



Legislative Report for HB 2353 (2013-2014) National Career Readiness Certificate Program

December 1, 2014

Section 5 of HB 2353 (2011) requires the Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development (CCWD) 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 2013-2014 academic year, and, 2) recommendations for improving the program.

Background

Certified Work Ready Communities (CWRC) is an overarching workforce strategy of Governor Kitzhaber and the Oregon Workforce Investment Board (OWIB) to enable Oregon's communities to demonstrate the skilled workforce necessary for local business expansion and for companies to locate and prosper in Oregon. Ongoing support of the Oregon CWRC initiative is critical as it provides an independent endorsement of the quality of the workforce and the community's ability to meet business growth demands.

A significant component of CWRC is the Oregon National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC). The NCRC is a valuable, portable certificate that verifies three foundational workplace skills: Applied Mathematics, Reading for Information, and Locating Information. Through certification by earning an NCRC, workers can demonstrate they have the foundational skills to be able to succeed in and grow with the companies in their communities. 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.

Progress to Date

One of the key criteria for CWRC at the county level is the participation of local businesses and organizations using the NCRC. Certified Work Ready Communities empower counties and states with actionable data and specific workforce goals that drive economic growth. The NCRC is a critical tool of the CWRC initiative; to date, over 37,000 individuals across Oregon have earned a NCRC which represents a 38% increase for the year ending 2014. As of July 1, 2014, all 36 counties in Oregon are participating in the work ready community initiatives. The top five performing counties nearing certification include the following below:

- Clatsop, 96% of Goals Attained
- Multnomah, 92% of Goals Attained
- Union, 89% of Goals Attained
- Washington, 88% of Goals Attained
- Lane, 88% of Goals Attained

Through the work of local staff in the WorkSource Oregon Centers, slightly fewer than 2,000 Oregon employers have signed letters of support indicating a preference and/or recognition of the NCRC as valuable credential in their hiring and recruitment practices. Letters of support have increased by over 65% for the twelve month period ending December 1, 2014.

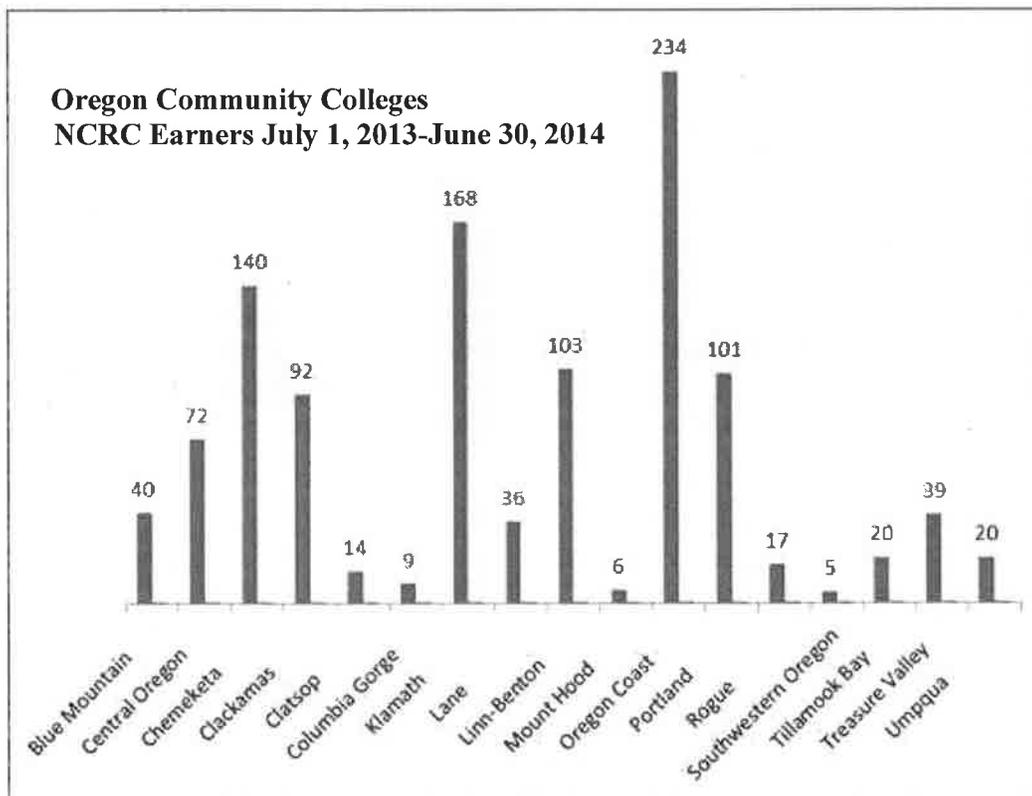
Moving Forward in 2015:

The CCWD continues to pursue expanding the CWRC initiative with educational stakeholders in the following ways:

- Continue to support Community Colleges in their pursuit to award college credit for the NCRC as endorsement by American Council on Education (ACE);
- Connect the NCRC to Adult Basic Education and GED programs;
- Continue to build strong partnerships with high schools, alternative youth programs, Educational Service Districts, and Career Technical Education programs; and
- Expand the number of community organization testing sites, testing capacity through trained proctors and testing availability opportunities;
- Launch the NCRC in Spanish and make it accessible, attainable and applicable for diverse Oregonians;
- Continue to increase employer engagement as it relates to CWRC, preferring and recognizing the NCRC, and capturing impact on business performance.

Student Engagement

Of the 10,390 individuals who earned an NCRC during the 2013-2014 academic year, 1,116 were enrolled in an Oregon community College. The graph below shows students enrolled by college:



Funding Status

This program was formerly funded entirely by federal Workforce Investment Act funds but due to on-going federal budget reductions it is now resourced through federal and state funding streams. The 2013 Oregon Legislature allocated funds to a Workforce Initiative through House Bill 5019, which included funding for the Certified Work Ready Communities initiative, the NCRC and associated preparatory online courseware.

Recommendations for Improving the Program:

- 1) Advocate for strong partnerships in your local legislative districts to help build the Certified Work Ready Community initiative.
- 2) Continue to fund Oregon's Certified Work Ready Community initiative.
- 3) Continue to provide funding that allow for all Oregon students to earn an Oregon National Career Readiness Certificate at no cost to them or their school.

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