



Project Esfuerzo

From Commitment to Completion at Chemeketa Community College, a proud Hispanic Serving Institution in the Willamette Valley of western Oregon.

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Introduction: Regional and Institutional Profile

Region

Located in the heart of Oregon’s Willamette Valley, Chemeketa’s service area includes Marion, Polk, and Yamhill counties. The service area is largely rural; however, there exists both urban and suburban populations present in the cities of Salem, Woodburn, McMinnville, and Dallas, where Chemeketa has campuses or centers.

Ethnic diversity. Chemeketa’s district is among Oregon’s most ethnically diverse, with 32% identifying as BIPOC including 24% identifying as Hispanic. This is in comparison to a statewide proportion of 29% identifying as BIPOC and 14% identifying as Hispanic.¹ In the public school districts within Chemeketa’s service area, 45% of students identify as Hispanic.² Further, 21% of the population speak a language other than English at home.

Low income. The district includes some of the state’s lowest-income populations. The most recent US Census data³ show 13% of the population is in poverty. According to the most recent data available, among individuals 18-29 years old, 38% were eligible for SNAP benefits in Marion county, 31% were eligible in Polk county, and 27% were eligible in Yamhill county. Among Hispanic individuals, 48% were eligible for SNAP benefits in Marion county, 27% were eligible in Polk county, and 42% were eligible in Yamhill county.⁴ In the public schools within Chemeketa’s district, 61% of schools have more than 50% of their students qualify for free or reduced lunch and 35% of schools have more than 70% of their students qualify⁵.

Low bachelor’s degree attainment. Only 26% of adults in the community hold a bachelor’s degree or higher. Low bachelor’s degree attainment can pose a significant barrier in this district: The fastest

¹ United States Census Bureau, “QuickFacts: Polk County, Oregon; Yamhill County, Oregon; Marion County, Oregon”

² Northwest Regional Education Service District, Oregon Schools Data, Demographics

³ United States Census Bureau, “QuickFacts: Polk County, Oregon; Yamhill County, Oregon; Marion County, Oregon”

⁴ United States Census Bureau, “Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Eligibility & Access”

⁵ Oregon Department of Education, “Free and Reduced Price Eligibility of Oregon Public Schools, valid March 1st, 2023 - February 28th, 2024”

growing industries in both the Salem Metropolitan Statistical Area and Yamhill county are private education and health services. The fastest growing job groups include computer and mathematical, architectural and engineering, healthcare practitioners and technical, and community and social service. Further, Salem is the state capital. As such many professional opportunities are governmental or affiliated with the government. All these job groups typically require postsecondary education and bachelor’s degree attainment.⁶ Mirroring the community, many Chemeketa students are low-income and place-bound, working, supporting families, and often pursuing education with minimal or no financial or family support.

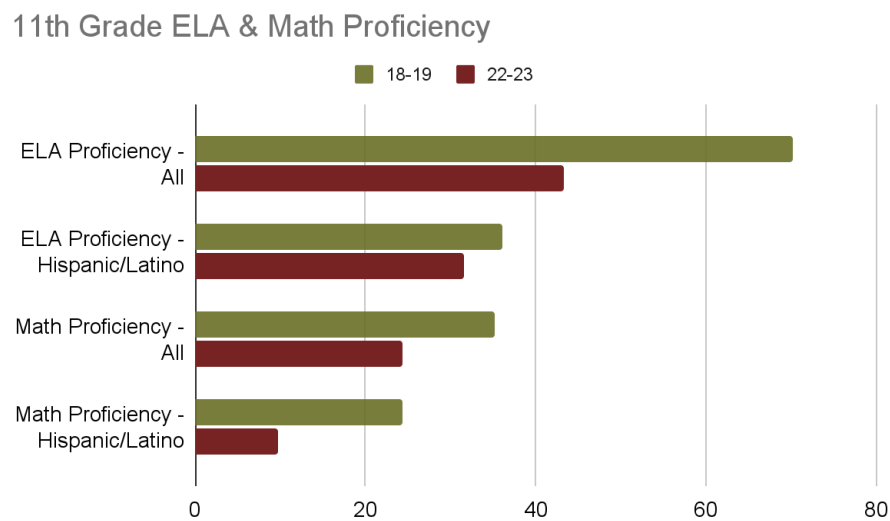


Figure 1, Proficiency rates in English Language Arts and Mathematics based on Smarter Balanced results, school year 2018-2019 compared to school year 2022-23.

Pandemic-related learning loss. The current students arriving at the college had significant disruptions to their education over the last three years and that impact is expected to continue for the next several years. Schools in the area were closed for longer periods of time than most of the country, which disproportionately affected those students with low access to internet and technology, parents with jobs that did not allow remote work, and those attending under-resourced schools. Indeed, English language

⁶ Ramos, Nicole S. State of Oregon Employment Department, “Mid-Valley Economic Indicators, December Data,” <https://www.qualityinfo.org/mid-valley>

arts (ELA) and mathematical competency among Oregon’s K-12 student population, as measured by the Smarter Balance statewide assessment, continues to show learning loss as a result of pandemic restrictions (see Figure 1.) For the 22-23 academic year, among all 11th grade students in Chemeketa’s feeder districts, there was a 26.9 percentage point decline in ELA proficiency and a 28.6 percentage point decline for Hispanic/Latinx students when compared with the 18-19 school year. The decline was more profound in math: Hispanic students' math proficiency dropped by more than 60%, from 29.4% meeting standards to a dismal 9.8%.⁷

Institution

Chemeketa Community College centers its success on creating equitable academic and co-curricular learning opportunities for students. Chemeketa’s mission is to transform lives and strengthen communities through quality education, services, and workforce training. Its vision, reflected in the meaning of its name, Chemeketa (Kalapuya for “gathering place”), is to be a gathering place for lifelong learning. The college is a proud, federally designated Hispanic Serving Institution, with more than 32% of students identifying as Hispanic and 41% as BIPOC. Chemeketa was named as a 2022 Most Promising Places to Work in Community Colleges by *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education* and the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD).

Programs and degrees. With two campuses, two outreach centers, a viticulture center, a regional training facility, and a Center for Business and Industry, Chemeketa offers:

- 13 associates degree and 17 certificate programs in Agriculture, Industrial Technology & Skilled Trades
- Two associates degree and six transfer programs in Arts, Humanities & Communications
- Seven associates degree and 17 certificate programs in Business & Hospitality

⁷ Oregon Department of Education, Assessment Group Reports, School Year 2022-23 and 2018-19.
<https://www.oregon.gov/ode/educator-resources/assessment/pages/assessment-group-reports.aspx>

- Two associates degree, nine transfer, four certificate programs and one licensure program in Education and Social Sciences
- Seven associate degree and six certificate programs in Emergency Services & Public Safety
- Seven associate degree and eight certificate programs in Health Professions and Wellness
- Seven associate degree, eight transfer, and four certificate programs in Science, Technology, Engineering & Math

In the 2023-24 academic year, Chemeketa launched its first bachelor's degree in applied science, a BAS in Applied Leadership and Management. These programs are fully accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities with additional oversight by the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission.

Enrollment and demographics. For the 2022-23 academic year, Chemeketa reported a total Full Time Equivalency enrollment of 7,153 and an unduplicated headcount of 17,894. Of the credit-seeking students, 40% identify as BIPOC, including 30% identifying as Hispanic/Latinx. Thirty-six percent are first-generation college students. Of the beginning, full-time students, 60% receive federal financial aid and 49% percent receive a Pell grant. More than a third are working twenty hours a week or more to support themselves while attending college. Female-identifying students represent 56% of credit student enrollment, and male-identifying students make up 44% of enrollment. The majority of Chemeketa's students enroll in gateway, college credit-bearing courses in math and writing, given our largely self-directed placement process. In academic year 2022-23, approximately 8% enrolled in developmental math or writing coursework.

Distance education. Chemeketa has offered asynchronous, online courses since the late 1990s. Hybrid courses - a blend of asynchronous online and onsite instruction - have been offered since the early 2000s. As a result of the emergency shift to synchronous, online (i.e., remote) learning during academic years 19-20 and 20-21, Chemeketa expanded its course delivery methods to include a remote delivery option. On average, 40% of enrolled students are

taking either asynchronous or synchronous online courses, or a blended course, utilizing a combination of synchronous and asynchronous online and onsite environments.

A. Quality of the Applicant's Comprehensive Development Plan

A1. The strengths, weaknesses, and significant problems of the institution's academic programs, institutional management, and fiscal stability are clearly and comprehensively analyzed and result from a process that involved major constituencies of the institution.

In winter of 2023, President Jessica Howard convened a committee charged with assessing Chemeketa's programs, management, and fiscal stability with the goal of identifying activities that would result in the improvement of the retention, graduation, and transfer of our Hispanic and BIPOC students. Using the term coined by Gina Ann Garcia,⁸ the committee's goal was to enhance Chemeketa's *servingsness*. The committee was constituted by the Chief Diversity Officer; the Executive Dean of Students, the Executive Dean over Career and Technical Education; the deans over Academic and Organizational Effectiveness, Academic Development, the Woodburn Center, the Center for Academic Innovation, and High School Partnerships; the directors of Chemeketa's College Access Programs (TRiO, CAMP), Talent Search and Upward Bound, and Workforce Partnerships; and two full-time faculty. The committee examined data available from multiple sources, representing input from a broad range of constituencies:

- Strategic Scorecard
- Equity Scorecard
- Campus Climate Survey
- CCSSE Survey
- SENSE Survey
- Budget Presentations to the Board of Education
- Community Polling Results
- Early Alert and Retention Center data

⁸ Garcia, Gina A. "Defining 'Servingsness' at Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs): Practical Implications for HSI Leaders," American Council on Education, <https://www.equityinhighered.org/resources/ideas-and-insights/defining-servingsness-at-hispanic-serving-institutions-hsis-practical-implications-for-hsi-leaders/>

From this data, the committee was gratified with significant advances made with respect to serving Chemeketa’s Hispanic/Latinx students, while also recognizing much work remained.

Project Esferzo, with its focus on addressing barriers to full-time study, successful course completion, and support for Hispanic/Latino male recruitment, retention, and success, will see a significant expansion in college completion rates.

Analysis of Academic Program Strengths and Weaknesses

Academic Program Strengths	Academic Program Weaknesses/Opportunities
Maturing Guided Pathways framework	Low retention, graduation, and transfer rates
Expanded student support capacity through institutional reorganization	Low Hispanic male student retention, graduation, and transfer
Digital tools for retention efforts	Loss of students with full-time status
Experienced, committed faculty	Equity gaps in course success and completion

Academic Program Strengths

Maturing Guided Pathways framework. Chemeketa began reshaping the student experience in 2018 when it joined the first cohort of Oregon community colleges committing to realigning academic programs, academic advising, and academic support according to the four pillars of the Guided Pathways model: 1) clarify the path, 2) have students enter the path, 3) ensure students stay on the path, and 4) ensure learning is happening with intentional outcomes.

Since then, Chemeketa has:

- Participated in statewide efforts to establish elements of the Oregon Transfer Compass, facilitating transfer between community colleges and 4-year colleges and universities. (Pillar 1)
- Established pathways (meta majors), tracks, and maps to facilitate student academic planning (Pillar 1)
- Adopted and utilized *Slate*, a customer relationship management application, to improve the student admission and onboarding process, aligned with Guided Pathways principles (Pillar 2)
- Adopted Lightcast’s *Career Coach* platform that facilitates student career exploration aligned with Chemeketa Pathways (Pillar 2)

- Established a range of opportunities for students with learning gaps to accelerate their math achievement through short-term refresher classes and co-requisite support courses (Pillar 3)
- Piloted new co-requisite models for gateway writing courses to likewise accelerate student writing achievement (Pillar 3)
- Improved institutional research and reporting capabilities to provide data on early momentum metrics and data disaggregation (Pillar 4)
- Established a faculty-led student learning outcomes committee that has advanced a culture of assessment throughout academic programs (Pillar 4)

Expanded student support capacity. Support from the previously awarded Title V DHSI grant, combined with state legislation and funding, has resulted in the establishment of the Student Success Center and the role of a Basic Needs Resources Navigator. The Student Success Center (SSC) is staffed by a director, two coordinators, four navigators, plus a complement of students who serve as peer mentors and ambassadors. The SSC leads student recruitment, orientation, onboarding, intervention, and recognition activities.

Oregon statute now requires all institutions of higher education to staff a “benefits navigator” position who assists students with locating and applying for “any federal, state or local program that provides assistance or benefits to individuals with financial need.” The benefits navigator is also charged with coordinating and providing “culturally specific resources, including resources for non-English speakers, to support students at the institution.”⁹ Chemeketa’s benefits navigator keeps an office with Counseling and Career Services.

Digital tools for retention efforts. Support from the previously awarded Title VI DHSI grant contributed to the acquisition of EAB Navigate, a digital tool that connects students to support services, academic resources, and faculty, with a mobile application that works on smartphones and tablets. Thus far, Navigate has supported Early Alert interventions, information

⁹ Section 350.262 — Benefits navigator; duties; process for feedback and recommendations, https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/bills_laws/ors/ors350.html.

about tutoring and other academic resources, appointment booking, and text campaigns to remind students of important dates and tasks. Current usage data indicates that a large number of students use the application regularly, with over 13,000 appointments booked by nearly 6,000 unique students.

Experienced, committed faculty: Chemeketa faculty are committed to and experienced in the delivery of innovative, student-centered instruction. Chemeketa currently employs approximately 429 faculty, of whom 188 are full-time and 241 are part-time. Chemeketa has a high retention rate among faculty, as evidenced by an average tenure of 13 years for full-time faculty,¹⁰ which provides stability and commitment for long-term goals. Beginning in 2021, the college community has been invited to nominate instructors for an annual Excellence in Teaching Award. 87% of the full-time instructional faculty have been nominated, while approximately 61% of the part-time faculty have been nominated. The majority of these nominations come from students, citing the enthusiasm, expertise, and care their instructor conveyed. Clearly, our faculty have a positive impact on the student learning experience.

Academic Program Weaknesses/Opportunities

2nd Year Retention	3-Year Graduation	6-Year Transfer
56%	27%	31%

Table 1: 2nd year retention, graduation, and transfer rates for first-time, full-time students

Low retention, graduation, and transfer rates. Chemeketa loses 44% of its students from one fall term to the next. Chemeketa’s three-year graduation rate of the 2020 cohort for all first-time, full-time students is 27%. The rate for both BIPOC and Hispanic/Latinx students is similar: 26%. Although this rate reflects a gradual improvement since 2016, and is an increase over the pre-pandemic cohorts, it nevertheless indicates the challenges the college experiences in

¹⁰ Institutional data for faculty and staff

helping students to reach their goals within a timeframe that requires fewer resources and affords more focus. Chemeketa’s six-year transfer rate for first-time, degree-seeking students to four-year institutions is 26% for the 2017 cohort. The rate has been relatively stable over the past 10 years. For BIPOC students, including those identified as Hispanic, the rate is 7 percent lower.¹¹ Project Esfuerzo’s interventions will address barriers to students persisting through to graduation and/or transfer.

Retention & Graduation - Hispanic Male Students

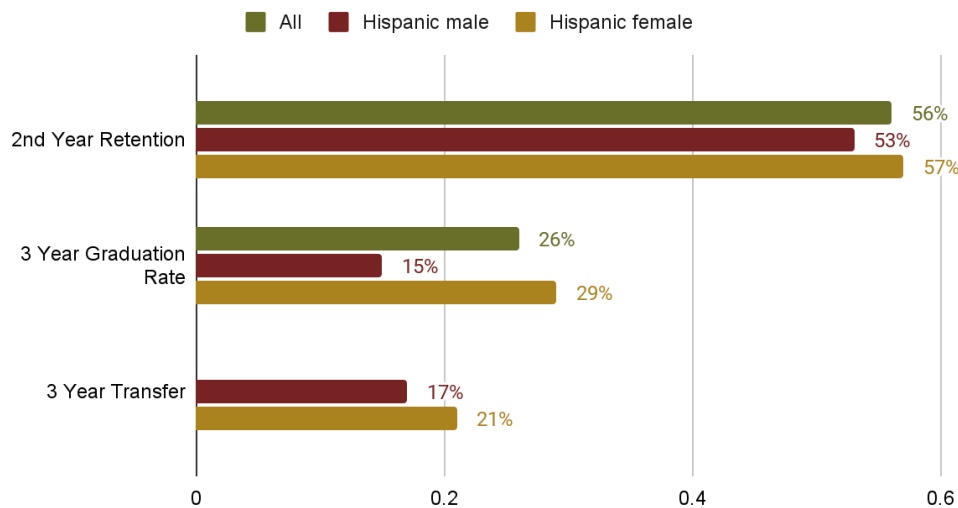


Figure 2: Hispanic Male student retention, graduation, and transfer rates compared with all students (as available) and Hispanic female students.

Low Hispanic/Latino male student retention, graduation, and transfer. Students identified as male and Hispanic appear to experience more barriers to meeting educational goals than the general population, as well as in comparison with students identified as female and Hispanic (see Figure 2). The challenges begin to reveal themselves with recruitment: Fewer Hispanic/Latino male students enroll in college compared to female students. While their first-year metrics are comparable to the overall population and to female Hispanic/Latina

¹¹ National Student Clearinghouse

students, the difference is most noticeable when examining 2nd year retention and 3rd year graduation and transfer rates. Project Esfuerzo’s interventions will address barriers to male students persisting through to graduation and/or transfer.

Loss of full-time students. One of the more striking data points uncovered while investigating Chemeketa’s strengths and weaknesses was the precipitous decline in students studying full-time. In Fall 2022, nearly 45% of the college’s enrollment would be considered full-time, since this is the proportion of students who attempted 12 or more credits. However, when calculated on an annual basis, only 18.5% of students continued to maintain full-time status (i.e., enrolling in 36 or more credits for the three terms that make up an academic year.) Project Esfuerzo’s interventions will address barriers to students enrolling for full-time study.

Equity gaps in course success and completion. Overall, 76% of Chemeketa’s credit-seeking students successfully complete their first year of studies with a grade of C or better. For Hispanic/Latinx students, the rate is 7 percent lower. For Hispanic/Latinx students who are not affiliated with a grant-funded support program such as TRiO, the rate is 9 percent lower. Table 2 lists the percent difference in course success for gateway courses for Hispanic/Latinx students. Project Esfuerzo’s interventions will bolster student achievement in these gateway courses, adding early momentum to a successful first year.

Anatomy & Physiology 1	College Algebra	Composition 1	Composition 2
-17%	-8%	-6%	-8%

Table 2: Equity gaps for Hispanic/Latinx students in successful completion of gateway courses.