



## Legislative Report for HB 2353 Revised (2011) National Career Readiness Certificate Program

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December 1, 2011

Section 5 of HB 2353 requires the Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development to provide data and recommendations on the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) program. This report provides 1) the number of students enrolled in an Oregon community college who utilized the services provided by the program during the 2010-2011 academic year, and, 2) recommendations for improving the program.

### **Background**

The National Career Readiness Certificate is a valuable, portable certificate that verifies three foundational workplace skills: Applied Mathematics, Reading for Information, and Locating Information. It helps job applicants stand out from the crowd and assures employers that applicants have the foundational skills needed to be successful on the job.

The NCRC program in Oregon was officially launched in January 2011 by Governor Kitzhaber and over 100 key public and private sector leaders. The Governor has identified the NCRC as one of his administration's key workforce development strategies.

Three key policy decisions shaped the strategies for implementing the NCRC throughout Oregon. First, the Local Workforce Investment Boards (LWIBs) were designated to convene partners around this initiative. Second, in order to create a balanced approach, state and local staff focused their outreach efforts on Oregon employers and job seekers. Finally, the WorkSource Oregon Centers were designated as the primary point where individuals access services to earn an NCRC which ensures statewide coverage.

### **Progress to Date**

Since the program began in 2009, roughly 11,800 individuals across Oregon have earned a National Career Readiness Certificate. Through the work of the local staff in the WorkSource Oregon Centers, 439 Oregon employers have signed a letter of commitment saying they will prefer the NCRC in their hiring and recruitment practice. In addition to the employer support, several associations have endorsed the program including Associated Oregon Industries, Oregon Business Association, Oregon Business Council, Energy Consortium of Oregon and Southwest Washington, Northwest Food Processors Association as well as twelve local economic development organizations and chambers of commerce.

### **Student Engagement**

Of the 7,572 individuals who earned an NCRC during the 2010-2011 academic year, 1,629 were enrolled in an Oregon community college. The table on the next page shows student enrollment by college:

<b>College</b>	<b># of Students</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Blue Mountain	10	0.61%
Central Oregon	346	21.24%
Chemeketa	251	15.41%
Clackamas	90	5.52%
Clatsop	11	0.68%
Columbia Gorge	5	0.31%
Klamath	5	0.31%
Lane	17	1.04%
Linn-Benton	14	0.86%
Mount Hood	247	15.16%
Oregon Coast	1	0.06%
Portland	504	30.94%
Rogue	2	0.12%
Southwestern Oregon	10	0.61%
Tillamook Bay	14	0.86%
Treasure Valley	98	6.02%
Umpqua	4	0.25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,629</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Sources: OCCURS, WorkSource Oregon Management Information System, ACT RegiSTAR

## **Recommendations**

HB 2353 states that the NCRC program may be offered through public high schools, community colleges, local and regional career centers, education service districts, and any other institutions deemed appropriate. Currently, the majority of WorkSource Oregon Centers and three Oregon community colleges provide individuals the opportunity to earn a National Career Readiness Certificate. During this first year of statewide implementation the NCRC has been supported by American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Statewide Activities funds. Unfortunately, expansion, if not successful continuation, is limited by the type and amount of funding used to support the program:

- ARRA funds are no longer available and WIA budget cuts at the federal level will severely impact the viability of the Oregon NCRC program.
- According to federal regulations, a majority of WIA funds provided to the LWIBs for this purpose cannot be used to serve individuals under 18 years old. Thus, a large portion of the funding supporting this program may not be used to offer the NCRC in public high schools.
- Lack of funding has limited allocations for infrastructure, outreach and testing at the local level such that a maximum of 7,500 NCRCs may be awarded in 2011-12.
- Lack of adequate funding is also resulting in the elimination of a state NCRC coordinator position significantly hampering efforts to expand and more deeply engage business partners, community colleges, school districts, and other community partners.