Clackamas Community College plans $90 million bond measure to finance campus upgrade

If voters approve a $90 million bond measure, Clackamas Community College would spend some of the money to upgrade equipment and training for high-demand careers, such as healthcare and engineering. (Clackamas Community College)

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After a resounding defeat in 2011, Clackamas Community College will again ask voters to pass a bond measure that would pay for new buildings and equipment.

Last week, the college district's board of directors told college President Joanne Truesdell to start work on a $90 million money measure that would be on the November ballot.

Voters rejected a $130 million bond measure in May 2011 by nearly a 2-1 ratio. In 2000, voters passed a $47 million measure that paid for several new buildings.

The college has more than $90 million worth of projects on its wish list. Over the next few months, Truesdell identify which projects will make the cut. She'll report back to the board in June. The board will decide in July whether to put the measure on the ballot.

The goal is "to increase affordable education options and job training for high-demand careers by modernizing our facilities," Truesdell said. Surveys show strong support for the money measure, she said.

Among the projects under consideration:

-- An "industrial/technical learning center" with labs and classrooms for students in electronic, automotive, manufacturing, welding and skilled trades programs, such as electricians and plumbers.

-- Updating and modernizing equipment and facilities for training students in those "high-demand jobs such as healthcare, science and engineering.

-- Upgrading electrical, heating, ventilation and plumbing systems.

-- Replacing workforce development facility to replace at the Harmony Community Campus.

If the measure passes, district taxpayers would see a slight increase in property taxes but the rate would decrease as bonds are paid off, said Jim Huckestein, vice president for college services.

Truesdell said the district is requesting less money this time for several reasons. The district's tax base has increased...
over the years, the district qualifies for $16 million in state matching grants; successful fundraising and increased corporate donations.

The college explained in a news lease how it assessed public demand for a bigger and better campus:

"CCC surveyed and interviewed more than 2,000 area residents in 2013 for the Imagine Clackamas community engagement process. Among the many lessons learned through the process was that people in the college district would like to see modernized facilities and equipment to meet the needs of the changing economy and workforce.

"Based on that feedback, CCC undertook two studies of its facilities: a strategic assessment to determine educational and training needs of college programs and an appraisal of work needed to maintain current facilities for the public. All of this information was studied and considered by college faculty and staff to identify gaps in current facilities, learning spaces and equipment.

"In January, an independent research firm conducted research on behalf of CCC to assess support for a bond measure that would meet the needs of the college and the community while continuing the current average tax rate. The results of the January survey found that 64 percent of respondents favored the proposed $90 million bond measure."

-- Steve Mayes

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