and the community that MHCC is investing in the future of the community.

Now, the college is renovating the bookstore and creating more visibility for those needs through the creation of the Equity and Community Resources Center. Staff is trying to put that front-and-center so students don't have to look for what they need to succeed. That pantry space is expanded. The college is doubling down on the partnerships. The objective is to provide the Equity and Community Resource Center as a student basic need hub for the campus. There will be the pantry, folks like Veteran Services Center and College Housing Northwest on campus, internal support, and the benefits navigator provided through the HB-834. The college has the money to fund the position. They help students connect to public benefits they might not know are available.

MHCC is expanding the SNAP program, which connects students to healthy foods and provides opportunities to buy more food. MHCC has a relationship with Amazon through that food pantry, which consistently delivers items to MHCC. There are pallets and pallets of things, and now there will be more space to store them. It is about partnerships, grants, foundation funds, and general funds. Staff will continue seeking opportunities to meet students' needs through partnerships.

Chair Quiroz asked these follow-up questions:

Is there any work being done with the Joint Office of Homelessness? Are you able to leverage any of those funds?

Ms. Simons said they are working with College Housing Northwest. College Housing Northwest were among the few people granted money through Project Turn-Key. MHCC helped and provided a rationale for why they should get that money. They purchased the Pony Soldier, a hotel they changed into housing. MHCC students will have the opportunity to obtain housing in this facility. When those students are in those spaces, frequently there is no cost or start low cost for students who can afford some rent and then slowly work them into what they can afford. When they're no longer students, the college will continue to work with them, slowly getting them accustomed to paying rent, connecting them to work, and earning while they learn opportunities through Workforce.

Commissioner Matt Donahue asked the following question:

This fiscal year, the college introduced the Equity Center as a home for the Office of Student Basic Needs. Has this office changed or evolved in the types of services it is offering?

Ms. Simons said the college has created a feedback loop even with building the Equity and Community Resource Center. The students were at the forefront of how MHCC wanted that to look. They gave their input to everything, even where things should be placed in the space. At the beginning of the pandemic, a survey went out, and 43% of the students had food insecurity. Between the houseless students and housing insecurities, it is around 40%. Then, things like childcare that come into play. It's a considerable challenge and barrier for students. As part of the Repro Grant, the pandemic fund for students' basic needs, there was a requirement to do an evaluation. Staff surveyed all of the students and had almost a 13% response rate, which was viewed as successful for a student population. Staff will use some of that data to continue improving how the college delivers on those resources. To support students, staff can invite social service agencies onto the campus to help make the connections.

Then, ask students:

- How does getting these resources enable them to stay in school?
- What could MHCC be doing better?
- What other services are not provided?
- What should the college look into regarding partnerships?

The staff will use that data to help inform the needs when opening the Equity and Community Resource Center and look at the impact on the students after receiving that support and whether they could complete their goal after receiving that report.

Commissioner Wubbold asked the following questions:

We understand MHCC has completed work on a Facilities Master plan. Tell us about the new facilities plan - what are your top priorities?

Mr. Charles George said the college has six priorities for the 2024 plan. They are:

1. Instruction – renovation of science labs and classrooms, multidisciplinary Health Professions labs and co-location, enhanced spaces to support new instructional modalities, library space updates for small group instruction and informal student learning.
2. Equity and Access – improve and add elevator access, restroom updates including all gender access, creating student activity centers, Title IX improvements.
3. Welcoming Feel – Increase the use of color and wayfinding, increase transparency in activity and support spaces, improve approachability of campus.
4. Student support and success – transform the library into a learning resource center, provide additional space for student clubs and activities, food service exploration of new delivery models, and provide social spaces for food sharing.
5. Asset Preservation and Deferred Maintenance – annual HVAC, plumbing, electrical upgrades and replacements, building envelope and energy conservation upgrades, 50-meter outdoor pool enclosure, additional renewable energy improvements.
6. Safety and Security – Building security and lockdown capabilities, mass notification improvements, cyber security, and campus grounds lighting.

What is the plan for funding these projects?

Ms. DeMent said some of the more extensive improvements are included in the upcoming GO Bond that MHCC is pursuing. One benefit of the updated Facilities and Campus plan is the more realistic and scalable approach to the priorities. Many new plan projects can be implemented as funding is available and with prioritized allocation of existing resources, allowing progress until additional funding is secured for the larger projects.

Can you share with us what projects from the old Facilities Master plan were rolled over to this updated plan?

Mr. George said the 2010 Master Plan priorities have some common themes.

They are:

1. Improved Wayfinding – Phase 1 was completed during the 2010 plan, and Phase 2 and desired welcoming improvements continued in the 2024 Plan.
2. Improvement to building modernization / seismic – Dental, Hub, and select classrooms completed during the 2010 plan with seismic still needed. The 2024 plan includes these components and classroom/lab improvements.
3. Improvements to site infrastructure and circulation – some infrastructure was completed from the 2010 plan. Still, the 2024 plan does not include new buildings or roadways due to changes in student needs and classroom availability under the new utilization survey.

4. Add new instructional spaces to accommodate increased enrollment and program needs – not completed from the 2010 plan due to funding. The 2024 plan included a space utilization audit that showed that MHCC has sufficient space, but remodels and updates are needed to meet current needs.

Chair Quiroz thanked the college for the discussion and contributions during the hearing. Then, she closed the hearing and opened a regular meeting of the Tax Supervising and Conservation Commission to certify Mt. Hood Community College's 2024-25 Approved Budget. She asked if the commissioners had any questions or comments concerning the budget. There were none.

She asked Executive Director Allegra Willhite to give staff recommendations for the certification letter.

Ms. Willhite thanked the MHCC staff for their partnership throughout the budget process and the year. TSCC staff appreciates your taking the time to answer questions and working so hard on your budget, proactively reaching out with budget questions, and ensuring everything is in compliance. TSCC staff found the budget estimates reasonable for the purposes stated and in substantial compliance with budget law and suggested no recommendations or objections to the Approved Budget for fiscal year 2024-25.

Chair Quiroz asked for a motion authorizing the TSCC commissioners to sign the certification letter as recommended by staff.

Chair Quiroz called for a motion.

Commissioner Wubbold moved to certify the Mt. Hood Community College's 2024-25 Approved Budget with no recommendations or objections as recommended by staff. Commissioner Burton seconded the motion, which passed with a unanimous vote of the commissioners.

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