

Text Transcript of Central Oregon Community College Board Meeting
Date: August 20, 2020

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>> Welcome everybody.

I like to call the order of the board of directors meeting special session.

The first item on the agenda, are there any agenda changes?

I will move on to public comment.

Jen, do you have anything for us?

>> No, there is no public comment.

>> The next item of business, updates to the college reopening plans. Doctor Chesley?

>> Thank you.

We are going to do a update on our reopening plan for all of you today. You know you are reproved the July 8 board meeting. You also proved our ability to make changes in that plan and adapt as needed.

We said we keep reviewing this current situation.

We said we would adapt.

Here we are today with some adaptation.

.

Jen will run the PowerPoint for me.

At various points I will call on the various members to contribute to this conversation as well.

Feel free to ask questions during or after this presentation.

Jen, let's go to the next slide.

The format of the presentation today is going to be brief view of what was originally approved.

One of the reasons we are making changes?

What specifically are those changes at a high level?

How will they impact the college?

What are the next steps that we will be taking?

Note a few points of pride you can be proud of since we have adapted to a very unprecedented situation.

Next slide.

When you approved our original plan, the underlying premise of that plan was resume offering in person classes and services to the greatest extent possible while still maintaining the health and safety of our students, staff and faculty through state strict guidelines put forward by the Oregon authority.

That permits premise has not changed.

What has changed with time and additional information is our situation.

That has caused us to reassess what we believe can be done safely in the fall.

Let's go to the next slide.

Before we share some of the specifics of the changes to share some of the reasons why the SLT and I believe we need to unanimously make some changes.

Our SLT as you know are not always unanimous.
Take that as a good sign and a good discussion.
We looked at quite a number of factors and data points.
I'm not going to look at every single one of them today.
I am going to highlight a few of them.
The first major area we looked at was local and state public health data.
What was coming out from our local authorities.
We have seen in trends central Oregon, new cases by week.
You've seen a spike about two weeks after July 4th where the week of 7/19
we are at 171 new cases that we.
That was the height of new cases for our region.
Now, we see that trend going down, last week that trend was 91 new cases.
That said, we still have many more cases than we did initially we shut
down in March.
Although the trend is getting better, we still don't feel like it's a
really positive trend.
There are currently into shoots Jefferson County 426 and creek County 54.
The trends may look better, but we still don't think they look as good as
you would like to see them.
Certainly have to wonder with visitors to bend and the spike we saw after
July 4th, what is coming now after Labor Day we also know there is
currently not locally, significant rapid testing availability.
National trends and health data and school openings.
We know that the CDC has noted that the rise in cases in COVID-19 is
great is now in the age group of 20-29 which although we have students
who span the spectrum in terms of age range, this is a significant
portion of our college population.
We know that they have been identified as some most serious super
spreaders of the pandemic.
We know that flu season is coming soon.
You have read them in the national news numerous stories of outbreaks in
K-12 institutions resume in person.
And when higher educations institutions resume in person.
Almost daily we see articles in higher education publications like inside
higher Ed.
August wave of campus reopening reversals.
Just today CNN headline lease 15 states report COVID-19 at their
colleges.
When lots of people get together in the same place, we certainly see
significant trend of colleges rethinking their plans just as we are.
Sometimes, admittedly that rethinking looks a bit different depending on
the school.
Some institutions are going to remote construction but keeping residents
calls open.
Others are closing residence halls.
Some are closing the residence halls at Thanksgiving in order to try to
avoid flu season.
There are different strategies being used, but many schools rethink them.
We also looked at what our local K-12 districts have been doing.
As you know, they are all at least starting the year in a remote fashion.
We know that means many of our students and faculty and staff they will
now have children home in the fall were as they might have thought
otherwise.

Certainly, just as you seen with our K-12 districts we have some of our faculty and staff understandably expressing anxiety about return to campus in the fall we have looked at all of the factors and really tried to do an assessment of the risks for the college and an assessment for the risk that the college situation might pose for our local community. It is absolutely relevant to note that our insurance, our case is not providing liability coverage for COVID-19.

You know the liability question across Oregon businesses and public entities has been one that has been discussed in the legislature. The fact is, now we don't have as of this point we don't have liability coverage for COVID-19.

We look at our situation and say, where is it as a college we absolutely cannot do our work remotely?

Where do we have a high level of control over the environment former limited amounts of times?

We have that control in our classrooms.

When we have less control for longer period of time in our residence halls?

Believe me, we are not casting any aspersions on the age group of 20-29 or students who live in residence halls.

It's just a fact when you gather people together for long periods of time those are significant sites for the spread of COVID-19.

Let's go to the next slide and talk a bit about some of our decisions.

We have rethought the mix of classes that we will be offering remotely versus in person.

You know that we had already decided way back in July that we could not and would not be offering the same scope of face-to-face passes that we would typically offer in the fall.

That was for safety reasons, that was for our social distancing requirements and other similar constraints that were rightly put in place.

Now we are moving to have even fewer classes face-to-face.

What I want to do is have Betsy Julian discuss this issue a little bit more present you the rationale for what we decided face-to-face and what we are putting remote and what that mix looks like right now.

The?

Betsy?

>> I been working with an instructional team and student services staff to come up with different alternative ways to decide which classes should be taught remotely versus in person.

We ended up coming up with five different levels and we decided on level III, the SLT decided on level III is the optimal approach.

Level I is where we were last spring which was the very lowest level.

Only those healthcare programs presented by the government.

Level II is where we are now the summer.

Those were the exempted programs as well as a few other CTE programs where the courses absolutely could not be delivered remotely.

This was things like automotive, aviation, flight labs.

And manufacturing.

Level III is one step broader than that.

It includes courses required for students to make progress towards their degree or certificate and classes of those required that can not be effectively taught in a remote environment.

There were some that were saying in an absolute pantry could do it, but the quality of learning was so seriously reduced that it was only an absolute necessity.

This would be things like our massage therapy classes.

Some of our science labs.

Things like this where faculty were really creative and managed to do it, but felt the quality had deteriorated.

The fourth level was optional classes that can't be done effectively in a remote environment.

Things like art, music, things like this that are not effectively done that way.

But also not required for student progress.

Level V is everything.

After much discussion, level III.

The one where all the classes that are required for student progress that need to be offered in person to effectively convey information, basically skills based, hands-on classes are the ones that we are looking to offer in person.

I should point out that a number of these classes will actually be doing in a hybrid format where the skills based portion will be done in person and the lecture component will be done in either a remote or online format.

Even in those, on some of them are faculty have worked to find ways where they are only doing in person skills based portion every other week or every third week so that they have really examined what needs to be done in person.

And how can we do this with smaller numbers of people in a safe environment while still having learning?

>> Betsy, can you run through a listing of what most areas and most of those courses fall into?

Maybe not every single one.

>> We are mostly talking about our career and technical rooms.

Automotive, within aviation were talking about flight labs.

The culinary labs, dental assisting, fire science, manufacturing, massage, most of our health fields.

Medical, pharmacy, dental, veterinary, medicine.

We also have other noncareer technicals such as outdoor leadership which is a transfer program but very skills based.

The science labs that I have mentioned.

I left out nursing.

Nursing of course falls into the hands on healthcare.

>> I will stop for a minute and ask if anyone has any questions for Betsy at this point?

Now, let's move to the residence hall.

You probably already determine from my remarks that we do not believe it is the right thing to do have a residence hall open this fall.

That certainly has some consequences and impacts.

I would like to ask Alicia to talk about the ways will be working with students who have signed up.

Some of that planning -we can talk a little bit more later about other impacts as well.

>> Thank you Laurie.

At this point in time early in the year we made the decision to open.

[name] Hall at 50 percent occupancy.

We had hundred 50 students signed up and ready to go.
We're looking at Juniper Hollis overflow housing.
With this decision we will notify students later today of this and some of the things you will do throughout the quarter is stay connected with the students and do some active outreach.
Every week, every other week type thing to keep students engaged in their learning assuming they steamrolled with us.
If they choose not to, we want to reach out to the students around mid-November to give a status update for winter term.
For the students who choose to give them the option to keep the housing deposit and application active with us so that we are able to open the residence hall and winter term they can easily move back in without having to start that process over.
The hope is we can still stay engaged with students, give them a sense of connection, in them a sense of camaraderie that you have when you live in an environment like that but do so in a remote and safe way.
It's really basic overview of some of the activities we will be doing.
The intent is to try to keep the students active with CO cc and continue their involvement through the quarter.

>> Can you speak to the approximate number of students who had expressed or applied to be live in the residence hall that would be in the CT programs we talked about?
We will have on-campus instruction?
>> There's 150 students total who completed the application process.
Rough numbers is about 25 percent of those, maybe 20 percent are engaged in the CTE programs.
The vast majority were exploratory students are transfer students.
We should not see an impact because of this decision on our career and technical education programs.
We broken down by program.
It was one student here, two students here.
It wasn't a whole group of students going towards one particular program.
It was part of the information we used to make this decision about that hall.

>> Student services will remain remote.
The campus will remain closed to the public.
Our library will continue to function virtually.
[name] Will be close to the public and to anyone besides the classes that would still be running and using that as a lab.
Although we are close to the public we are allowed where we feel appropriate to provide space that might be useful for unique college kinds of endeavors or community endeavors.
Next slide?
>> Couple of important points to remember.
This applies to all of our campuses.
It will be reassessed for winter term.
I'm going to remind everyone here and listening that the commitment that we have made through the fall term is that no employee who is working remotely is required to come to campus during the fall term.
Those whose work only can be done on campus, if they are feeling uncomfortable should absolutely contact their supervisors and human resources to see what we might do to help them feel more safe.
Or what we might do differently.

Her interest is in having our employees be comfortable with the working situation and feel as safe as possible.

Next slide these in police.

There are impacts in making these decisions.

We have done initial assessments and I want to ask Dave Dona to show that assessment and some thoughts about budget with all of you.

>>.

>> You Laurie.

If the board would indulge me for just a second I'd like to go back to prior year quickly to do a quick status report.

You will get your detailed January report as you normally do.

I wanted to circle back and talk about prior year first and then move into the current year.

Last February while we were in a pre-pandemic mode is actually feeling quite good about where we were in the forecasting.

That we would land in a good place and then of course the world changed and the governor issued executive orders limiting what we can do.

Our her world changed.

We were very concerned about the high level of uncertainty and what that meant both in terms of budget, operations and so forth.

We had some really good discussions, some hard discussions.

The president instituted a number of fiscal and budgetary actions.

This was early March.

In anticipation that we would manage this high level of uncertainty.

The biggest uncertainty out of the gate was what a moment would be doing for spring term.

Our instructional team did some Herculean work from traditional to face-to-face to remote and other lien online delivery.

Schools were starting to see enrollment declines for spring term as high as 30 percent.

Just to give you an idea of what that would've done to us financially, if we had seen a loss of 20-25 percent of spring term enrollment that would be a loss of over \$3 million of tuition and fee revenue.

Our ability to pivot was instrumental in getting to a strong end of your financial position.

Actually ended up seven percent down for spring term.

When you combine that with fall and winter we actually ended up down 4 and a half percent.

We budgeted to be down five percent.

We exceeded budget.

With state support coming in higher than we had budgeted -your member that the whole discussion into itself.

We actually finish the year in a positive operating position of \$985,000.

The board should be quite pleased that those early fiscal and budgetary actions saved us an additional \$1.9 million.

Those actions were made up of a spending freeze and all nonessential spending which brought up another million five.

We furloughed hourly employees.

Those are seasonal and hourly folks.

We furloughed some positions that could not be done remotely.

Her work that could not be done remotely.

And we did a hiring freeze on open positions.

The combination of that saved us about \$1.9 million.

We actually didn't see the same enrollment declines at some other schools experienced.

That gave us a very strong end of your position.

I also allowed us to reverse the transfers in from other funds that you are used to seeing as part of our support package.

The 2.1 million that would have been budgeted to bring into last year, we are able to reverse and have that to help us manage through the current year.

I would just summarize by saying, some early fiscal and budgetary actions allowed us to have a very strong end of year, positive operating position.

I will start with the.

Questions or comments about that before I move into the current year?

>> What do you attribute are declined versus other community colleges?

>> I think that will be something that will have to be determined.

I think we have some ideas and I would look to Betsy to help out.

Talking to the other business officers, some of the other schools have a much higher percentage of their courses in CTE which does not lend itself to teaching remotely.

That would be one of the.

Part of it may be that been on the transfer side they were not able to transition pivot as quickly as we were able to pivot to remote environment.

Betsy, do you want to add anything to that?

>> Yes, I agree with of the comments you made.

I also have to give a real shout out to our e-learning staff provided an incredible level of support that made it possible for some faculty members who had maybe thought they would not be able to be successful and to offer courses in a remote or distance format.

To make it so that they felt they had the support and the ability to do this.

I think back when I talked to my colleagues that it was one of the things we are able to offer that not everybody else did.

I want to give a shout out to our faculty who stepped out of their comfort zone and did things they may be a few months earlier or in different circumstances would have said they did not think they could do. Out of all of our CTE programs, the only ones we did not offer was automotive.

Others we had to do some changing of the scheduling, change some classes that were offered.

We were able to come up with necessary courses for students to take.

Many schools ended up not even attempting to offer classes in a number of different programs.

Between e-learning, faculty willingness to step outside of their comfort zone and take risks.

I also think waiting a week, delaying the start of the term by one week also allowed a little more ability to make the shift and help us as well.

I want to give a kudos to student services folks were communicating with students all the things that were being done to make sure they are learning would still be effective and and keep the students overly anxious about the situation.

>> If there are no other questions I will move into the current year.

Again, high level uncertainty.

Summer term was up over 10 percent in terms of enrollment.

We started well.

Interestingly enough a lot of the other community colleges I had conversations with were actually down summer term.

Were five weeks out now and looking at being out.

Again, these comparisons probably are not super valuable at this time because there's so much volatility.

We are showing we are down somewhere around five percent for fall term. Some of the other schools are reporting to be down 10-20 percent in fall term.

I think it is our ability was to deliver courses in a different format that paid dividends for us.

Starting out with this year, our big revenue source is we are watching closely of course -there was a concern about state data being defunded as part of the states changes to get to a balanced operating position.

We were on the list of targeted areas to be held harmless if possible.

At the end of the special session we found out that in fact we were held harmless which meant we did not have to worry about the loss of state support due to defunding.

In this initial round at least.

I want to caution everyone that is really good news, but that does not mean states forecasting will hold.

If they have to come back for a second round of defunding, we may be harmed later.

We will see how that goes.

The good news is we were held harmless in this first round.

We were asked to see what eight and half percent reduction to our biannual adjustment would be.

That would've been over \$3 million of lost support.

Tuition and fees, that's very difficult to determine.

That's why we are being very cautious and continuing with those physical and budgetary actions from prior year going forward.

We're still being very cautious about spending and hiring vacant positions and such.

Property taxes I'm not concerned about.

We are pretty spot on with recent forecasting without.

Where we are going to take a beating is really on the more enterprise side of the shop which is everything from facility rental to food service, bookstore, residence hall.

Without a physical student population on campus you're not going to be generating the normal revenue we would expect to have to manage that loss of revenue.

We will be looking at how we cut costs help mitigate the loss of revenue. The net effect is as small as possible.

We'll be looking at working with some of our service providers like Sodexo and Apogee to see if we can find ways to reduce those charges to offset the lost revenue.

We will look at staffing positions, if you don't have students on campus what positions would still be affected by that effect?

Give you an idea of what kind of impact it has, if we are not opened for fall term, we lose both the room revenue as well as the required meal plan revenue.

We are looking at \$1.2 million worth of lost revenue.

Some of that can be impacted by reducing expenses.

We'll be looking at that side of the budget as well.

>> My question was, do we have a sense of closing the residence hall and what the will cost us?

In other words what we not be able to recover?

>> The big ones are some of the contractual agreements we have with service providers like Apogee.

Of course, it is the death debt service on residence hall.

Those are the big ones.

The labor side is the third big one and we will have to look at that labor composition to see which of those positions will be needed and which ones we will not need.

Those are the big three.

>> I'm sure were looking into it but I want to ask the question.

Have we talked to legal counsel about our existing contracts to make sure there's not some existing opportunity?

>> I can answer that.

The person who is lead staff member supervising housing is in conversations with Apogee the Internet service provider.

They are looking at what type of accommodations they can make for housing.

Pandemics are not necessarily covered in the standard language.

They are willing to work with their different clients.

We should know more within the next week or so.

>> I would encourage you to talk to a lawyer about contract language.

Having some success personally with contracts.

The big contract I worked on in another part of my life for a conference that got canceled before the governor issued an order requiring cancellation.

We were able to get a significant portion of our contract voided.

It's not necessarily with the linkage of the document says that because there is a force clause under Oregon law.

I think it's worth making sure you look into it.

>> Thanks for that.

We have already seen Sodexo's willingness to reduce their fees to us.

They are not providing any service because there are no students here.

We are already seeing some of that in action already.

A couple of other things -with these actions we took, the furlough and layoffs and such we will keep being very conservative.

We will see a spike and we have seen a spike in her unemployment claims.

As you can imagine we had to furlough some folks.

They are eligible for unemployment.

Something I'm finding that was a surprise to me is when the unemployment or self insured for unemployment claims, apparently when they determine claims they look back 18 months.

If we have employees left the college and went to work for someone else and then got laid off we are a participant in those claims.

Because of the fact that we are self-insured.

We saw over \$70,000 worth of claims in our last cycle.

In a normal year we would see about 40-50,000 for the full year.

We are going to see that.

The good news is armed unemployment reserve account we have set up started off with a pretty healthy balance of over \$300,000.

We will be able to absorb some of that lease for a period of time.

I would just summarize by saying we ended last year with a positive operating position.

We are starting off this year very conservative and fiscally responsible. I have been very appreciative of good discussion and the fact that we were very decisive about implementing fiscal actions early last year rather than waiting and hoping.

Some of the other schools did not fare near as well.

I'm pleased with where we are.

We are not immune to the impacts, but our fiscal position is similar with other schools.

Any other questions?

>> In regards to unemployment insurance reserve that we had about 300,000.

Is that something that's been accumulating over the years?

>> Thank you.

We anticipate what costs we would typically have in one year.

We always carry a balance forward of two-\$300,000 in anticipation of a potential spike.

>> Thank you.

>> Thank you, Dave.

The message is, we are well positioned in general, but I think you can see that there will be some difficult decisions ahead for us.

In short term and longer term when we look at what we are currently seeing as the state revenue projections in the upcoming biennium.

Budget is not our only challenge.

I don't know person on our team who would not like to be back at work this fall in a different environment.

We know we have additional work to do to improve our working conditions and our morale.

To keep Moralis eyes we can.

To that end, I ask and to lead a task force specifically about how we can improve our remote working conditions.

They have brought some recommendations forward that we are now reviewing because we think that is important.

We are creating some supervisor training for the remote work environment. It's applicable to the face-to-face environment as well.

We are doing that because we know this ongoing environment we are in continues to be a challenge.

A number of other steps.

Similarly, for our students that see and her team and e-learning have been doing a lot of work this summer to improve our remote instruction and online learning.

Alicia and her team also working hard on how we build community and keep morale high and mental health solid as we move to -as we continue with a primarily remote environment.

We actually, earlier this term did three different surveys.

One of our faculty and one of our staff and one of our students.

To assess how they were dealing with the remote environment and what we could potentially do about it.

A number of the things we have done like a task force on remote work learning, remote working conditions excuse me was a result of those recommendations.

Some of our work with e-learning in our faculty resulted in those recommendations.

We are doing those assessments and acting on them.

That will continue to be a challenge for us.

Final slide.

I think there are reasons to be proud of the work that this college has done.

You have heard already and you know from your experience as board members that the history of strong, financial stewardship at the college now serves as very well.

I am very grateful for it and I know you are as well.

I am really proud of how the faculty and staff and students have shown resilience and even in these tough times when it's easy to get tired and easy to get a little down it can see the glimmer of opportunity in a pretty dismal situation.

We try to focus on that and say, what can we do for the future?

Examples of grit and graciousness across the board really too many to mention.

I will call out a few.

We are making this decision at this time because we are about a month out from the start of fall term classes.

We knew we could not wait till the last minute.

To do the best job he could.

Literally, up until last week we were exploring all the options, our teams were getting ready to have more students and staff on campus.

They were exploring all the opportunities to be as expansive as we could be.

I told you all about how he looked at Juniper Paul.

We have really tried to balance keeping all of her options open until the right point in time.

Primarily, of course we want the health and safety of our community.

We are also here to serve.

We worked really hard struggling to find the safest and healthiest ways for us to be able to serve.

Jen and the college relations folks have led the creation of Spanish language and COVID-19 web content that is extensive and I think places as well amongst our peers in terms of our Spanish-language outreach for students.

I would be remiss and I know you're out there.

I know you are here.

Reopening task force.

They have done an amazing job grappling with all kinds of complex issues.

I think there might be -I will get some disappointment now that we cannot be as open as we would like to be.

Their work is still going to be needed.

It's still really important.

They get to continue and I know they are thrilled about that.

With that, I will ask if there any questions or feedback that you might have for us.

Anything you would like more information on or questions for any of the staff for me?

>> This is Janet, I'm interrupting to say Erica has asked me to do roll call which we did not do yet.

You mind if I do that quickly?

>> Not at all.

>> Great, thank you.

Taking role, [Taking attendance]

>> Questions?

Additional information we can try to provide?

>> I will just offer a short comment.

My wife and I took a short vacation this last week in my work schedule this week has been light.

It's the first time I have had this many days where I am not in clinic testing patients who are potentially COVID-19 positive.

I'm not checking the COVID-19 number update every day and spending time at home with the family.

It feels distant and like it's not that big of a deal and it's not that big of a threat.

I know when I go back to work this weekend I'm going to be there in the thick of it again and reminded of how ever present and dangerous this is.

I just want to say I know how frustrating and disappointing it is to have to step up.

I know how disappointing it is to step back from the plan that was proposed in July.

I'm very grateful you have decided to make this change.

I feel much more comfortable with this plan going forward.

I am proud of the work that all of you have put into this.

>> I just want to say along with the process when we first allowed Doctor Chesley to make decisions in a more dynamic way.

As we approve the plan we knew there would be adjustments.

As always, Doctor Chesley as the president of COCC.edu and the staff and your team have gone about this process in a really thoughtful way.

Just wanted to say I appreciate that.

Doing what's in the best interest of the community, students and employees.

Thank you for all the work you are doing!

>> Thank you.

It is a team.

>> It takes a village, right?

[laughter]

>> This is Allen. I want to second what everybody said.

We are doing a great job.

Thank you President Chesley for leading.

>> Of course we have a regular board meeting on September 9.

As is required and as we would do anyway, we will be reviewing the reopening plan and we will be giving you some additional information.

We will talk more about the steps of budget, working conditions and doing learning conditions and more.

You will receive monthly updates as expected.

>> Are there any other further comments or questions?

Okay.

Unless there's anything I have forgotten?

Thank you everybody for attending and have a good rest of your day.

>> Take care.

[end of call]