

Central Oregon Community College

# COCC

## magazine

2024



## A GROUNDBREAKING MOMENT

Transforming the Madras campus with health care and educator programs

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**COVER** Health care training is coming to COCC Madras. Photo by Timothy Park. Top to bottom: Opsis Architecture; Broadus Bees; Andy Tullis/*The Bulletin*.

## Letter From the President

Greetings, Central Oregon, and welcome to *COCC Magazine*, the annual publication of Central Oregon Community College. Read on for stories of graduates making a difference in the world of natural resources; for news about our 24,000-square-foot campus expansion in Jefferson County; and to see how community partnerships and support are essential to COCC's mission.

I was proud to highlight some of those essential partnerships during COCC's "State of the College" address held in January. It was our first-ever public event designed to share COCC's goals as we strive to best serve Central Oregon. During that event, I outlined how, together with many community organizations and industries, we engage collectively for the benefit of our region. Whether answering a workforce need with an all-new training program or standing together on a sustainability initiative, this collaboration moves us all forward.

As I shared in January, and emphasize now, COCC's mission is to empower students and engage communities through high-quality, equitable and accessible lifelong education. Our spring term is on the horizon and we're eager to continue recent enrollment momentum: After some years of pandemic-driven decreases, COCC's enrollment saw growth in the fall 2023 and winter 2024 terms. Students are coming to COCC to start new chapters, connect with new careers and forge fuller lives. We're honored to be part of their journeys.

Best regards,



Dr. Laurie Chesley  
COCC President



## Lecture Series Brings TALKS OF WONDER

A piece of a bear's leg bone, rendered into a crude flute, is believed by many in the scientific community to be the oldest known musical instrument. It was found in a cave in northwestern Slovenia in 1995, and when modeled into a working flute and played by a modern mouth, it produces the diatonic scale — a series of successive musical notes. Carbon-dated at more than 45,000 years old, the bone, perhaps, made a tune for a Neanderthal.

"We weren't supposed to invent that for another 20,000 years," neuroscientist Larry S. Sherman, Ph.D., remarked to an audience on COCC's Bend campus, referencing a more "contemporary" bone-fashioned instrument that's linked to Homo sapiens. Only our species, some argue, could have such creative capacity. But the femur flute speaks for itself.

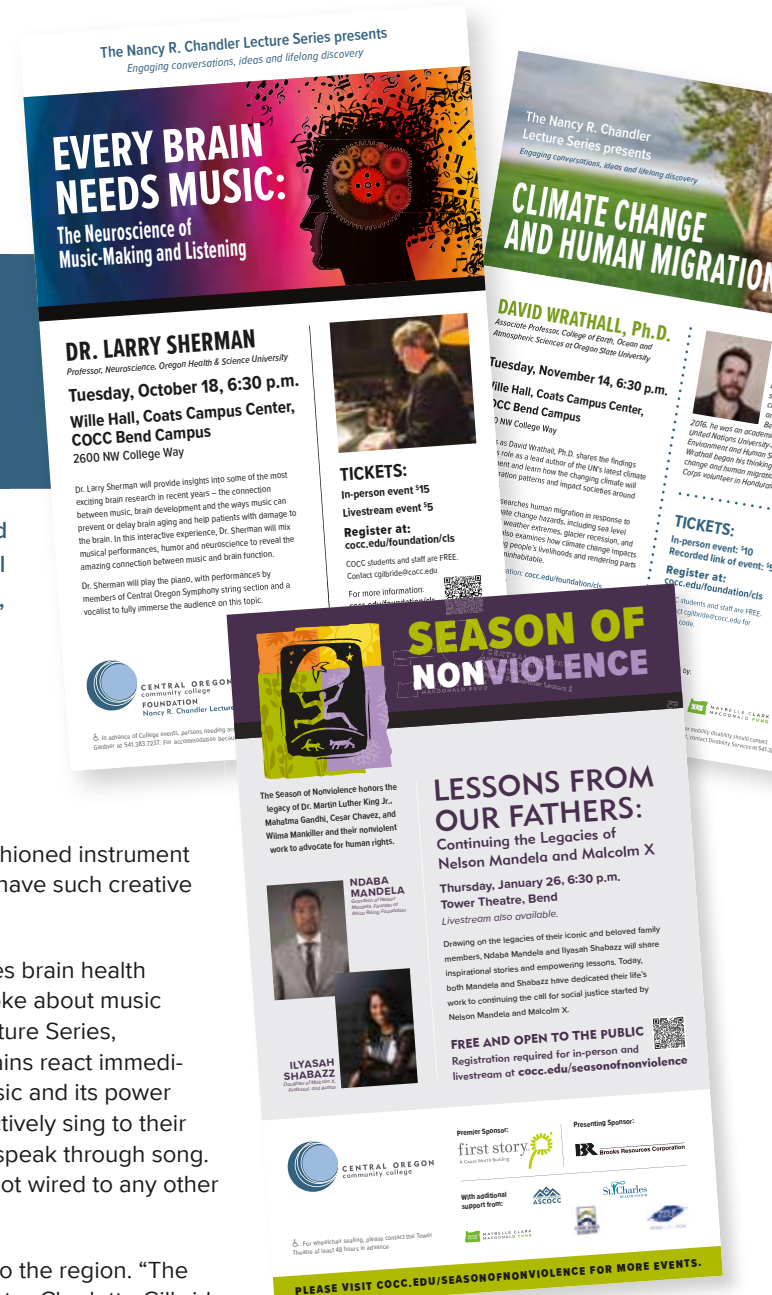
A professor with the National Primate Research Center — who studies brain health (and is a lifelong jazz and rock band pianist) — Sherman recently spoke about music and minds as part of the COCC Foundation's Nancy R. Chandler Lecture Series, a long-running scholarly program of inspiring presentations. "Our brains react immediately to music," Sherman enthused, his talk tracing the origins of music and its power to communicate, share stories and lock-in memories. Mothers instinctively sing to their children in all cultures. Non-verbal dementia patients can somehow speak through song. The associated neurons for all this brain activity are music-specific, not wired to any other sounds. Music profoundly matters to us.

Every year, the Chandler Lecture Series brings renowned speakers to the region. "The program has been engaging minds since 1985," says series coordinator Charlotte Gilbride, referring to when former *Bend Bulletin* publisher and editor Robert W. Chandler Sr. established the series in honor of his wife, Nancy. As media delegates for the High Desert, the Chandlers would often host visitors from across the nation — and around the world — where discussions frequently went beyond the headlines.

Some of the series programming is held in collaboration with other organizers, such as the High Desert Museum or the University of Oregon School of Journalism, for merged educational impact. All are free to COCC students, and many are free to the community. The caliber of events helped the series earn new support last year: The program received its first National Endowment for the Humanities grant — one of just 30 "Spotlight on Humanities in Higher Education" awards given out.

Many diverse speakers have sparked wonder over the years, such as Pulitzer Prize-nominated writer Maya Angelou, journalist Lulu Garcia-Navarro and educator Jelani Cobb. Activist Ndaba Mandela, grandson of Nelson Mandela, and Ilyasah Shabazz, daughter of Malcom X, were part of COCC's 2023 Season of Nonviolence, co-coordinated by the Chandler Lecture Series and the Diversity and Inclusion office, which this year includes *New York Times*-bestselling novelist T.J. Klune (April 9).

On the Chandler Lecture Series marquee this spring: "Art, Social Justice and the Radical Imaginary" with artist Favianna Rodriguez (April 30) and "Taking the High Road: From Community Secrets to Public Apology" with Professor Linda Tamura (May 14). Visit [cocc.edu/foundation/cls](http://cocc.edu/foundation/cls) for details.



## TOGETHER, WE CHANGE LIVES

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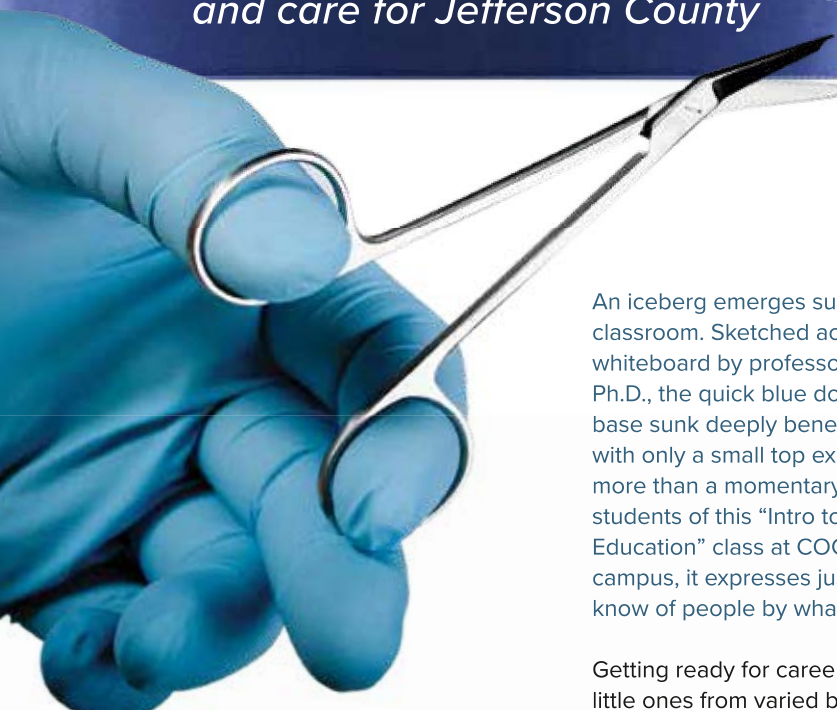
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# A GROUNDBREAKING MOMENT

*Investing in careers, community and care for Jefferson County*



An iceberg emerges suddenly in the classroom. Sketched across the room's whiteboard by professor Amy Howell, Ph.D., the quick blue doodle — its broad base sunk deeply beneath a waterline, with only a small top exposed — is more than a momentary visual. For students of this "Intro to Early Childhood Education" class at COCC's Bend campus, it expresses just how little we know of people by what's visible.

Getting ready for careers working with little ones from varied backgrounds, the class engages in a share session — of heritages, home lives and histories. The exercise quickly opens students' eyes to cultural and other differences. One student says that she and her family celebrate her adoption day every year. Another speaks mostly Spanish at home.

The classroom is set up like an elementary school with small worktables and brightly colored pen caddies, children's books lining the shelves. A little stuffed hedgehog sits atop a cabinet, clinging to a spotted mushroom with glee. Mirroring the work environment, the learning space is inspiring — and essential for certificates and degrees in the Early Childhood Education program.

It's also largely based at the Bend campus. But the College is currently underway with a project, supported by the COCC Foundation's "Growing Together" campaign, to develop a new facility at the Madras campus — anticipated to be fully open by the fall of 2025 — that will bring a second permanent training center for the Early Childhood Education program to Jefferson County.

It will serve an audience of early educators who tend to hail from beyond Bend: This past year, of the 10 students who completed their early learning degree or certificate, three were from Madras, one was from Warm Springs and two were from Redmond.

With curriculum delivered in both English and Spanish, the degrees and certificates will tie into an on-site child care space, fully managed by the long-running Children's Learning Center of Madras. Care and enrichment for toddlers and infants from the community will go hand in hand with experiential learning for COCC students, a cooperative formula that will serve some 100 children and their families with a critical workforce solution (see: "Child's Play is a Serious Topic.")

The 24,000-square-foot expansion will also house degree and certificate programs for the College's well-established Nursing, Nursing Assistant and Medical Assistant disciplines, all essential occupations for a county, like much of Central Oregon, that continues to grow rapidly. In all, across the four academic programs, as many as 88 individuals could potentially graduate each year.

## GATHERING MOMENTUM

Looking out over an open field of wild-grown wheatgrass, with Mt. Jefferson swaddled in clouds in the distance, Daleena Green stands at the edge of COCC's Madras campus on a hot spring day. A western meadowlark trills cheerily nearby. Green, the executive director of the Madras-based Bean Foundation, glances at the architectural rendering in her hands, looks around, and visualizes.

The plans depict a two-story, two-tone brick structure tucked into the slight hillside. Upstairs: science labs and simulated hospital spaces. Downstairs: The Children's Learning Center and early learning student observation rooms. The second level bridges to the existing building with an open patio, while a broad play area for toddlers and pre-kindergartners, below, fans out in the direction of the mountains.

"There's a lot of momentum for it, a lot of buzz," Green says of the project. After years of discussion and communal planning, the campus extension — on land gifted by the Bean Foundation — has taken design form. (Site preparation is currently underway.) The main goal that Al Bean set out to accomplish with the nonprofit he started in 1981, Green emphasizes, was to support education for local youth by partnering with the community. "This," she says, "checks all the boxes."

Fundraising for the "Growing Together" campaign is still very much ongoing, but the 26 acres gifted to COCC — coupled with the Bean Foundation's original 23-acre donation, which first established the Madras campus in 2011 — set the keystone. Adding significant support: a recently awarded \$1 million grant from the Oregon-based JTMF Foundation and \$4 million in funds from Oregon lottery revenue bonds.



**The expansion will also house the College's well-established Nursing, Nursing Assistant and Medical Assistant disciplines."**



Just beyond the overgrown edge of the donated property, a new pedestrian trail, installed by the city, rolls out in both directions. The seven-mile path connects many spots across the community of nearly 8,000 residents, including the high school and the College's campus. It's a literal track to higher education.

"While they're still in high school, our students will have expanded opportunities to earn college credit, saving them money and time along their educational journey," says Jay Mathisen, superintendent of the 509J School District, of the COCC expansion. "Graduates and their families will have affordable college and career opportunities that won't require them to move away."



**STAYING AND SERVING**  
Central Oregon, like much of the country, is confronting a severe medical worker shortage. Between 2020 and 2021, the number of registered nurses across the U.S. fell by more than 100,000, reports the National Council of State Boards of Nursing — by 2027, over 600,000 more are planning to retire or leave nursing. Becker's Hospital Review, a trade publication, recently estimated that some 3.2 million new health care workers, such as medical assistants and nursing assistants, will need to join the field over the next five years to keep pace with demand.

Recruiting and retention in rural areas is especially challenging, says Shannon Edgar, BSN, chief nursing officer for St. Charles Health System's Madras and Prineville locations. "This investment is going to help us ensure we have more

resources in the community," she says of the updated campus. "It's going to create a larger resource of trained professionals who are more likely to stay and serve in the community."

For Rosario Perez, that hometown option would have helped immensely. Having chosen health care studies straight from Madras High, the new Medical Assistant graduate spent untold hours and dollars just getting to class in Bend. "The difference it would have made for me is not having to spend so much on gas almost every day, and instead of spending almost two hours in a car every day, using that time to study," she says.

Perez persevered, completing one of her rotations at St. Charles' Madras clinic (one of two places she's considering working at in her community). "It's a very rewarding field," she says, sharing that helping quash barriers for Spanish speakers is part of what appeals to her about the profession. As the Madras campus expansion gets underway, so will meaningful careers and increased community well-being. New doors are opening — and a new day for Jefferson County is coming.

**Learn how you can get involved with the "Growing Together" campaign: [cocc.edu/growingtogether](http://cocc.edu/growingtogether)**

## CHILD'S PLAY IS A SERIOUS TOPIC

The acute lack of child care across the High Desert is a fixed roadblock for many families — options for furthering an education or continuing a career are simply beyond reach. Jefferson County is a glaring example. "We've had people on the waitlist for two years," shares Teresa Martin, executive director of The Children's Learning Center in Madras. "Our current list is around 40, from infants to age five."

When The Children's Learning Center's location opens on the Madras campus, all those little ones will immediately have a place to go. The five-classroom space will accommodate up to 100 children. By partnering with COCC, the licensed business (in operation since 1966) will provide easily accessible work experience necessary for students. "We know there is a huge demand for workers in the early childhood field," Martin adds, "and this partnership will allow us to help grow the field of providers."

The center will have other functions, too. COCC's Early Child Care Business Development Accelerator Program, a turnkey training partnership with NeighborImpact, will use the space to nurture licensed-and-ready child care owners in three months.



# A Path to a Bachelor's — and Beyond

**Leading to more than 40 distinct academic majors, two-year transfer degrees put students on a direct, affordable track to higher learning**

As a presenter at the 2022 Central Oregon Early Learning Conference at COCC — an annual, two-day professional development summit for regional educators — Luis Navez Dircio felt the significance of the moment. Some six years prior, Navez Dircio had been a COCC first-year student pursuing a plan of becoming a teacher, and the conference was a part of his learning experience. Now he was in front of the audience, sharing his knowledge.

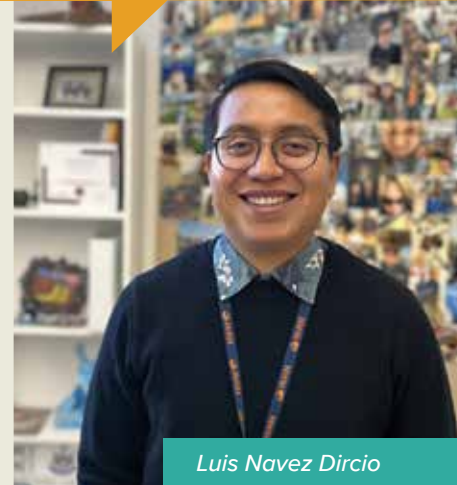
That path began with a transfer degree at COCC. Transfer degrees, which last year comprised some 55% of the overall awards issued by the College — the majority of which take the form of an Associate of Science degree or an Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer degree, an AAOT degree — connect students' COCC credits to four-year universities. The AAOT is designed to fully conform to state of Oregon public university guidelines and meet all lower-division requirements.

"I knew that education was the career that I wanted," recalls Navez Dircio, who went on to earn a bachelor's at Oregon State University-Cascades and a master's in special education from the University of Oregon. He became a learning specialist at Caldera High School and now works with students facing learning challenges, helping with study skills and homework, while also coaching soccer.

Framed around specific courses that shape the basis of a four-year degree, transfer degrees prep students for what's next — while keeping the first two years more affordable. The transfer areas of study are incredibly diverse at COCC, offering some 43 majors, from business and physics to economics and math to computer science and psychology.

“Earning this degree streamlined and simplified my educational path.”

"These degrees establish a stellar academic foundation," says Tyler Hayes, director of admissions and registrar at COCC. "Transfer degrees offer our students a chance to receive excellent instruction while staying close to home, and then smoothly transition into the four-year college experience." Other benefits: Class sizes are small and the course catalog is large.



Luis Navez Dircio

Many COCC transfer students have continued at OSU, UO and Portland State University — the current top-3 transfer destinations — but Oregon's public universities also include Eastern Oregon University, Oregon Institute of Technology, Southern Oregon University and Western Oregon University. A number of other institutions accept the AAOT degree, such as George Fox University, Linfield University, Pacific University, Willamette University and more. COCC grads have also chosen places like Arizona State University, the University of Wisconsin, Washington State University and the University of Montana to continue their journey.

"Earning the AAOT streamlined and simplified my educational path," says Kristen Howard, a paralegal who works in estate planning. It's exciting work, she shares, helping clients feel relief — and providing a human touch throughout the process. Her transfer degree took her to UO, where she earned a bachelor's in social science. A job as a judicial specialist with the Oregon Judicial Department inspired her to receive a paralegal certificate from OSU.

"If someone told me they were thinking about getting the AAOT, I would say do it," she says. "The peace of mind knowing that when I completed it, I could transfer seamlessly to U of O as a junior was a gift."

**Explore all COCC transfer degrees: [cocc.edu/degreeoptions](http://cocc.edu/degreeoptions)**

# Together for Community Learning

Partnering with local organizations and missions, Community Education at COCC amplifies outreach and lifelong learning



Sporting an amber-colored T-shirt that reads “Bee the Change,” master beekeeper Jimmy Wilkie stands in front of an evening Community Education class on COCC’s Bend campus and dispenses honeybee wisdom.

At some point in their short lives, Wilkie shares, all worker bees will be assigned the role of seeking out and transporting water to cool the hive down in summer — generally traveling up to a mile and a half before beelining back and expelling the liquid; busy wings create the cooling effect. If a hive needs to move their large queen, he adds, she’ll be fed less and slimmed down for the coming flight.

As to when honey can be harvested in Central Oregon, it’s once a year, close to

Labor Day when rabbitbrush is in bright yellow bloom and bees can quickly turn to that source of nectar for replenishing their winter stores. And yes, stings happen, Wilkie acknowledges, but being a good hive overseer can greatly reduce those odds.

“Managed bees are less aggressive,” he tells the 11 students, several of whom have journeyed from Prineville and Madras for the two-part class. “Some people say bees can recognize your face.”

“Beekeeping for Beginners,” now in its second year, is a toolkit-type class to get a backyard honey operation up and running. The course also connects Central Oregonians to their natural

world and helps activate food generation. Bees and their pollination, after all, are responsible for one out of every three bites of food we ingest.

As an active member of the Redmond-based Central Oregon Beekeeping Association, Wilkie brings a larger-purpose layer to his teaching, something that goes beyond hive essentials. His class draws attention to the mission of the community-oriented nonprofit and its part in confronting a disturbing trend of large-scale bee die-offs: From April 2022 to April 2023, for instance, U.S. beekeepers reported losing over 48% of their colonies due to adverse weather, pesticides and other factors.

Collaborating on these kinds of hands-on, lifelong learning experiences is a priority for the College. By working with groups and individuals who bridge into important initiatives, the Community Education course catalog can help amplify important work happening in the region.

Early last year, a new partnership with the Upper Deschutes Watershed Council brought a weeklong speaker series, “Learn About Your Home Waters,” to Bend and Sisters (and online, too). Focused on the Metolius River and the Upper Deschutes watersheds, the in-depth series featured six sessions apiece, including a river’s-edge tour. Currently, a similar series on Whychus Creek is underway in Sisters, and another series on the Upper Deschutes is potentially coming to Redmond in the future.

“These presentations offer a holistic understanding about our local watersheds,” explains Kris Knight, executive director of Upper Deschutes Watershed Council, whose nonprofit works to protect and restore the two-million-acre watershed. “It’s a great learning opportunity for citizens of Central Oregon to learn about their local rivers and streams.”

Attendees learn from scientists about topics like habitat restoration, river hydrology, water quality and native fish populations. The classes are co-promoted by both organizations and held with the support of COCC’s enrollment platform, streaming services and a meeting space if needed.



Modeled after this formula, a similar course with the Oregon Glaciers Institute is starting up this fall. The design of the class will include a combination of lectures and open-air experiences, such as a group hike to the glaciers that flank Broken Top. Students will learn about these vital, but fast-vanishing water-storage resources — of the 50 glaciers that existed in the southern Cascades in the 1950s, only 27 still persist.

“It’s our goal to partner with great local organizations that are already providing public education in our communities,” explains Stephanie Goetsch, coordinator of Community Education. “COCC can support their missions and help get the word out about the good work they do.”

[View the complete Community Education catalog: cocc.edu/ce](https://cocc.edu/ce)



## Collaborative Support Stokes Summer Camps

Summer camp can set the table for some truly memorable learning. “My 11-year-old is fairly blasé about most things, but the instructors of this camp class completely enthralled her. This was world-class culinary instruction.” Shared by a parent of a COCC Youth Camps participant, these words capture the impact of the Community Education summer program — with camps in coding, theater, criminal justice, aviation, digital music production and culinary, to name a few — held each year (with some options available year-round) for ages 10-15 at the College’s four campuses.

But not every household can budget for camp costs. To help make the Youth Camps more accessible to more families, a generous award last year from the Sisters-based Roundhouse Foundation covered the tuition, fully or partially, of 213 rural, underserved youth in Madras, Prineville and Redmond. The \$20,000 grant supported instructional costs and paid for 20 individual camps, with topics in STEM-based learning.

Additionally, funding from the Marie Lamfrom Charitable Trust, totaling \$37,500, provided incredible assistance to cover two staff members’ part-time salaries in the Community Education department, and these managers combined on the oversight and development of camp curriculum. A portion of the grant helped establish a fund for future scholarships.

Because of these funding partners and their commitment to Youth Camps at COCC, underserved local students are able to access summertime learning opportunities — and start to see the road to higher learning rising in front of them.

Left: Broadus Bees. Middle top: John Moore. Middle bottom: Hal DeShow. Right: Timothy Park.

# STEWARDS OF THE NATURAL WORLD

How the work of two COCC grads is impacting Oregon's precious wildlife and water resources



Jamie Bowles

Deep in the hemlock forests and volcanic slopes of Oregon's southern Cascades, there's a small, secretive and very rare resident: the Sierra Nevada red fox. It's so rare, in fact, estimates indicate fewer than 40 of the foxes exist, spread between Oregon and California. That bleak fact has earned the fox a place on the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's "Strategy Species" list, among 29 mammals of great conservation need.

But Jamie Bowles knows the fox well. Or at least better than just about anyone else in Oregon — which comes with a caveat. "There's hardly anything known about them," she shares, having radio-collared and studied the phantom-like animal for more than five years. She has tracked individuals with radio telemetry, learning about their habitat (high elevation, averaging 6,400'), home-range size (about 50 square miles) and den-site preferences (rockslide and earthen abodes, often reused for multiple litters). Along the way, she's become the state's expert.

Bowles got her start at COCC, coming to the College in 2010 after the recession

derailed her medical job. She found new footing with a transfer degree, later landing an internship with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife that involved trap-netting invasive fish from a boat on local high lakes. "I absolutely loved it," she recalls. "It was dirty work, the weather was crazy, we worked really long days." For someone who grew up hunting and fishing, seeing the world of wildlife through a career lens brought new focus.

After earning a bachelor's degree in natural resources management at Oregon State University-Cascades, Bowles completed a master's at OSU, composing her thesis on the fox. Her job at the time, as an Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife field technician, helped pin her research to resources, resulting in a project that benefited the state. "I didn't know anything about foxes prior to starting my tech position," she shares. Now, just a decade later, she serves as the agency's regional district habitat biologist.

Her "office" is epic. It's an area that spans the cobble banks of the Columbia River, south along the 252-mile Deschutes River and its

watershed, and down into the pine forests and open plains around northern Klamath County. A day's work might be on a helicopter conducting deer and pronghorn herd composition counts near Fort Rock. Or she might meet with county officials near The Dalles to discuss habitat survey needs around wind turbine installations.

Along Highway 97, Bowles has worked with the Oregon Department of Transportation to develop a series of wildlife crossings, seven in all, from Sunriver to Gilchrist. These underpasses and connected fence segments help keep animals and vehicles from fatal contact. "Deer and elk have been using it, wolves have been using it, mountain lions use it," she says. "We see a lot more action during migration period, in fall and spring."

From little-known foxes to reemerging wolverines to overpopulating barred owls, all are part of Bowles' significant stewardship. "We're a resource," she says, "for going out and doing the research necessary to determine how it is that we can conserve these fish and wildlife populations for future generations."

## CARRIED ON WATER

Sitting in his home office in Bend, Breck Flanagan-Caldwell is surrounded by mountainous topographic maps, nature-themed literature and a chart of Oregon's fresh waters. On a shelf, a scene from Celilo Falls on the Columbia River, captured in an 1899 black-and-white photo, shows several shawled Native American figures gathered above the salmon-churned pool. It portrays a moment in time, a long look back at a once-undammed habitat.

The view forward, even in the near term, is also looking black and white. In an era of changing climate and rising development, water use, particularly in the West, is under new scrutiny. An evolving relationship with water is required. Many users, from food producers to booming communities, are relying on a resource that demands stewardship like never before. Oregon recently recorded its driest period on record — going back 1,200 years — between 2000 and 2021.

As a water rights certificate specialist with the Oregon Water Resources Department, Flanagan-Caldwell, who splits his time between his Bend home and an office in Salem, deals in rate and volume. And in people and places.

"I'm responsible for processing applications for new water rights authorizations," he explains. "And I process proposed changes to existing water rights." Which is to say that he applies state statutes and administrative rules to ensure Oregon water law compliance, together with

natural resource policies. It's a job focused on addressing sufficient, sustainable water supplies.

Having grown up in Bend, Flanagan-Caldwell spent his early years exploring Oregon's many natural wonders. At COCC, he instantly enjoyed the field trips and outdoor labs, and simultaneously took classes at OSU-Cascades through the shared dual-enrollment program, combining studies to earn a bachelor's degree in natural resources.

An early job as a field technician with the Swalley Irrigation District in Tumalo involved working at the intersection of water reclamation and agriculture. "I really took an interest in water policy and water governance, especially with the work that happens locally," he says of that experience. He contributed to the district's canal-to-pipe conservation efforts, playing a part in some of the largest conserved-water contributions impacting the Middle Deschutes River.

Later, as a conservation technician with the Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation District, Flanagan-Caldwell

helped with the district's inclusion in the Deschutes Basin Water Collaborative, involving 80-plus groups — farmers, environmental groups, the Confederated Tribes and others — in the basin, all working toward stream flow, ecological, agricultural and community needs.

Oregon's immediate challenges include overdrawn aquifers, updating an approach to how groundwater is regulated, and keeping equity, culture and ecology at the forefront. Flanagan-Caldwell, who currently serves as a board member with the Deschutes Land Trust and hopes to pursue an advanced degree in water policy, is someone whose work with diverse communities will contribute to facing that new frontier.

"I see a world right now that's grappling with water supply and demand imbalances, and the different interplays between socioeconomic and environmental factors," he adds. "From a management perspective, it's possible that we can be a model for other basins in the West when exploring solutions."

Many users, from food producers to booming communities, are relying on a resource that demands stewardship like never before.



Breck Flanagan-Caldwell

# NOTEBOOK

A quick glance at some of the latest news and offerings at the College



## Harbor for Higher Learning

The High Desert may be a long way from the high seas, but a growing partnership between the U.S. Coast Guard and COCC is bringing a “Coastie” focus to two technical training areas at the College: Culinary and Automotive Technology. Students pursuing a degree in Culinary Arts or Baking and Pastry at the Cascade Culinary Institute are eligible (at the time of publication) for a \$75,000 sign-on bonus by committing to being a Coast Guard chef for four years. Completers of the program are eligible for direct-entry petty officer training, a three-week course in lieu of eight-week boot camp, along with advancing to fifth highest out of nine possible ranks. COCC’s is the only culinary program in the Northwest the service branch is partnered with. “It’s amazing, students get to further their degree as a specialist. It creates a whole career pathway,” says Thor Erickson, associate professor of Culinary. A similarly designed arrangement began this past fall with the College’s Master Automotive Service Technician certificate, with students able to transfer engine and systems training to the Coast Guard for increased pay and rank, plus a \$20,000 sign-on bonus (at the time of publication).

## Sustainability in Action

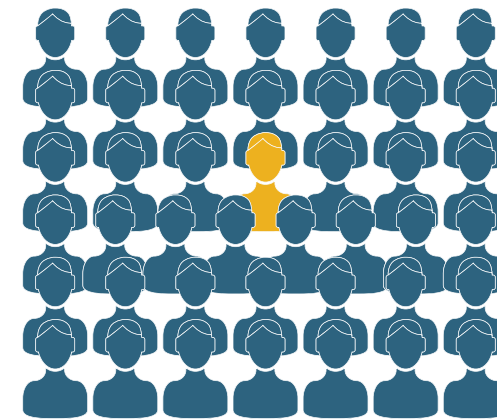
Building upon prior sustainability efforts — which greatly expanded with COCC’s recently signed higher education Presidents’ Climate Commitment — the College last year received a grant from the Oregon Clean Fuels Program and Pacific Power to purchase two all-electric Chevy Bolts for student learning and staff work trips. Free public charging stations have been available on the Redmond and Madras campuses since 2019, and last year a station was added to the Prineville campus; a Bend campus station is underway. E-bikes, too, are part of the update: Last spring, the Campus Safety department bought two throttle-style e-bikes for its team to reduce driving miles. And the Automotive Technology program used state funds to add a pre-owned Tesla to its teaching-oriented motor pool. These collective moves reflect a larger COCC focus on carbon neutrality, which involves sustainability-focused curriculum, EV-hybrid training and a key role — made possible by a \$3 million National Science Foundation grant — in developing national certification standards for EV technicians.



## Nursing Reaches a New Level

Nationwide, the number of registered nurses fell by more than 100,000 between 2020 and 2021, reports the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, and by 2027, over 600,000 more are planning to retire or leave the field. To meet the rising need of RNs at all levels, COCC will soon offer a bachelor’s degree in Nursing, or BSN. The Oregon Legislature passed SB 523 in 2023, giving community colleges authority to provide this education. The program is expected to start up in 2025 and offer 10 to 20 slots per year. “This provides a valuable local option to RN graduates,” says Joan Ching, chief nurse executive at St. Charles Health System. “They can continue their education with familiar faculty, learning environments, student supports and — critically — a more affordable career pathway than currently exists.” The selective admissions program will be open to RNs and lead to leadership roles and higher pay.

# COCC’S ECONOMIC IMPACT



**1** out of every **43** JOBS

The activities of COCC and its students support **3,562** jobs annually, or **one out of 43 jobs** in the COCC district.

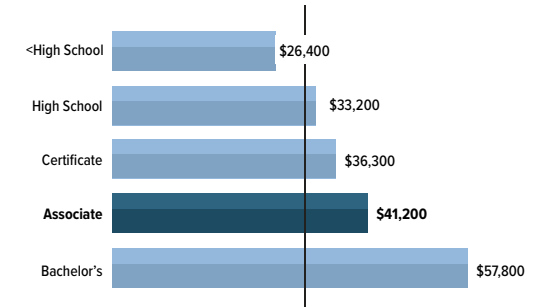


**\$289.6M**

**ANNUAL TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT**

Through operations, student spending and alumni impact, COCC’s total annual impact equals **\$289.6 million** or **3,562** jobs supported.

Source: *The Economic Value of Central Oregon Community College (Fiscal Year 2021-22)* by Lightcast Economic Impact Study



**\$8,000**

**INCREASE IN EARNINGS**

The average associate degree graduate from COCC will see an **increase in earnings of \$8,000** each year compared to someone with a high school diploma working in Oregon.





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