Clackamas Community College refers $90 million facilities bond to November ballot

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

(Clackamas Community College)

Michael Bamesberger | mbamesberger@oregonian.com
By Michael Bamesberger | mbamesberger@oregonian.com
Email the author | Follow on Twitter

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Clackamas Community College will ask voters in November to approve a $90 million bond to upgrade and expand its facilities.

College officials say modernized classrooms and laboratories would allow the college to better prepare students for highly specialized and in-demand jobs in fields such as engineering and healthcare.

"There were 32,000 jobs in Oregon last year that went unfilled because workers didn't have the right skills," said Greg Chaimov, a member of the college's Board of Education.

Increasingly, employers want prospective employees to be trained in using the latest technology before they're hired, Chaimov said. But many of the college's programs do not have the newest machinery or don't have the space to accommodate it.

"Industry after industry, we're finding that we're a step behind the curve," he said.

The board on Wednesday referred the bond measure to the Nov. 4 ballot. Though the board will finalize the projects on July 30, the list will likely include:

- The construction of a new "industrial technical center" at the Oregon City campus. The center will include new labs and classrooms for programs like electronics, automotive, manufacturing, welding and more.
- Replacing a 61-year-old building at the Harmony Road campus with a new workforce development and training facility.
- Updating equipment and facilities campus-wide for training in high-demand industries like healthcare, science and engineering.
- Replacing worn-out electrical, heating, ventilation and plumbing systems in existing buildings.

The bond would be phased in slowly to coincide with the expiration of an earlier bond in 2020, Chaimov said.
Residents in the district wouldn't see any increase in the 19 cents per $1,000 tax rate on assessed property value, he said. For the owner of a $250,000 home, that tax rate amounts to about $47.50.

The district covers much of Clackamas County except for Lake Oswego, which is served by Portland Community College, as well as Sandy, Damascus, and Boring.

Clackamas Community College President Joanne Truesdell said the college has raised $20 million in grants, donations and outside funding, with more on the way. "I'm confident we'll get to $40 million," she said.

The goal of the bond is to really help the community, she said. Clackamas Community College is the least expensive community college in the state and the upgrades will allow many students in the area access to family-wage jobs.

**Voters rejected a $130 million bond measure** in May 2011 by nearly a 2-1 ratio. In 2003, voters passed a $47 million measure that paid for several new buildings.

Officials believe the college now has support for a bond. Early polling shows 64 percent are in favor, Chaimov said.

-- Michael Bamesberger

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