

This will go down in history as the week when Oregon community colleges were first approved for a state appropriation of half-a-billion dollars. While it isn't everything we asked for, it is a giant step in the right direction with still a couple weeks left in this session and, as they say in opera, it ain't over 'til the fat lady sings. (Actually, I've only ever heard people say that about baseball when they appear to be making an opera reference but I digress.)

There have been a number of questions about media reports that community colleges got \$511 million. This is confusing if you don't understand that the appropriation is to the Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development, of which, the Community College Support Fund is the largest part. To be clear, here's what is actually in the bill that was sent to the full Ways and Means Committee Monday.

Community College Support Fund	\$500,000,000
CCWD office operations	\$2,165,920
Office Operations increase	\$1,085,710
Career Pathways	\$0
Statewide Financial Aid Exchange	\$438,000
Healthcare Workforce Initiative	\$2,205,000
Integrated Management Information System	\$1,700,000
Virtual Learning	\$0
Workforce & Career Readiness Certificate	\$0
Skill Up Oregon	\$0
Debt Service	\$3,516,206
Total	\$511,110,836

When we've been talking all session long about \$529 million to be distributed to community colleges, that was the recommended appropriation to the Community College Support Fund adopted by the State Board of Education. It compares (apples to apples) to the \$500 million in this bill– not the total agency budget.

On the capital construction front, there have been serious meetings the last couple of days between the Governor and the Legislative Leadership to discuss capital appropriations. We have not yet seen what the Legislative Fiscal recommendation for community colleges capital will be but we are encouraged both by the length of the conversations and the rumors that are wafting out from under closed doors that we will be getting a substantial appropriation for capital projects.

Also this week, work sessions are underway for the policy recommendations that will guide the distribution of the Shared Responsibility Model for Financial Aid distribution. The budget for financial aid has already passed out with a \$43 million increase. These conversations are about how those funds will be accessed. We'll keep you posted on those decisions as they are made.

This is the first week this session that the legislature will stay in town and work through Saturday. That's a clear sign that sine die isn't far off.