NEWS RELEASE

July 17, 2013

$8 million award to RCC will enhance economic development; regional health care systems to benefit

Rogue Community College will receive $8 million in state capital construction bonds – an award that will boost regional job training, economic development, and health care.

“These funds will help RCC further develop our allied health and science programs and will result in more people trained for skilled jobs and a healthier economy,” said RCC President Peter Angstadt.

Approved by the Oregon Legislature, the funds will be used to upgrade and expand RCC allied health and science facilities at the college’s three campuses in Jackson and Josephine counties, increasing lab and classroom space and purchasing new equipment. In order to receive $8 million from the state, the college will be required to raise $8 million in matching funds.

“It’s important to continue our work to secure a financial commitment of local dollars to match the state grant, which will require the full support of everyone in our region,” Angstadt said.

The total $16 million project will play a vital role in local economic development by training an estimated 460 students in the first three years of operation with student enrollment projected to grow in each of the following five years. The funds also will allow RCC to expand partnerships with hospitals and other local and regional health providers.

The Legislature’s principle in providing capital construction bonds is economic development and training for high-demand jobs, according to President Angstadt.

“We anticipate 460 graduates from health care programs over a three-year period, employed in essential allied health careers, which will provide an additional $16 million to regional private payrolls,” he noted.

RCC currently offers allied health care programs in such areas as dental assisting, certified nursing assistant, and emergency medical technology. Every year, approximately 125 students graduate from these programs, move into the workforce and begin their careers — and the demand is growing. RCC also offers professional health care training including nursing, pre-dental hygiene, pre-medical imaging, and pre-medicine programs (dentistry, medicine, optometry, pharmacy, and veterinary).

“We continually have many more applicants than we have space to accommodate,” Angstadt explained. “In 2012, our dental assistant program had more than 50 applicants for just 24 slots, and every seat in our certified nursing assistant class filled within minutes after registration opened. Due to space and staff limitations,
we are able to offer training for only 10 of the 26 highest-demand healthcare occupations,” he added.

Employment in the health care sector is strong and provides a good opportunity for RCC graduates. Health care providers in the area have unfilled positions, and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics expects employment in these occupations to grow by 35 percent in the next decade. Locally, the state Employment Department reports the number of jobs available in allied health fields in Jackson and Josephine counties will grow an average of 22 percent between 2010 and 2020. Currently, approximately 90 percent of RCC students find jobs in their career area within six to nine months of graduation.

“All these factors point to a tremendous demand in our area – and the nation – for qualified health care graduates,” Angstadt said. “In response to this escalating need, we have worked with a local consortium of health care employers to develop a response. The result is a proposal to expand our allied health programs to increase the number of students we can accept and add programs in areas identified by local providers as having the greatest need,” he explained.

“In order to achieve these goals and position ourselves for future growth, expansion and upgrades to our health and science facilities, labs and classroom spaces are necessary,” Angstadt concluded.

RCC’s plan is to phase in expansion beginning with programs for Certified Nursing Assistant – Acute Care and Clinical Laboratory Assistant. Rogue has entered agreements with two other Oregon community colleges to give students training opportunities in physical therapy and occupational therapy assistant programs.

The college also has plans to provide training for highly skilled positions in many other areas and is working with industry partners to build a 50,000-square-foot flexible technology lab. A $500,000 state matching grant, already in hand, would be used to develop the flex tech lab: high-bay shop spaces with moveable walls that would allow quick reconfiguration for different types of training. The lab’s design also would make it easier to add new programs quickly as demand arises.

“We are working with employers to develop the skilled employees they need to succeed,” Angstadt said. “We are creating the right training for the right people at the right time.”

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